

out from all the multitude of sinners—as if he stood before God, the head and chief of all that had ever offended against His law.

Thus every man, who is in any intense degree affected by his sins, who arrives at any spiritual understanding of what sin is, of God's purity and Christ's love, must share more or less in the feelings of the Apostle when he calls himself the chief of sinners. Whether among men he has spent a holy and saintly life, or whether all life long he has drunk in iniquity with greediness, he must, if awakened to his real state and character, join in the Apostle's confession and make it his own.

The Use of Instrumental Aid in Public Praise.

(Continued.)

BEFORE attempting to explain why, in ancient times, the praises of the Church were not conducted by that best of all instruments—the human voice—without instrumental support, it may be necessary to admonish the reader of the true question at issue. It is not to be supposed that playing upon an instrument is praising God, any more than the ringing of the Church bell upon Sabbath morning. Such an expedient does not contemplate, as its chief aim, the production of fine and expressive music. The praises of the sanctuary are meant, not for amusement, but for edification. Sweet sounds addressed to the ear alone may be music, but music in the very lowest sense of the word. Music is an art which, like poetry and painting, properly appeals to our intellectual and moral nature—especially to the religious and emotional feelings. Through its aid, prosaic thoughts are winged with emotion. Thus, it impresses truth upon the soul, by reiteration, and by causing the mind to dwell upon it. In short, while music affords the natural outlet by which the pious heart expresses its delight, it is also the handmaid of moral instruction.

The object, then, of instrumental aid, is to enable the people to sing unitedly, powerfully and effectively. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that no expedient, however excellent, can supersede musical instruction and practice. The First Book of Discipline, prepared under the direction of John Knox, enjoins such exercises at other times than the ordinary diets of public worship. "Moreover, men, women and children would be expected to exercise themselves in Psalms, that, when the Kirk doth convene and sing, they be the more able, with common hearts and voices, to praise God." No plan can altogether dispense with the necessity of practising, either at family worship, or in singing classes, or in congregational practisings, the tunes used on the Lord's day. People will

not learn them by inspiration, without effort or instruction.

The most common method, among Presbyterians, of conducting the praises of a congregation, is the employment of a choir. There was a large choir, consisting of hundreds, in the days of David and Solomon. In our time, the few individuals who compose a choir are probably the persons of greatest musical skill and capacity in the congregation. It is presumed that they regularly meet for practice, and that they are qualified to conduct the public praise in good time and tune. The theory and the practice, however, are very different. The individuals who compose a choir, being volunteers, choir-leaders find it difficult to collect them for regular practice. The singing of the four parts by the choir, at concert pitch, causes the pitch of the air to be so high as to fatigue ordinary voices, and the great proportion of the people, finding it uncomfortable to sing at the pitch which the choir have taken, do not sing at all. Again, the cultivation of choral singing practically prevents any attempt to instruct the rest of the people. The choir, finding it difficult enough to keep themselves in practice, do not feel called upon to interest themselves in the musical instruction of the rest of the people. Choral singing being their object, their labors terminate with themselves. Any one may understand that, when six or seven individuals have taught themselves to sing harmoniously together, even the addition of a single voice spoils their harmony—how much more the harsh and unarrangeable voices of the multitude. It is only after long practice, by mutual adaptation, by learning to accommodate each other's voices, and rub off mutual asperities and discords, arising from loudness and incorrectness, that a choir learns to sing with that perfect sympathy and oneness of sound that constitute harmony. It is, therefore, very natural that they should not wish a labor spoiled, of which they are as proud as a painter is of his picture, or a poet of his lyric, and that when coarse, uncultured voices join, they should feel very much as the said painter would if he saw a common sign-painter lifting up his huge brush, to add to his piece some coarse embellishment; or said poet would feel, if he heard an illiterate fellow mending his verse. It is for this reason that highly cultivated choirs actually prefer tunes which the people do not know.

The above causes combine in producing an effect which is well known, namely, that wherever there is a good choir, the congregation do not join. Wherever, however, the choir is inferior, the congregation join in some measure. In fact, the singing of the congregation seems to be in an inverse ratio to the excellence of the choir. This is a curious fact, and it is a fact, so far as my own observation in Europe and America extends. I have never heard a smooth, melodious, well-attuned choir followed by the congrega-