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DECENCY AND ORDER

IN

The Worship of the Sanctuary.

A S E R M O N

PREACHED IN

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, COLLINGWOOD,

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY, 1872,

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

By the REV. STEPHEN LETT, LL. D.,

RECTOR, RURAL DEAN OF WEST SIMCOE.

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OF CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

WHEN to the House of God ye come, a prayer in secret say,
On bended knee, His grace implore, for thus 'tis meet to pray.
Leave at the door your weekly cares, GOD loves the pure in heart ;
To those who wholly look to HIM, HE will true grace impart :
Aloud, but humbly, answer make, as Common Prayer directs ;
He who sits silent or asleep, the way of life neglects.
In standing posture give your alms, and standing sing GOD's Praise ;
Be not afraid to lift your voice, the gladsome hymns to raise.
Bow at the Holy name which GOD in our poor nature bore,
And silently HIS blessing ask, ere that ye seek the door.
Thus ever use the House of GOD, in prayer and joyful praise ;
He best will pass the coming week, who these few rules obeys.

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A SERMON.

I COR. XIV. 40.

"Let all things be done decently, and in order."

SUCH is the general and comprehensive direction, which the great Apostle to the Gentiles gave, in writing, to the Church at Corinth. It appears that, when after a sojourn of some six months, when the Apostle had departed from them, a certain false teacher had arrived in their midst, who introduced grievous errors in doctrine, and mal-practices in discipline. Under these circumstances the Church Authorities wrote a letter to the Apostle consulting him upon the various topics at issue. In reply St. Paul sharply rebuked the false teacher, he entered at considerable length on some of the topics on which he had been consulted; giving his judgment as to the discipline of the Church, and the ministrations of the Sanctuary—other points he passed over altogether, for the present; saying "the rest will I set in order when I come."—But meanwhile he gives them this general rule, "Let all things be done decently and in order."

This direction of the inspired Paul ought to be the great principle on which we should ever act, in all the ordinary affairs of every-day life, but more especially in those matters, to which it was originally applied, viz.: the conduct of the services of the Church.—And I have selected it as a text to-day because I wish to impress upon your minds that due decorum and order, which should be observed in the celebration of Divine Worship, and I mean to explain to you, as briefly as may be consistent with clearness, some improvements which have lately been introduced into our service. That some improvements and reforms are required in the services of the Church, I will quote the words of the Rev. J. C. Ryle, a man who is looked up to by all the

extreme low Church party in England as their leader, but who is nevertheless equally respected by all. I heard that able and learned divine utter these words at the Nottingham Congress, and I quote them from the official Report:—

“Our beloved Church does not get the full benefit of its numbers and position, for want of reforms and sensible adaptations to the advanced requirements of the times. It persists in wearing the old clothes which were made for our grandfathers 200 years ago, and is consequently cramped and hampered when it takes the field.” “Let her infuse fresh blood and vigour into her machinery, and show the world that she is elastic and not cast-iron, and can meet the times; then will she renew her youth like the eagle, and not be ashamed when she speaks with her enemies in the gate.” [Doubtless it was this very sentiment which has wrought the many improvements—undoubted improvements—which we have witnessed during the past few years. The wretched old Metrical (?) Psalmody of Tate and Brady has retired before the Evangelical and truly poetic as well as Scriptural “Hymns, ancient and modern,” The New Lectionary for the first time used on the first day of January last, has superseded that which had been in use for three hundred years; and those who watch Church movements view with amazement, if not with somewhat of alarm, the sweeping changes proposed to be introduced by the Archbishop of Canterbury.] I regret however that I am obliged to make these explanations not on the loving invitation of whole-souled church-members, but in refutation of the false and slanderous gossip and chit-chat which has occupied certain ignorant and wicked detractors and afforded food to their ill-constituted minds, during the past week, persons who have even attempted to parade their supposed grievances before the public, and to have their aspersions against their Pastor inserted in the public press of our town with the secret stab of the “anonymous correspondent.” I am glad however to find that the conductors of our newspapers had too much self-respect to allow their columns to be prostituted to such an unworthy purpose.^a I am always, not only too ready, but too happy, to explain to any member of my flock or to any inquiring soul to whatever denomination he may belong, any difficulties, which may arise in his or her mind respecting either doctrine or discipline.

As to the first point.—“The congregation standing while the offertory is being made.” First of all, no one is obliged to stand and, as a matter of fact, some one or two continue sitting. 'Tis very true that I have expressed myself as desirous that the congregation should stand at that time, not merely because it is the all-but universal practice in our dear mother Church in England, but because it is only decent, when we present our offerings to the Giver of all good, that we should do so in a reverential and respectful manner. Would you, I ask, present a tribute to your earthly monarch carelessly lolling in your chair; and is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords to be treated with less respect? It is an essential part of Divine Worship to make an offering of your worldly substance as well of your souls and your bodies.—“Ye shall not come before the Lord empty” is the unrepealed order of the Almighty.—Those who in the lazy position of lolling pass the plate with an excusing nod, or who, desirous of saving their decency, put on the plate the three or five cent bit, an acknowledgment to God, for food, health, clothes, house, family, and all the blessings of this life for the past week, can have but a small appreciation of the claim which He has upon us, Who hath given us all things richly to enjoy. Read the history of the early church in the Acts; those, who brought their offerings, laid them reverently at the Apostles' feet, and when a false-hearted man, and his equally false-hearted wife, would deceive the Church, the estimate of the offertory service is well expressed in the words “thou has not lied unto men but unto God.” The offertory was not made to man, but to God.^b

A second cause for grievance is, that I have erected a Confessional and that I have a newly-formed choir of boys; and, after some occult and mysterious rites, we all walk into church in solemn procession, and that I purpose robing the choiristers in surplices. This you will say perhaps is somewhat of an exaggeration, and putting the case too strong, but such has been the assertion made. Now as the facts,—I found our Choir needed replenishing and I adopted an idea, broached by my worthy young friend who filled my place during my temporary absence, that it would be well to avail ourselves of the services of some of the boys of the congregation for this purpose. But my experience in this matter has been

that, at first at all events, boys should be under the immediate eye of their elders, for we all know that a devotional spirit is not, as a rule, the spirit of a fine healthy lad in all the buoyancy of youth; having therefore enlisted a few boys as choristers, I proceeded to provide seats for them in front of the choir, so as to be under my own supervision; and, in order that they might be present at the commencement of Divine Service, and also be imbued with a proper spirit when in the Sanctuary, I deemed it most desirable, nay absolutely necessary, that they should come to the Vestry and join me in prayer (and here I may say that my practice has always been to offer a private prayer in the vestry, before entering the church) I say I considered that it would do much to the solemnization of their minds, as well as bring a blessing to their young hearts to offer up, before they entered the Church, such a prayer as this:—"O, Almighty God, grant that the words we are about to repeat with our lips, we may feel in our hearts, and practise in our lives." And so far, I have not been mistaken in my anticipations, for I bear them record that their demeanour has been most reverential. Of course God only can see the heart, but as far as the outward behaviour is concerned, that has been most satisfactory; and, after service, before leaving God's House, we have another prayer, of similar import.

As to the surplice question, surely it would be well to adopt the sentiment "that we should not cry out till we are hurt." I have not invested the choristers in snowy garments, emblematic of the hearts of all who serve God in His Sanctuary, they have not, like Samuel of old, been girded with the linen ephod when they minister before the Lord; I have refrained from doing this, because the accommodation was so limited, and a surpliced choir would be, perhaps, out of place in our contracted little church.

To you, the members of the choir, and more especially to you, my Dear Boys, I would say, remember you are doing Angels' work, you have entered on a high and holy service; ever consider it your highest privilege to do all you can for the honour of God, more especially in the service of His holy Church. Some will try by the shafts of ridicule to turn you from the path of your duty and privilege, heed them not, they are Satan's agents, doing Satan's work, they

would prevent you obeying the injunction of the sweet Psalmist of Israel "Young men and maidens, old men and children, praise the name of the Lord." Disturbers are they, hinderers of God's word, Christians in name perhaps, but only in name, for they are the troublers of our Israel.

But alas! that there should be need of a special choir in our church! Why should not the whole congregation be a choir? and with one heart, one soul, so also with one voice sing the praises of God, "lustily and with a good courage?" But what is the fact? Only a very few comply with the directions of Scripture and of the Church in the offices of Praise,—and as to the responding, although you as a congregation, compare favourably with others, yet are you far short of what you ought to be. The general confession is "said after me" by a very few, by, perhaps, half a dozen, a few others mumble some uncertain sounds, while the majority of the congregation are mute,—and the same with the rest of all the service. As to the "Amens," they are very few indeed. It must be in the minds of many, what an agitation arose in the Parish some three years ago when the choir chanted the "Amens," because the people would not repeat them. Well, at the solicitation of a few weak-minded parishoners, that practice was abandoned, and how melancholy has been the result! Instead of a full, hearty "Amen" sung by the choir; in which many joined, we have now one or two mutters, and sometimes not even so many; surely I have spoken to you on this point once and again, but all to little or no effect. A parishoner has told me that, some weeks ago, he took his place in the lower part of the church and responded in his ordinary voice, that all around him at once gave him a broad stare, as though he had committed some grave offence against decorum and propriety. Ah, my good people, has this thought never occurred to you—how ready you are to carp, to take exception at what you may be pleased to consider the fault of your minister, and how blind you are to your own short comings? In my private devotions, a few mornings since, I read this text, "and He was casting out a devil, and it was dumb." Come down, O Blessed Saviour, and now perform a similar miracle of grace among this people.

"O Lord, open Thou our lips."
 "And our mouth shall shew forth Thy praise."

Suppose the scene changed, and, Oh, that it were changed! from the Church on earth, militant, to the Church in Heaven, triumphant. Suppose that one of those glorious beings, who surround the throne of the Omnipotent, were to invite his fellows to sing a glorious Hallelujah to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, suppose you that then even one of the Redeemed and Saved Church would remain mute and apathetic, while the Redeemer's love was being chanted!

Another alleged cause for dissatisfaction is, like the former, the result of ignorance.—“Bowling at the sacred name.” On this subject I do not *now* speak for the first time. Are these objectors aware that this is in accordance with scripture, “wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name that is above every name, that at the name of JESUS every knee should bow?” Are these objectors aware that it is in accordance also with the Canons of our Church? In the 18th Canon we find this direction, “Likewise, when in time of Divine Service, the Lord Jesus shall be mentioned, due and lowly reverence shall be done by all persons present, as it hath been accustomed; testifying by these outward ceremonies and gestures, their inward humility, Christian resolution, and due acknowledgment that the Lord Jesus Christ, the true and eternal Son of God, is the only Saviour of the world, in whom alone all the mercies, graces, and promises of God to mankind for this life, and the life to come, are fully and wholly comprised.” So that the changes and innovations are not to be charged on those who bow, whenever the sacred name occurs, but on those who do not. *They* are those, who are changing the customs and invading the institutions of our forefathers, who after all, perhaps, were a little wiser than their descendants. I am often grieved to notice the growing neglect of this most seemly and reverential observance. One might naturally expect that, in days when infidelity rears its brazen front with unparalleled impudence, when blasphemers abound and scoffers walk on every side, the people of God would wax more zealous, and become more tenacious of every badge distinguishing them as worshippers of an insulted Lord. New light, however, seems to have broken in upon some of them, a light which I do not believe to have come from heaven, whencesoever else it came from, teaching

them that now, is the time to relax in these points,—the season to rob the Lord of that outward demonstration of respect which his enemies delight to see withdrawn from Him. “It is too Popish,” say these silly objectors. For my part, I have never, but once in boyhood, been at service in a Roman Catholic place of Worship, and therefore am unable to say what the custom is there; these objectors seem to be more familiar with the service of the Mass than I am.—But this custom is not borrowed from Rome; it was a universal custom in the Church from the beginning. But, even were it borrowed from Romanism, are we, therefore, to reject it? Then indeed ours would be but a sorry skeleton of a religion. Away go the Creeds! Away goes the Lord’s Prayer!! Away goes the whole of the blessed Bible!!! Romanism is Christianity, as I conceive, added to, and corrupted by man’s device. Our Religion, the Religion of the Reformed Church of England, is Christianity, rescued and reformed, after the most perfect form of the Church in her first and purest days, and in strict accordance with Holy Scripture. Our beautiful Liturgy is no other than the Romish Prayer Book, purged of all, that the fond inventions of man had introduced, to deface a pure worship. Those who refuse to bow, and who stiffen the neck and toss back the head, when the sacred name is pronounced, shew how little regard they pay either to the positive command of Scripture or the express direction of their Church.

Our Rulric enjoins kneeling during the supplicatory portions of the service; and, fast and fast are many in our congregations departing from this command. I do not suppose that there are a dozen persons in this church who kneel; and yet who will be bold enough to assert that the exercise of kneeling is not enjoined in the Testaments, both Old and New, enforced by the example of our Blessed Redeemer himself and his Holy Apostles. I do not know, because I have never tried, and I trust in God that I never shall be tempted to try, what degree of devotional feeling accompanies a sitting posture during the worship of my Heavenly Father, but I much question the advantages of such a comfortable and sleep-inviting demeanour. While we remain in the body we cannot discover the intimate connection, subsisting between the outward act and the inward thought; but it does appear to me an odd way of obeying the Apostolic exhortation to “glorify God in your body

and in your spirit, which are God's," to attempt such a disjunction of mind and matter just where we are admonished specially to join them in the service and Worship of God. To deny or to curtail the homage of the body, in order to exalt that of the soul, is going against universal experience and against the tenor of His injunction, Who knew what is in man better than man himself knows it. To me I confess that it is a very delightful moment of realization, in regard to the privilege of church membership and the Communion of Saints, when Brethren and Sisters-in-the-Lord, do outward homage to HIM, who in taking their nature upon HIM never ceased to be "God over all, Blessed for ever." It is surely fitting and meet that, that flesh which He deigned to take into connection with Deity, should with lowly and external reverence, hail Him as God manifest in the flesh. JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD, are words of mighty and immeasurable import! The Saviour, the Anointed, our Anointed, our God, the Captain of our Salvation, the Head of His body the Church, which body we are, it was He Who wore our form, bore our griefs, carried our sorrows, Who walked our earth, a persecuted and afflicted man, Who hung upon the cross for our sins, descended into the grave, that it might become to us the gate of life, and now in heights of eternal glory visits our temple and harkens to our prayers. Let those, who can, deny Him this poor tribute of grateful reverence, but, so long as I have power to use a muscle, I will bow, in deep and willing adoration, to the glorious and blessed name of JESUS CHRIST, MY LORD.

Then again exception is taken against me because some of the congregation make a reverence at the "Gloria:" all minds are not constituted alike; some are more devotional and reverential than others, while perhaps each is equally loving, and it may be, equally devout; but why interfere with another's liberty? The practice of bowing on such occasions is a very ancient, and at the same time a beautiful custom, and once was a universal rule of Worshippers. Does it not seem correct and proper that man below should make a reverence at words of such import and such deep devotion, especially as we read in the Apocalyptic vision, that the Heavenly Inhabitants veil their faces and fall down before Him that sitteth upon the throne, and cast their crowns

at His feet as they chant the triumphal hymn, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which is and was and is to come," words of most holy import and deep devotion? Instead of taking exceptions against their Brethren and Sisters for the exhibition of too much reverence, would it not be better that these objectors should shew somewhat more devotion themselves. I see many coming into God's House in the most irreverent manner, flinging themselves into their seat as though they were in a Play House or a Concert Room, their eyes wandering about, and never offering a secret prayer that "the words of their mouth and the meditations of their hearts may be acceptable in the sight of the Lord, their Strength, and their Redeemer."

My Brethren, Dearly Beloved in the Lord, however arrogantly a few (and I believe a very few) may assume to themselves the position of sitting in judgment on their minister, and however, assiduously they may go round the parish, endeavouring to generate an ill-feeling against him, yet am I conscious to myself, in the presence of my Heavenly Master, of doing my duty faithfully, though it may be feebly, not withholding from you the whole counsel of God, pressing on you the the great Salvation purchased by our adorable Redeemer on Calvary's Hill; and I will yield to none in honestly urging upon you, with every energy which God has given me, the blessed Evangelical Doctrines of our beloved Church, a moon which has no light of her own, but derives all her brilliancy and all her splendour from the glorious Sun of Righteousness.

Soundness of Doctrine is not incompatible with decency and order of ritual.

Threats have been used that if the Boys' Choir, to which I hope to have large additions, and which, by God's blessing, I mean to encourage by every possible means in my power, in order that our Service may be made more worthy of Him Whom we worship; Threats I say are used that, if the Boys' Choir be continued, there will be a considerable defection from the Church. I do not believe that any thing of the kind will occur, all I can say is that any who apostatize, for such a pretended cause, never were true sons or daughters of the Church. The defection of such will be little if any loss.

Again, another threat has been held out, that the screws of the Voluntary System will be applied and that if I desire to continue my ministrations in the parish, I must not expect any income from the people. This has been used by one at present before me, one whose name I have never seen as a contributor to any Church object; but let me tell that individual, that such a threat has no terror for me, for, though starvation should threaten me and mine, yet would I pursue that course, which the Holy Spirit tells me I should adopt. But neither do I fear this threat either, a threat which manly feeling should have smothered as soon as it was conceived.

But after all, there is much encouragement in this miserable opposition, the result of ignorance in the case of some, of ignorance and wickedness in the case of others. An opposition to which, perhaps, I give more prominence than it deserves, by noticing it in the least degree. It shows me that I am doing good work. Never in the history of the Church, from the day that Satan beguiled our first Mother from her allegiance down to the latest period in the Church's history, never did the Lord put it into the heart of any of His servants to be more earnest, more zealous, more decided in His cause and for His glory and for the salvation of souls but Satan also puts it into the hearts of his agents to counteract if possible, and by any means to check the blessed work of labor and love. Even Paul himself was not without this trial, "Alexander the copper-smith hath done me much harm, the Lord reward him according to his work." After a ministry extending over thirty years I have now for the first time to refer to myself from the pulpit. If, however, these false aspersions, so assiduously propagated, affected only myself, personally, I would have passed them by as "the idle wind which I regard not," but when they are aimed at the peace of the church, whose minister I am, then I felt that it was my duty, however painful, in accordance with the advice of a valued friend, to notice them and to explain the principle on which I acted in these points which have so agitated, not the church-going portion of the congregation, but a few who seldom are seen within the Sanctuary walls. I pray God that He will be pleased to turn their hearts and to give them a large portion of that humility which was so characteristic of our Blessed Master. Far more congenial would it have been to me to have taken, as I at first intended, the

subject of this day's sermon from the first Lesson, and to have enlarged on the bright side of the prophecy, "the Seed of the Woman shall bruise the Serpent's head," instead of being obliged to take up the darker side "It shall bruise thy head"

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May the Lord pour into all our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace of all ~~wishes~~ Amen.

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NOTES.

a The following article appeared in the *Collingwood Enterprise*, its February.

"PLAYING AT POPERY."—As a "Churchman but not a Papist," neglected to send us his real name, we must decline to insert his communication, bearing the above title. We are asked to "pronounce upon" the "innovations" that have been recently made at the English Church, in this town. We decline to do so, because it is not ours, but the business of the congregation, to express themselves upon any matter which they may consider affects the interests of their church. We may state, however, that the introduction of a boy-choir, with or without surplices, is not necessarily an indication of High Churchism.

b I am indebted to the Rev. John Carry, B.D., for the following information, apposite to this subject.

The Offertory Service in the Primitive Church was very different from the general irreverence of the present day. The Roman Emperors, after the Empire had become Christian, did not sit on their thrones in the Church, and drop their offerings into a dish presented to them. It was granted to them as a special favor to be allowed to rise from their superb throne, walk into the Chancel, and lay their gift on the Altar. The learned Bingham, discoursing of the uses of the Chancel in the Primitive Church, says: (Antiqq Bk. viii. c. vi. Sect. 7) "St. Ambrose would not permit the Emperor Theodosius himself to communicate in this part, but obliged him to retire as soon as he had made his oblation at the Altar, which custom continued for some time after, as appears from what Theodosius Junior says of himself in the Acts of the Council of Ephesus, that he only went up to the Altar to make his oblation, and having done that, retired again to the Exterior Court or *atrium* of the people. And so we find it decreed, correspondent to this practice, in the Council of Trullo, That no lay-man whatsoever should come unto the altar-part, except only the Emperor, when he had made his oblation to the Creator, according to ancient custom."

c In my early school days this was a universal practice. I well remember the entire class making a reverence when the line in Alvary's Prosody occurred—"In recto ac patric, et venerandum nomen IESU." When I went to my first curacy, an occurrence took place

which showed me the practical utility of this respectful act. An old half-pay was conversing with some other gentleman, and swore by the sacred name; I rose up my hat, and made an inclination of my head. My military friend immediately attacked me, somewhat rudely, asking me if I intended to insult him. I replied, "Not by any means, but I always made a bow whenever I heard that name." I then walked away. When next I met this gentleman, he told me that "he had been dwelling on the gentle rebuke I gave him; he thanked me for so doing, and said he would endeavour to break himself of so useless and, unquestionably, so wicked a habit."