

The Bercan.

THEY RECEIVED THE WORD WITH ALL READINESS OF MIND, AND SEARCHED THE SCRIPTURES DAILY, WHETHER THOSE THINGS WERE SO.—Acts xvii. 11.

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[Vol. I.]

LIFE.

I saw a little fairy boat,
Glide o'er a glassy lake;
Bright buds wav'd round the gilded prow,
Flowers scattered in its wake.
It held one fair and sylphlike-child
Within its bosom slight,—
One hand upon the little helm,
Whilst all seemed calm and bright.

I saw that tiny bark again,
Upon a glancing stream,
Flit midst its green and fairy isles,
Like a swift-passing dream.
A fair-haired youth now guided it,
Through all those changing scenes:
Whirls and storm around him played,
In showers and fitful gleams.

Again it burst upon my view,
On riffs dark and dread;
Its gilded prow all worn and broke,
Its flowers faded and dead;
It held, while in its wild career,
Manhood's all-braving form:
His eyes fixed on the bow of hope,
That shone above the storm.

I saw the way-worn bark once more,
Tossed on a boundless sea:
Before it yawned a dead, dark gulf,—
Beyond, Eternity.
An aged man reclined within,
With wasted form and eye;
But still his gaze forever fixed
Upon the brightening sky.

For there, there beamed a fadeless light,
That pilgrim's long-sought haven,
Where he might moor his shattered bark:
And that bright home was—Heaven.

(New York American.)

CONSTRAINING MOTIVES.

As the principles and feelings of our nature, which are addressed in religion, are precisely the same with those which are continually exercised in the affairs of this world, we may expect to find a resemblance between the doctrines of a true religion and the means and arguments by which a virtuous man acquires an influence over the characters and conduct of his fellow-creatures. When a man desires another to do any thing, that is the precept; when he enforces it by any mode of persuasion, that is the doctrine. When the Athenians were at war with the Heraclidae, it was declared by the Oracle, that the nation whose king died first, should be victorious in the contest. As soon as this was known, Codrus disguised himself, went over to the camp of the enemy, and exposed himself there to a quarrel with a soldier, who killed him without knowing who he was. The Athenians sent to demand the body of their king; which so alarmed the Heraclidae, from the recollection of the Oracle, that they fled in disorder. Now, let us suppose that Codrus wished to inculcate the principle of patriotism in his countrymen. If he had merely issued a proclamation, commanding every citizen to prefer the interest of his country to his own life, he would have been giving them a moral precept, but without a corresponding doctrine. If he had joined to this proclamation, the promise of honour and wealth as the rewards of obedience, he would have been adding a very powerful doctrine, yet nevertheless such a doctrine as must have led much more directly to patriotic conduct than to patriotic feeling and principle. Vanity and avarice, without patriotism, might have gained those rewards. But if he wished to excite or to cherish the principle of patriotism in the hearts of his people, he chose the most eloquent and prevailing argument, when he sacrificed his life for them, and thus attracted their admiration and gratitude to that spirit which animated his breast, and their love to that country, of which he was at once the representative and the ransom.

It is indeed a striking and yet an undeniable fact, that we are comparatively little affected by abstract truths in morality. The cry of a child will produce a greater movement, in almost any mind, than twenty pages of unanswerable reasoning. An instinctive acquaintance with this fact guides us in our dealings with our fellow-creatures; and He who formed the heart of man, has attested his revealed word, by showing his acquaintance with the channel through which persuasion and instruction might be most effectually communicated. It may therefore be useful to illustrate, at greater length, the analogy which exists between the persuasions of the gospel, and those which might be fixed on as the most powerful arguments capable of being addressed to any human feelings on the subject of human interests.

Let us, then, present to ourselves a company of men travelling along the sea-shore. One of them, better acquainted with the ground than the rest, warns them of quicksands, and points out to them a landmark which indicates the position of a dangerous pass. They however see no great reason for apprehension; they are anxious to get forwards, and cannot resolve upon making a considerable circuit in order to avoid what appears to them an imaginary evil; they reject his counsel, and proceed onwards. In these circumstances, what argument ought he to use? What mode of persuasion can we imagine fitted to fasten on their minds a strong conviction of the reality of their danger, and the disinterested benevolence of their adviser? His words have been ineffectual; he must try some other method; he must act. And he does so; for, seeing no other way of prevailing on them, he desires them to wait only a single moment, till they see the truth of his warning confirmed by his fate. He goes before them; he puts his foot on the seemingly firm sand, and sinks to death. This eloquence is irresistible. He was the most active and vigorous among them; if any one could have extricated himself from the difficulty, it was

he; they are persuaded; they make the necessary circuit, bitterly accusing themselves of the death of their generous companion; and during their progress, as often as these landmarks occur, his nobleness and their own danger rise to their minds, and secure their safety. Rashness is now not perilous merely,—it is ungrateful; it is making void the death of their deliverer.

To walk without God in the world, is to walk in sin; and sin is the way of danger. Men had been told this by their own consciences, and they had even partially and occasionally believed it; but still they walked on. Common arguments had failed; the manifestations of the Divine character in creation and providence, and the testimony of conscience, had been in a great measure disregarded: it thus seemed necessary, that a stronger appeal should be made to their understanding and their feelings. The danger of sin must be more strikingly and unequivocally demonstrated: and the alarm excited by this demonstration must be connected with a more kindly and generous principle, which may bind their affections to that God from whom they have wandered. But how is this to be done? What more prevailing appeal can be made? Must the Almighty Warner demonstrate the evil of sin, by undergoing its effects? Must he prove the danger of sin, by exhibiting himself as a sufferer under its consequences? Must he who knew no sin suffer as a sinner, that he might persuade men that sin is indeed an evil? It was even so. God became man, and dwelt amongst us. He himself encountered the terrors of guilt, and bore its punishment; and called on his careless creatures to consider and understand the evil of sin, by contemplating even its undesired effects on a being of perfect purity, who was over all, God blessed for ever. Could they hope to sustain that weight which had crushed the Son of God? Could they rush into that guilt and that danger against which he had so pathetically warned them? Could they refuse their hearts and their obedience to him who had proved himself so worthy of their confidence?—especially when we consider that this great Benefactor is ever present, and sees the acceptance which this history of his compassion meets with in every breast, rejoicing in those whose spirits are purified by it, and still holding out the warning of his example to the most regardless.

Ancient history tells us of a certain king who made a law against adultery, in which it was enacted that the offender should be punished by the loss of both eyes. The very first offender was his own son. The case was most distressing; for the king was an affectionate father, as well as a just magistrate. After much deliberation and inward struggle, he finally commanded one of his own eyes to be pulled out and one of his son's. It is easier to conceive than to describe what must have been the feelings of the son in these most affecting circumstances. His offence would appear to him in a new light; it would appear to him not simply as connected with painful consequences to himself, but as the cause of a father's sufferings, and an injury to a father's love. If the king had passed over the law altogether, in his son's favour, he would have exhibited no regard for justice, and he would have given a very inferior proof of affection. We measure affection by the sacrifice which it is prepared to make, and by the resistance which it overcomes. If the sacrifice had been made, and the resistance overcome secretly in the heart of the king, there could have been but little evidence of the real existence either of principle or of affection; and the son might perhaps have had reason to think, that his pardon was as much the effect of his father's disregard of the law as of his affection to him; and at any rate, even if he had given the fullest credit to the abstract justice and kindness which were combined in his acquittal, it is impossible that this theoretical character of his father could have wrought on his heart any impression half so energetic, or interesting, or overwhelming, as that which must have been produced by the simple and unequivocal and practical exhibition of worth which has been recorded.—*Erskine's Internal Evidence.*

PRAYER BY LAYMEN.

That a layman may lead in social prayer, is, according to the principles of Christianity, and the religion of the Bible, so evident and incontrovertible, that to set about proving it by argument, seems like lighting a candle to see the sun. I can see no reason or objection against it which merits serious consideration. It is not merely their privilege, but in many cases, and on many occasions, it is the duty of Laymen to pray together; and they would sin in neglecting it. Whether they ought or ought not to use the Prayer Book, will, if the Lord permit, hereafter be considered. This is a distinct point, and no little confusion has been the consequence of blending it with others. The present question is, whether a layman may, according to the Holy Scriptures, and the standards of the Protestant Episcopal Church, lead in social prayer. What text of Scripture, we may well ask—or what canon or other rule of the Church is there, which forbids it?—Or we may appeal to the practice, and to the understanding of Christians generally—Churchmen not excepted.

Suppose a man in his family—may he not pray with them? He would not live as a Christian, did he neglect it. Should it be said, that his being the head of the family, gives him this right?—We say that another layman, who is not the head—who is an inmate, or but a visitor, may, and in many cases ought to, do it. If he said further, that a family is a small community; we reply, not necessarily, nor always. There may be, including slaves and domestics, inmates and

visitors, a hundred, which is a larger number than usually attend the Prayer Meetings; and were there several hundreds, still one of them ought, morning and evening, to lead their devotions, in prayer. Should it be still further urged that a family, however large, differs in some respects from a social meeting—though we think the difference not material as it regards this question, we will suppose a dining party of three or four hundred (no very uncommon case) a number larger than the most of our congregations; it will still, by all pious Christians, be allowed that one of them should lead in prayer; nor would any one be so absurd as to accuse him of usurping the ministerial office. But we will go yet farther, and suppose a thousand people assembled in a Church, and on the Lord's day, and for the express purpose of public worship, should their Clergyman be absent, or though present be unwell, very few will deny that in such case, it is more suitable that a layman should pray, than that the congregation should disperse without prayer. And this we know well is agreeable to very common usage in our Church. Laymen frequently pray in our public congregations, and in the same place as an ordained minister—some licensed and others not. This has been for many years the practice in our Churches, and so far as I know, generally approved. Some of our vacant parishes have, in all human appearance, been kept alive by what is called lay-reading, which it is hoped no Episcopalian will deny to be lay-praying. And without further remarks on this point, we shall suppose it sufficiently evident that the fact of laymen sometimes leading in social prayer, is no proof of their usurping the clerical office, nor any just ground of objection against the meetings.

Among the heavy charges against the meetings in question, one is, that extempore prayer is sometimes used, and in consequence our Liturgy less esteemed. My own experience and observation confirm me in the belief that the effect is the contrary: that generally, they who are accustomed to both, prefer our forms to extempore prayer, especially on the occasions for which the forms are intended. Are we then to secure the attachment of our people to the Liturgy by keeping them in ignorance of the superior excellence of the extempore way? Such management would not accord with the principles of our Church; and such apprehension the true lovers of the Liturgy will disclaim. They who fear that occasionally praying without the Prayer Book will lessen our esteem for it, compliment it much the same as they do the Church, who maintain that it will be injured by reading the Bible without the Prayer Book. The Church is infinitely more in danger from her members leaving the firm Protestant ground on which she has taken her noble stand, and leaning to Catholic principles, falsely so called.

It is further said that praying extempore is a violation of the rules of the Church: but what rules we are not told, nor can we discover. The Liturgy is appointed for the public worship of the Church: but they who attend the conference meetings do not intend or view them as occasions of public worship: if they did so view them, they would hold them in the house devoted to that purpose. The fact indeed is, that the Prayer Book is much used in the meetings; but whether with the greatest propriety, may well be questioned. The principal complaint is, that laymen presume to pray extempore; and to this the present remarks will be chiefly confined.

That our Church has been so absurd as to forbid any one to pray extempore, or that she has declared it to be sinful or improper, very few, we might hope, will pretend. If such were her view, nothing hinders that she should declare it.

That laymen may and ought to pray, we have formerly shown: and so far is it from being a fact that the Church commands them to use the Liturgy, she does not (excepting the case of those who are licensed) expressly even permit them to use it. The 34th canon speaks of "ministers" only, and does not require laymen to use the Liturgy; and they who are disposed to be rigid or superstitious, might, with better show of reason, question whether any layman, if not especially licensed, may use those prayers which the Rubrics declare shall be used by the minister: for this would be more like an intrusion into the ministerial office, and a literal violation of our rules.

It is a question of much more importance, and of more difficulty, how far it is proper and expedient to use the Liturgy on occasions for which it was never intended. It is a fact well known that it has been much disgraced and rendered contemptible in the public view, by the awkwardness of using it on particular occasions to which it is not adapted, and for which it was never designed. Were the Prayer Book used only according to the intentions of the Church in setting it forth, it would ever appear in its true dignity and excellence. The objection which men of good sense have chiefly urged against our Liturgy, is its unsuitableness for occasions on which it is sometimes used: an objection for which, not the Church, but its mistaken friends are answerable. On this ground too in a great degree, it not chiefly, rests the popular prejudice against forms of prayer. Did we use the forms we have according to their intention only, and provide a sufficient number and variety of others for particular purposes and occasions; leaving it (as the Church indeed does wisely) to adapt prayers to extraordinary occasions, liturgies would be more generally esteemed, the people more edified, and the Church increased. The Church does not pretend to have provided prayers for all circumstances; but the contrary. She supposes that the Bishop, as is his duty, will at his discretion, set forth forms as exigencies require: and

when thus set forth, they are, in his Diocese of the same authority as the Prayer Book. Our Convention, by authorizing this, admits, what every one knows, that the Book of Common Prayer is not designed nor suitable for all particular cases. And if the Bishops neglect this duty, which they almost wholly do, ministers and their people must, on some very important occasions, neglect to pray: or they must use prayers not appropriate; or they must, according to the wisdom given them, prepare something that is suitable. And which of them they ought to do, the best friends of the Church, and the most pious Christians will be generally agreed. Small is comparatively the number who will be so absurd as to maintain, that because the Church has prescribed prayers to be used on common, and some particular occasions, that we are to pray on no other occasions, or to use no other prayers.—*From the Right Rev. Bishop Griswold's Remarks on Prayer Meetings.*

THE VISIBLE AND THE INVISIBLE CHURCH.

ARCHBISHOP CRANMER ON THE APOSTLES' CREED.—"I believe the Holy Catholic Church; that is to say, that ever there is found some company of men or some congregation of good people, which believe the Gospel and are saved." For this word, Church, signifieth a company of men lightened with the Spirit of Christ, which do receive the gospel, &c. And this Christian Church is a communion of Saints, that is to say all that be of this communion, or company, be holy and be one holy body under Christ their Head. And this congregation receiveth of their Head and Lord, all spiritual riches and gifts that pertain to the sanctification and making holy of the same body. And these ghostly treasures be common to the whole body, and to every member of the same."

Cranmer's Catechism of 1548, Fathers of the Eng. Church, pp. 235, 6.

"But the holy Church is so unknown to the world that no man can describe it, but God alone, who only searcheth the hearts of all men, and knoweth his true children from others."

"This Church, (the invisible) "is the pillar of truth, because it resteth in God's word: "but as for the open, known Church, (the visible) "and the outward face thereof, it is not the pillar of truth, otherwise than it is (as it were) a register or treasury, to keep the books of God's holy will and testament, and to rest only thereupon." "For if the Church" (the visible) "proceed further, to make any new articles of faith, besides the Scripture or contrary to the Scripture, or direct not the form of life according to the same; then it is not the pillar of truth, nor the Church of Christ, but the synagogue of Satan, and the temple of Antichrist."

Cranmer's Answer to Dr. Smith, Fathers of the English Church, pp. 544, 545.

BISHOP RIDLEY.—"The name, Church, is taken in Scripture sometimes for the whole multitude of them which profess the name of Christ, of the which they are also named Christians. But, as St. Paul saith of the Jew, 'Not every one is a Jew outwardly, &c. Neither yet all that be of Israel are counted of the seed.' Even so, not every one which is a Christian outwardly, is a Christian indeed. For 'If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, the same is none of his.' Therefore, that Church, which is his body, of which Christ is the Head, standeth only of living stones and christians, not only outwardly in name and title, but inwardly in heart and in truth."—*Ridley's Works, (Parker Soc. Ed.) p. 126.*

HOOKER.—"For lack of diligent observing, the difference first between the Church of God mystical and visible, then between the visible sound and corrupted—the oversights are neither few nor light that have been committed."

He proceeds to show the difference between the Church visible and invisible, as follows:

"The Church of Christ which we properly term his body mystical, can be but one, neither can that be sensibly discerned by any man, inasmuch as the parts thereof are some in heaven already with Christ, and the rest that are on earth (albeit their natural persons be visible) we do not discern under this property whereby they are truly and infallibly of that body. Only our minds, by intellectual conceit, are able to apprehend that such a real body there is: a body collective, because it containeth a huge multitude; a body mystical, because the mystery of their conjunction is removed altogether from sense. Whatsoever we read in Scripture, concerning the endless love and saving mercy which God showeth towards his Church, the only proper subject thereof, is this Church. They who are of this society, have such marks and notes of distinction from all others, as are not objects unto our senses; only unto God who seeth their hearts, and understandeth all their secret cogitations; unto him they will be clear and manifest."

Having thus defined the mystical or invisible society, Hooker proceeds to do the same for the visible.

"As those everlasting promises of love, mercy, and blessedness belong to the mystical Church; even so, on the other side, when we read of any duty which the Church of God is

bound unto, the Church whom this doth concern is a sensible, and known company.—And this visible Church, in like sort, is but one, continued from the first beginning of the world, to the last end. The visible Church of Jesus Christ is one in outward profession of those things which supernaturally appertain to the very essence of Christianity, and are necessarily required in every particular Christian man.

If by external profession they be christians, then they are of the visible church of Christ: and christians, by external profession, they are all whose mark of recognition hath in it those things which we have mentioned (one Lord, one Baptism;) yea, although they be impious idolaters, wicked heretics, persons excommunicable. Such we deny not to be imps and limbs of Satan, even as long as they continue such. Is it then possible that the self-same men should belong both to the Synagogue of Satan, and to the Church of Jesus Christ? Unto that Church which is his mystical body, not possible; because that body consisteth of none but true Israelites, true sons of Abraham, true servants and saints of God. Howbeit, of the visible Body and Church of Jesus Christ, those may be, and oftentimes are, in respect of the main parts of their outward profession, who in regard of their inward disposition of mind, yea, of external conversation, yea, even of some parts of their very profession, are most worthy both hateful in the sight of God himself, and in the eyes of the sounder parts of the visible Church most execrable.—(Ecc. Pol. b. iii. § 1.)

THE TRUE TEMPLE.—"The multitude of them which truly believe (howsoever they be dispersed far and wide, each from other) is all one body, whereof the Head is Christ; one building, whereof he is corner-stone, in whom they, as the members of the body, being knit, and as the stones of the building, being coupled, grow up to a man of perfect stature, and rise to an holy temple in the Lord. That which linketh Christ to us is his mere mercy and love towards us. That which tieth us to him, is our faith in the promised salvation revealed, in the word of truth. That which uniteth and joineth us amongst ourselves, in such sort that we are now as if we had but one heart and one soul, is our love. Who be inwardly in heart the lively members of this body, and the polished stones of this building, coupled and joined to Christ, as flesh of his flesh, and bones of his bones, by the mutual bonds of his unspeakable love towards them, and their unfeigned faith in him, thus linked and fastened to each other, by a spiritual, sincere, and hearty affection of love, without any manner of simulation; who be Jews within, and what their names be; none can tell, save he whose eyes do behold the secret dispositions of all men's hearts."—*Hooker's 1st Sermon on St. Jude.*

(Appendix to Sermon on the Holy Catholic Church, by the Right Rev. G. P. McIlvaine, D.D., Bishop of Ohio.)

SACRAMENTAL INSTRUCTION.

III. We would notice the vast moment of a well-balanced view of Sacramental grace.—We have a need to guard alike against superstition and irreverence. Can we forget—as a wholesome warning against the former—the recipients of typical Sacraments, administered by the hands of God himself, perished? It is therefore a well-timed admonition of Bishop Davenant—"We must not glory, because we are made partakers of the external Sacrament, unless we obtain besides, the internal and quickening work of Christ. For if this be wanting, as it was heretofore said to the Jews, (Acts vii. 51) O ye uncircumcised in heart—so it may be justly said to us—O ye unbaptized in heart." "As a restraint against the latter, we hear the solemn declaration of our holy God sealed with so fearful a sentence—"I will be sanctified in all them that draw nigh to me." "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." "We greatly admire the manifold wisdom exemplified in the Sacramental economy. Lest in a pretension to a spurious spirituality we should slight the ordinances as empty forms, he has appointed them to be effectual means of grace. Lest we should depend upon them in a self-righteous formality, he has ordained them as only means. The practical apprehension of this precise medium will preserve us from the errors on the right hand and on the left. We subtract nothing from their Scriptural efficacy. We attribute to them nothing beyond the plain Declaration of Scripture.

We admit indeed the extreme difficulty of maintaining this true mean between the undue exaltation and depreciation of the Sacraments. The movement of a great controversy without a careful self-discipline shakes the right balance, and turns it aside from the straight line; so that error is too often opposed—not by sound and well-considered truth, but by the opposite extreme—or at least by some tendency towards it. The circumstances of the times often constrain us to view truth rather in its opposition to error, than in its own native freedom, simplicity, and purity. This brings us almost necessarily under an influence unfavourable to a calm and dispassionate investigation. For, constituted as we are—with so much corruption and perversity yet adhering to us—a strong revulsion against particular errors may sometimes hinder a clear apprehension of important truth. In contending earnestly against the Romish error (alas! not confined to Rome) of the Sacraments conferring grace *ex opere operato*, *non ex opere operantis*, we may in the heat of the contro-

* 1 Cor. x. 1—5. † On Col. ii. 11.
‡ Lev. x. 1—3. § Psalm lxxxix. 7.
¶ Incidit in Scyllam, qui vult vitare Charybdim.
‡ i. e. as Bellarmine defines it.—"Ipsius actionis Sacramentalis a Deo ad hoc instituta, non ex merito agentis; vel suscipientis."