

body of each congregation. We mean that which recommends to begin the worship with a brief prayer—a prayer reverently acknowledging the glorious majesty and grace of the God with whom we have to do, invoking his presence, and the help needful to serve him acceptably. This order has been long disused, though a sense of its propriety seems to be implied in the practice that still lingers with us, of the heads of families invoking a blessing on domestic worship. Probably the desire of elevating the mind early to a fitting ardour of devotion has induced the preference for literally "entering his gates with praise." And so much do we like this ourselves that we should deprecate any long detention from the introductory song. But a short, and serious, invocation of God's name—or recognition of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, would, without displacing that delightful service, as an effort of solemn self-recollection, avail to compose the spirit, and add intensity to the united outpouring of praise.

In the absence of a liturgy—in its presence indeed also—much depends on the officiating person—on his very spirit and manner—to secure the full effect of any order of worship. Nor will we omit to say, that we regard a large proportion of the responsibility for unprofitable Sabbaths, as attaching to those who lead the prayers and praise. We are sure that every preacher impressed with the importance of the care of souls, and the sacredness pertaining to all the service of Jehovah's sanctuary, will bear with us when we suggest the inquiry, whether sufficient pains are bestowed on the conducting of this part of the sanctuary service. It is no reason why preparation should be dispensed with, that we dispense with a form of prayer, or disapprove of any stringent directory. And the very argument against restrictive liturgies, and in favour of our Presbyterian mode, is greatly weakened, when ministers yield to the temptation to leave all in respect of the social devotional services, to extemporaneous effort and impulse. The advantage of our plan, as formerly said, lies in its capability of adaptation, to varying providences, and experiences. In this lies the evil of imposing exclusive forms. But nothing is more disappointing to spiritual worshippers (and the best sermon will not compensate for it) than to be led in confessions and supplication at the throne by lips inadequately touched by the sacred fire; and whose utterances do not bespeak, in the comprehensive range of the matter of prayer, or in the fervour of manner, due forethought of the various topics claiming remembrance, or due sympathy with the various necessities of worshippers. Very precious are such opportunities of pouring forth before the Lord of the Sabbath, the joys and cares which labour for utterance in the breasts of those who compose the solemn assembly. How gratifying when between preacher and hearer, heart is found to answer to heart, and the glow of sacred devotion kindled at the closet or domestic altar on the

morning of the sacred and loved day, fanned not quenched on entering the gates of Zion. We are not so much for lengthy prayers; but we are for such fullness and minuteness as conscientious premeditation can reconcile with reasonable limits; and nothing should be left neglected to adapt both the prayers and songs of the sanctuary to the designs of the Sabbatical appointment, as a memorial both of creation and redemption, and an anticipative pledge of the heavenly rest.

And when we mention praise, which, as we have said, we are far from wishing to displace from its precedence, we would urge that to secure its due effect, something belongs to the minister, something to the leader of the music, much to the congregation itself. Not a little depends on the right selection of Psalms. We would particularly suggest for the opening song, that it should be one fitted to raise the thoughts and feelings to fitting ardour; and, for the rest, that the Psalms, many or few, sung during the service, should, as far as possible, have adaptation to the various sentiments of adoring gratitude, contrition, and expectancy of faith, which constitute the three-fold element in praise as in prayer. We would recommend these suggestions, by appealing to the recollections of christians, how differently they have felt when summoned to join at the outset of public worship in some such song as the 100th, the 111th, or 135th, compared with a more didactic passage, though of course equally good in its time and place, being alike inspired, say some section of the 119th Psalm,—suppose the verse which will occur in its turn, where the Psalms are sung in course, or as it may happen to appear appropriate to the discourse of the day—"In understanding I excel those that are ancients"! Not that we deny that certain advantages attend the singing "through the Psalms"—though the writer of this can never forget the awkward feeling of a commencement in which he had to take part under this rule, at verse 9th of Psalm 10th, "He lion-like lurks in his den." He would therefore advise such as follow this course, at least to modify it by occasional deviation from it—not that these verses should never be sung—but they should not initiate the service of the day—or, what is but an adhering to the rule observed by the spirit of inspiration itself—in the animating introductions which characterise the most of the sacred songs, let the preacher generally include such introductory stanzas with the more prosaic portions to which he desires to pass on. For example; the first verse of the 30th Pharaoh phrase should be joined with the 4th and following verses which we have heard sung alone; or at any rate the 3rd verse should be sung with them. So the first verse of the 33rd Pharaoh phrase, "Father of all, &c.," should be joined with the fifth and remainder, where these portions are judged appropriate. On this principle, we were rather glad, on a recent occasion, when a Precentor by a mere mistake of what the minister had ruled, began at a

verse which the other had designed to omit,—albeit we are lovers of order, and wish that the Pulpit should direct the desk. Nor is the Precentor's duty unimportant. We honour all endeavours to perfect the musical part of the Church Psalmody. Only, we pray the master of the song, not to be over hasty in engraving on it unknown pieces, or strange variations, which, to an audience unwarned, have an effect kindred to that of the unknown tongue. And, above all, how much depends, for the full spiritual advantage, on the example set both from desk and pulpit, of real devotion! The least appearance of the want of serious participation in the worship as such, is of unhappy tendency. There are temptations to distraction of mind, which the occupant whether of pulpit or desk has to guard against. Let it not seem as if the part of the one were but officially to lead the song, or of the other to observe the singers, and to resume his work when others have done.

But a word more on the temptations of the members—the occupant of the pew. We sympathise with our ancient directory for worship in its recommendation of a demeanour serious but unostentatious, to those entering the assembly, "taking their seats or places without adoration or bowing themselves towards one place or other"—words which may be applied to discourage—what may be exhibited under the plea of reverence—any very marked appearance of prayer apart, by a late entrant, after social worship has begun. Still we love the practice, more usual among Episcopalians than Presbyterians, of a serious and silent invocation; and we like the outward indication of it, by each member of a congregation when entering his seat, especially before the service has commenced.

And with this we would connect the advice to redeem the precious moments that are often in the power of earlier comers to the sanctuary, by putting them to better use than that of curious staring at one another, or at later entrants.

It is good to be present betimes; and we have sometimes ventured to calculate how much of holy scripture might be read during these minutes, and how valuably they might supplement the brief opportunities which many may be limited to at home. In this respect, even—"gather up the fragments: let nothing be lost!"

W.

THE RELIGIOUS AWAKENING.

Accounts are still received of the progress of the religious awakening in the United States, and in some parts of Canada. In most of the cities and towns, union prayer meetings are still held and attended by large numbers of devout worshippers. In most of our Canadian cities and towns, these union meetings are held, and, we believe, with good results. Ministers and members of different Churches are brought together in solemn and pleasing circumstances. They have an opportunity of becoming acquainted with each other,