

worshipper, and what is new, strange, and fluctuating,—between knowing what you are about, and a state of perfect ignorance, of what the person, who is the mouth of your congregation, is going to ask for you next,—between entering on the public worship of God with a pious composure of mind without distraction, and the unavoidable exercise of criticising, comparing, and determining. While you are thus engaged, permit me to remind you, that, should there be expressions or requests in your public prayers with which you cannot agree, yet they have been already, as soon as uttered, presented to God as *your* prayers, and you cannot recal them. Thus you may, by the mouth of your congregation, send up to the throne of grace, in the short space of one day, contradictory petitions and desires, as your speakers may change. Now this is treating that God who made us in a way that has no parallel in the dealings of men with one another. If you have cause to petition your temporal governor, you will carefully prepare, and weigh every word and expression, before you present your memorial as the signification of your desires. Is it not fully as reasonable that we should bring the same caution to the throne of grace, in matters of infinitely more importance? If I have not already exhausted your patience, I would add, that there is not one objection that can be brought against the use of precomposed forms of prayer in public worship which do not lie with equal force against the use of psalms and hymns. Psalms and hymns, like prayers, embrace petitions, supplications, and thanksgiving. If therefore the objection against one is good, it must be equally good against the other; yet I never heard of people undertaking to sing the instantaneous productions of the moment. Had I thought that a system of devotion which must necessarily have in its composition the elements of confusion, forgetfulness, and self-contradiction were acceptable to the supreme Being, I would certainly think that the measured verse and the harmony of sounds were perfectly useless and unnecessary. But since poetry and music, which cannot be the production of the moment, are universally summoned to the service of God, does it not appear that we are more anxious to gratify a native taste of our own than to please God? For if the irregularities, to say no worse, of prayer be acceptable to God, I can see no reason why irregularities in poetry and music should be unacceptable. If you then persevere in your dislike to precomposed forms of prayer, consistency requires you to reject psalms and hymns, except such as the mouth of the minister shall pronounce off hand as he does your public prayers.

[Here the parties were obliged to break off, each being summoned to his respective business, but should I be present, when they meet again, I shall not fail to take notes of their conversation. I hold them both in great respect, and feel quite impatient till I hear the defence of M. They are both endowed with good temper which forbids me to expect railing accusations on either side.]

Montreal, June, 1827.

F—H.

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