

prescribed in the Mishna for all possible occasions; of these, according to the Rabbi Gamaliel, at least eighteen were to be used daily. There are prayers in connection with comets, rain, lightning, tempests; at the sight of the sea, of lakes and rivers; for places where miracles had been performed, where idols had been destroyed; prayers on receiving good news, on using new furniture, on entering a fortified city, and on leaving one, etc. All that was required on such occasions was a short prayer; but a long one was more meritorious. People went to the synagogue not only for public worship, but for private prayer; and prayer offered here was thought to be more efficacious. Prayer was offered up in the street, and especially at the hour of prayer; and any one riding on a mule at that hour was required to dismount. On no pretext was prayer to be interrupted. It was offered in a standing position with the face turned toward the temple." (Tholuck).

One can easily see how these practices offered occasions for ostentation. Whilst a humble man sought some quiet nook in which he might, unobserved, lift up his heart to God, one who courted observation would select the synagogue or the street corner where he could be seen by the largest number of onlookers. Of course there was no harm in praying anywhere or at any time. There might be no harm either in the loudness of the tone assumed or the fervour of the gestures displayed. The harm was in doing these things to be seen of men. And here, indeed, we may say, as in reference to almsgiving, that public prayer is a most clear and distinct duty, both as an act of common worship, as the fulfilment of a personal duty, and as an example to others. There may be as much hypocrisy in protesting that we pray not in public but in secret, as in ostentatious public prayer.

What our Lord means is, that our prayer must be real. Whether public or private, it must be an act of communion with God. If it is public, there must be more than meets the eye of man. If it is private, then it must be an outgoing of the soul to God. And our Lord puts the counsel in a very striking manner: "Enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." The circumstances of prayer may be public or private; but prayer itself must always be secret. Even when it expresses itself in spoken words, its essence lies not in the language, but in the thought, the emotion, the aspiration.

And as with prayer, so with the response. Each kind of prayer had its own peculiar reward. Those who desire to be seen of men are actually seen of men. Those who desire to have communion with God are admitted to this communion and are thus rewarded in secret. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.

From ostentatious prayer our Lord passes to "vain repetitions" in prayer. There has been some doubt as to the meaning of the word employed here by our Lord; but the thought intended to be conveyed is clear enough. Of course our Lord did not mean to condemn merely lengthy prayers. We are to pray always, to pray without ceasing; and the life of a devout man is a perpetual prayer. Every act of his is an offering to God. Every word of his has a sacred meaning. Our whole life may be, and should be, a sacrifice to the Most High. Nor does our Lord condemn explicitness and minuteness in prayer. We may ask of God all good things collectively, or we may lay our special needs before Him, just as our hearts may prompt us; and we may be well assured that He will not bless us the less because we pray in one manner rather than in another. So long as our prayers are sincere, humble, loving, trustful, we may be quite sure that they are heard of God.

But the manner of prayer which Christ condemns is that foolish repetition of the same words which seems to say that mere reiteration must move the mind of God. Our Lord would seem to have condemned, by anticipation, the custom which was to spring up in the Christian Church, of saying the same prayer a great many times, as though there were virtue in the mere repetition. What but this can be the meaning of the numbering of beads, of the saying, over and over again, of the *Ave Maria* and the *Pater Noster*? It is hardly possible, with the utmost exercise of charity, to

ignore the application of our Lord's rebuke to these practices of the Roman communion.

The Prayer-Book An Incident.

In the summer of 1848, during a month spent at that beautiful retreat, the "Blue Sulphur Springs" of Virginia, very early one Sunday morning, wishing an hour of quiet, I wandered, my Prayer-Book in hand, to the pretty summer-house over the spring. A few minutes after reaching there an old gentleman came in, saying: "Good morning, my young lady; a book in your hand? I hope it is the Bible; no other book for this Sunday morning."

I replied: "No, it's the Prayer-Book."

"Ah!" said he, "I am sorry to hear this; I have watched you during the week, and hoped you were a Christian."

"What do you know of the Prayer-Book?" I asked.

"I never saw one," my old friend said; "and I never saw an Episcopalian before, and where I live, near the Hawk's Nest, in Kanawha, we think them like the Roman Catholics; and I belong to the Methodist Church."

"Then you ought not to find fault with the Episcopal Church," I replied. And then I asked: "Will you look at this Prayer-Book? See it for yourself, and if you find fault after that, then I will have nothing more to say; just read the first sentence in the book."

My aged friend, hesitatingly (as though he were not obeying the command, "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath Day,") took my book and read aloud: "The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him," and said, "That is good; that is from the Bible!" He read on—all the Sentences, the Exhortation, the Confession, and then said: "Will you lend me this book?"

Constantly for days the old man was seen with that book in his hand, and often the tears were wiped away whilst he was reading.

At the end of ten days he came to me, his eyes filled with tears, and holding the book in his hand, said with a tremulous voice: "I have come to say good-by; I have read all this book—every word from the first sentence—'The Lord is in His holy temple,' to the last verse of the Hymns: and if I thought you could ever get another, I would ask you to give me this. Often I cannot get to meeting, and when I want to pray, cannot say all just as I wish to, and this book says it all—everything I want, and I would rather have it than anything else in the world; but I would not deprive you." I gave it to him.—*Selected.*

A Norwegian Judgment.

A dog who had been run over by a carriage crawled to the door of a tanner in the town of Aho; the man's son, a boy fifteen years of age, first stoned and then poured a vessel of boiling water upon the suffering animal.

This act was witnessed by one of the magistrates, and the cruel lad was condemned by the Board of Magistrates to the following punishment: He was conducted to the place of execution by an officer of justice, who read to him this sentence:

"Inhuman young man, because you did not assist an animal who implored your aid by its cries, and who derives being from the same God who gave you life; because you added to the torture of the agonized beast and cruelly murdered it, the Council of the City have sentenced you to wear on your breast the name you deserve, and to receive fifty stripes from the executioner."

Were such examples made in your courts of juvenile cruelty, we should have fewer cases of savage wife-beating, and of the daily conflicts of brutalized men, such as occupy the time of our magistrates and fill our police reports.

A Pleasant Voice.

There is no power of love so hard to get and keep as a kind voice. A kind hand is deaf and dumb. It may be rough in flesh and blood, yet do the work of a soft heart, and do it with a soft touch. But there is no one thing that love so much needs as a sweet voice to tell what it means

and feels, and it is hard to get and keep it in the right tone. One must start in youth and be on the watch night and day, at work, at play, to get and keep a voice that shall speak at all times the thought of a kind heart. I would say to all the boys and girls: "Use a kind voice at home." Watch it day by day as a pearl of great price, for it will be worth to you in days to come more than the best pearls hid in the sea. A kind voice is a lark's song to hearth and home. It is to the heart what light is to the eye.

Heart worship.

In a certain congregation, may be seen regularly an aged man silently following the course of the service, kneeling in prayer, standing in praise, and sitting patiently through the sometimes lengthy sermon; yet all the while there is visible on his countenance that pathetic, passive calm, indicating a deafness that is all but total.

"Do you not find Church-going very uninteresting, now?" asked a friend, recently.

"Yes, answered the old man, 'I cannot deny that I do weary sometimes when the service is long; but I go for three reasons: first, I can at least honor God with my presence in His House; second, I can worship Him in spirit, if in silence; third, every Church-goer if regular and faithful may influence some one who is less so.'"

What a lesson for those who offer God a grudging, reluctant, and irregular attendance at His House, and go home perhaps grumbling over a sermon less interesting than usual, or a service not altogether up to the mark.

Well, undoubtedly, "the Lord knoweth them that are His," and how justly, therefore, will He discriminate between the true and the counterfeit worshippers that assemble continually in His House of Prayer.

Tempted by Degrees.

John Newton says; "Satan seldom comes to a Christian with great temptations, or with a temptation to commit a great sin. You bring a green log and a candle together, and they are very safe neighbours, but bring a few shavings and set them alight, and then bring a few small sticks and let them take fire, and the log be in the midst of them, and you will soon get rid of your log." And so it is with little sins. You will be startled with the idea of committing a great sin, and so the devil brings you a little temptation, and leaves you to indulge yourself. There is no great harm in this; "no great peril in that;" and so by these little chips we are first easily lighted up, and at last the green log is burned. Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.

Who is the Best Man.

All useful work is honorable. The best life is that in which the powers of mind and body are most beneficently employed: an indolent life, whether passed in poverty or wealth, is a degraded and degrading life. No man can serve God by any other means than by serving his fellow-men. We do not disparage the church or the worship of God, in public or private places, but he is the truest and most devout worshiper who goes about the practical duties of life in the right spirit, feeling that he is responsible for the use he makes of his time, talents, strength and opportunities. The man who, according to his ability, does the most to promote the welfare of his fellow-men, be he scavenger or statesman, hod-carrier or preacher of the gospel, is the best man on earth. The dignity of labour is not dependant on the sphere of one's activities so much as on the spirit of the worker and the nearness of his approach to his highest possibilities of usefulness. A good cobbler is a more dignified and honorable worker than the man who, having no capacity for intellectual pursuits, scorns to toil for a livelihood, and wastes his life in the substratum of a profession.

—God is limited to no place. He is also excluded from none. He is in all places, and in the least of his creatures, in the petal of the flowers, in a blade of grass; and yet he is in no place. Nowhere, comprehensively and exclusively; everywhere, because everywhere he is creating and upholding everything.—*Luther.*