

# THE PRESBYTERIAN QUARTERLY.

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## I. THE CONSTITUTION OF THE SEMINARY CURRICULUM.<sup>1</sup>

I AM disposed to look upon the subject the discussion of which I have been asked to open, as a practical rather than as a purely theoretical one. One result of this mode of looking at it will be that we shall approach it from the point of view of our existing institutions, and ask, not what is the ideal curriculum for theological study, but what is the ideal and what the practicable curriculum for such institutions as our theological seminaries actually are.

The fundamental facts here, I take it, are three.

(1), Our theological seminaries are not the theological departments of universities, but training schools for the Christian ministry. That is to say, the object they set before themselves is fundamentally a practical one. They do not exist primarily in order to advance theological learning, but in order to impart theological instruction; their first object is not investigation, but communication; and they call their students to them, not that these may explore the unknown, but that they may learn the known in the sphere of theological truth. They do not exist primarily, again, in order to place in reach of all who may be interested in theological thought facilities for acquiring information concerning whatever department of theological learning each inquirer may for the moment desire to give his attention to; but in order that they may provide for a select body of young men, who

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<sup>1</sup> A paper read before the "General Association of the Professors of the Theological Seminaries of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America," June 3, 1896.

## V. CHRISTIAN GIVING IN THE SANCTUARY SERVICE.<sup>1</sup>

ONCE every year, on the day of atonement, from the Samaritan altar on the summit of Mount Gerizim, the smoke of the burnt offering ascends and mingles with the clouds. In no other place for the past eighteen hundred years has such a sight been witnessed. Elsewhere that altar fire has gone out forever. We, however, are so familiar with that scene in the history of the church of God before the Christian era, that although all the symbolic teaching and pointing of the altar service has ended in its actual fulfilment, it still influences our judgment. We are affected to-day in our sense of the proprieties of God's house by the sacrificial blood, and fire, and smoke, and their relation to the ancient worship. The use of the word "sacrifice" in our English Bible, when describing the offerings on the altar, sensibly controls thought and shapes our estimate of the proper thing. It has taken away the simple idea of an offering, and led the mind to conceive only of something put upon the altar, and thereby made sacred.

The word "sacrifice," derived from the Latin and meaning something made sacred, and implying dedication upon an altar, fails to be an equivalent of the Hebrew in the Old, or the Greek in the New Testament, when speaking of an offering. The thing offered ceremonially, with the English word "sacrifice" describing it, has led the religious mind to think of the life poured out and the body consumed on an altar as the only offering belonging to the services of God's worship, and that form of offering having passed away, nothing appeals to us in its place as belonging to or being an act of worship.

To give money is one thing, but to give money in God's house and as a part of divine worship is another thing. The ceremo-

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<sup>1</sup> A paper read by Ruling Elder Ralph E. Prime at the Glasgow General Council of the Pan-Presbyterian Alliance, June, 1896.

nial offering of common money, which buys alike the good and bad, seems unseemly to the person who feels affectionately and tenderly, but thinks not deeply.

Although from the earliest times, as was true of the time of St. Paul, collections were made among Christians for the saints, presumptively the poor, they seem at some period in very early times to have come to be regarded as gifts only to the saints, and not as gifts to God. There may have been others, but the only contributions in apostolic times of which we read in Scripture were the contributions for the saints. How these offerings were made, or whether given as alms, or in some cases as distribution of goods held in common, as some have written, is not stated. Down through the post-apostolic times the contributions among the Christians continued, but almost always, if not in every instance, the gift was strictly for the poor. At some time, if not from the very beginning, these offerings were taken in the church service. But whether recognized at all after apostolic times as a gift to God, it will be hard to prove until we come to the time of Edward VI. of England. Yet it is claimed that at one time in France, as early as A. D. 700, a gift for the ransom of the soul in lands or goods or money was to be granted by deed or epistle, executed in the presence of witnesses, and the writing laid upon the altar. Note, the thing or the money was not present, nor does the idea of worship in this act appear. The rubrics of the first prayer book of Edward VI. provide for collections for the poor to be taken, giving special direction for a collection in the time of service into *the poor man's boxes*, but no word in prayer or address recognized the fact that the gift was an act of worship. In the second prayer book of Edward VI., put forth in 1552, the fifth year of his reign, the offering being still given for the poor only, in the prayer commonly called the prayer for the church militant, for the first time in the English liturgy the offering is regarded as alms to God.

We do not hesitate to claim that the Christian act of contributing to the relief of the poor saints no doubt was also the custom of all Christians, and that the custom was continued with the Reformers and in the Reformed churches; but the collection among

Christians seems with them, also, to have been limited to the gifts to the poor, and to be no part of divine service. Whether violent distaste for the papacy, and the determination not to do anything the papists did, had any influence in crystallizing sentiment in the direction which it took in the Reformed churches, cannot be certainly averred at this distant time, but the fact remains that though the clause referred to was introduced in the second prayer book of Edward VI. and into the prayer for the church militant, by which the gifts to the poor are recognized as alms offered to God, it was not followed in the Reformed churches, and the collection was put into such relations that it did not become a part of the public divine service at all.

Besides the general aversion to any imitation of anything papistic, or even prelatie or episcopal, look as we will upon the quality of the thing given, in the Reformed churches the act itself as connected with the worship in the sanctuary was regarded as disturbing the service, distracting to the mind, turning the worshipper from sacred things, and from thoughts and meditation appropriate to the service, the place, and the occasion, and from the very idea of worship.

Early in the history of the churches of the Reformation, the custom obtained in some places of collecting money at stated or set times among God's people, and when gathered in the sanctuary at divine service those gifts were for the poor, and we read in *Pardovan's Collections*, that by an act of Assembly of the Church of Scotland, on the eleventh of August, 1648, concerning such a practice, it was ordered in these words: "Collections for the poor in the time of divine service (which is practiced in some churches abroad) are discharged as being the very great and unseemly disturbance thereof. And kirk sessions are ordained to appoint some other way for receiving these collections." And the book further says: "The method now ordained taken is this; the elders or deacons do collect at the church door from the people as they enter in, or else from them when within the church, immediately before pronouncing the blessing, and after divine service is ended." In another place in *Pardovan*, is found language which is still retained in many a directory of worship: "Nothing is to be at-

tempted in the worship of God but what has been prescribed in the Holy Scripture.”

Before the act of the Assembly of the Church of Scotland quoted from Pardovan, and in 1645, an edition of the *Directory for Worship* was issued in London “for the three kingdoms,” in which it is said: “The collection for the poor is to be so ordered that no part of the publique worship is thereby hindered.” This identical language found way into the *Directory for Worship* as used in the American churches, and is found in the edition of that book published in 1745, and in the edition of 1789 its place in or after the communion service is stated to be after the prayer which follows the reception of the sacrament.

However we may regard the early rule, which provides only for a collection for the poor, and specifies the time and place of the collection and that it must not disturb or hinder divine service, and which makes a dividing-line between the ending of divine service and the pronouncing of the benediction, yet many of us will recollect that in the American churches, thirty or more years ago, the time immediately before the blessing, or, perhaps, before the last exercise of praise, was the time for all the collections, though probably no one of the worshippers in those times ever consciously drew the line, or thought that the divine services ended until the blessing was pronounced.

*The Directory for Worship in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, as has been stated, in 1789, or before that date, provided that, upon the celebration of the Lord’s supper, after the final prayer, a collection for the poor and to defray expenses of the elements may be made, or at such other time as may seem meet to the eldership. This was before the singing of the final hymn, according to the actual practice. We cannot fail to observe that the great difficulty must have been that to our Scottish and American ancestors the act of Christian giving was not regarded as giving to God. They did not see beyond the immediate purpose for which the money was gathered. Their eyes never went beyond the recipient himself. Hence, they did not, and reasonably could not, regard the act as a gift to God, or as an act of worship. We have seen how it was enjoined in those

times that nothing should be attempted in the worship of God but what has been prescribed in the Holy Scriptures; but evidently no man, or body of men—at any rate, in our Reformed churches—ever set about to search out specially if the giving of our money as believers and as Christians, or Christian giving, was, in fact, giving to God, or if such an act was an act of worship.

But Christian giving in the sanctuary of things of intrinsic value, as an act of worship and as a part of divine service, has scriptural authority.

In later and quite recent times, the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America has taken, as we believe, the first step in the direction of recognizing this fact, and for the reasons, that the subject has received new examination and attention in the light of new Christian developments; that there is a great call upon Christians of this age to give, and to give systematically and proportionately instead of by fitful, impulsive acts; that the objects to which Christians, as such, have in this century been taught to expend their gifts have been greatly multiplied. That church, having for several years considered the subject by its committees, in the year 1885 adopted the new statement, that "The worship of God by offerings is in harmony with the whole spirit of Scripture worship."

Is this founded on the truth as we read it? Notwithstanding all prejudices and deliverances and customs, all sounding a protest against the collection in the public worship of the sanctuary, when we examine the Scriptures we find that, from the earliest time, according to the custom of the Jewish people, gifts to God of other things than those offered upon an altar were commended and invited. The burnt offering passed away, but the free-will offering always had, and always will have, its place. The altar was not within the holy of holies, nor was the treasury there; but there were cast into the treasury offerings to God by his loving people in all ages, acceptable to him, invited by him, and devoted to him.

The psalmist connects the glory of God, and that, too, in the sanctuary, with an offering in his courts: "Give unto the Lord the glory due to his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts." We have never read that the gift of the gold, frankincense, and

myrrh, which the three kings of the Orient laid at the feet of the infant Redeemer, were rejected, nor that the testimony of the love and the faith of the givers was ever questioned because they were not burnt offerings, or because they were intrinsically valuable instead of being ceremonially valuable. Nor has it ever been suggested that that particular act of giving was other than an act of worship. Though none of us be a "king of Orient," the same act by one of us would have all of the qualities which that act had. The same act of faith by different persons cannot have different qualities.

A study of this subject in the Scriptures will disclose wonderful relations between worship and the collection. But for the arbitrary division into chapters, we should see how Paul, moved by the Holy Spirit, wrote to the Corinthians, in the same message, about the things ordinarily esteemed to be spiritual and also about the collection for the saints, without separation of subject from subject, as to quality and importance. Note his clear words: They are of resurrection, of glory, of victory over the grave, of heaven and immortality, of encouragement to steadfastness, of abounding in the work of the Lord, and last, but not least, of the collection for the saints. The whole message to his mind is equally the message of the Holy Spirit; all equally the word of God; and the time of the gift is the first day of the week, the Sabbath-day, the day of worship, the day of the gathering in the sanctuary. And these things being so, then the act of giving our money ought to be an act of worship, and an offering which becometh the courts of the Lord's house.

Giving is a natural act of worship. True, sincere worship always implies love. We cannot agree that placation of an evil spirit, which arouses apprehension or fear, is properly called worship. But our God is love, and if we love God we shall be found doing those things which the human heart prompts, and the human hand does, not only consciously as a testimony of that love, but also spontaneously. Though the act be intended, yet it will unconsciously come out of the desire of the heart. We all have about us those whom we love. They are in our homes. We are not content with words to assure of affection, but we anticipate

desire. Knowledge, not of a real want only, but of the slightest desire, materializes into a gift which is tangible testimony of love, a gift that fills and ends the desire, and changes thought from the thing wanted to the person of the giver. Words are very cheap. Assurance of affection by the testimony of uttered words costs very little, and words often are as ephemeral as their sound. But not so with the gift. It lasts; it reminds of the giver. Apply these thoughts to the gifts in the sanctuary. God does not need these things, but he has made us as we are, and he graciously permits and encourages the gifts we bring. Our natures are such as he has given, and our love for him is his own creation. That he takes delight in the gifts, the free-will offerings of those who profess their love of him, the whole Scripture testifies. We may, indeed, worship God with gifts, and by them fix our own thoughts upon him, the giver of all good.

Giving to God, to be an act of worship and to have place in the divine service of the sanctuary, should be a thanksgiving. To praise the Lord with a song which is thanksgiving, the Psalmist says, shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs. Paul wrote that the gifts of the Corinthians not only supplied the wants of the saints, but were abundant also by many thanksgivings.

To be a gift to God, and to have a place in our divine service as worship, it should be also a cheerful free-will offering. Listen to these inspired words: "He which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly, and he that soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver." It is certainly out of harmony with the idea that giving can and ought to be a part of the exercises of public divine worship, to hear from the preacher words of pressure upon the people to give, so prevalent in some places, when the commendation of the Scripture is of the cheerful giver only.

In 1874 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America said, "All giving to our Lord's objects should be from spiritual motives and as an act of worship to almighty God, a grateful gift to our divine Redeemer and a



means of grace to our souls." He who begs from men for the Lord's cause always appeals to the meanest of motives. He must not in his appeal prefer the cause before him whose the cause is. He surely who is shamed into giving is not doing honor to God and is not in his act offering worship. He who gives grudgingly makes no gift at all. In the sum of the commandments we are taught to love the Lord our God with the mind as well as the heart. All needful intelligence to fill the mind with the facts of the need of the Lord's cause, and to convince that it is the Lord's cause, and to show how God will be honored by the gift, is, of course, reasonable, for we can never love a cause we know little about, and our hearts do not respond intelligently or usefully or safely to any cause which does not appeal to our minds so as to move our hearts. So far only may we appeal for gifts in the sanctuary. The worship of God by offerings can only be by the freewill offering. We must not beg. The ambassador of the King of kings cannot be a beggar. He stands before the people the representative of him who says, "Every beast of the forest is mine and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee, for the world is mine and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the most High. And call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Such a king needs nothing. To beg for him is to make little of his character and his relation to his stewards, whom we are.

Christian giving, further, must not be measured by its quantity, nor the gift of one be compared with the gift of another; but in each case the gift should be the best we have. It will never do to bring to God that which we have no need of ourselves. The gifts of the early Christians to the poor were not, as is often the case with us in these times, gifts of cast-off things, which we are ashamed to use ourselves. David refused to offer to God the gifts from others, and declares "neither will I offer to the Lord burnt offerings of that which costs me nothing." In the old Levitical law the burnt offering, the peace offering, the trespass

offering, the sin offering, was in each case required to be of that which was perfect, and without blemish, a type of the perfect sacrifice of the Christ. But not so the free-will offering, which, when not in payment of a vow, might even be a dismembered, deformed, blind, maimed, or broken animal, in fact, whatever the willing, thankful, worshipful heart had to give. So, also, the mite of the widow cast into the treasury, being her all, was more to God than all the gifts of the rich. In each case the gift testified love and thanks, and that is worship.

And as to the form of giving. It will be quite difficult to satisfy the tastes and consciences of all. Human tastes differ, and taste has its place in testing the things that ought to be in the church services. Our church happily clings to the simplicity which cannot offend for what it has, and can only be criticised for what it has not. A happy position.

There is no model in the Scripture for the order of church services. Was it not so left that changing tastes and changing circumstances and the suggestions of the new conditions of church work and life, and the sense of fitness of the Christian people of each suggestive period of church life, should be allowed to influence what shall be acknowledged as proper and helpful to us in the worship of God's house? We shall ever be conservative and plain, and, perhaps, to some, over plain and over cold in this matter. We have, however, the Scripture on our side. There was no biblical authority for the change from the simple garb of the fisherman's coat to the royal purple of the empire. No doubt, it was copied from the empire when the simple presbyter became a bishop and put on the purple of the throne. We shall not make the mistake of providing regalia for ministers, or any other such extreme of formal worship. But we may make the mistake of not coming up to our privilege and not dignifying as we may the free-will thank offerings in the house of God as an act of worship having a proper place in the divine service. Can this service of thanksgiving, this act of making a free-will offering, commended in the Scripture, be so treated and arranged, and given its place in the sanctuary service, as to lead the people to the true appreciation of it as their privilege?

One is most familiar with the ways of his own church, because there he stately worships. In the church which has honored me by naming me one of its delegates to this Council, the subject of the place in the Christian church services of such matters as free-will offerings of money, has had most serious and discriminating attention, as a result whereof its General Assembly in 1885 proposed an overture, which was adopted by the presbyteries in 1886, and which added to the *Directory for Worship* a complete chapter on the subject, called, "Of the Worship of God by Offerings." It provides that the service of bringing such offerings shall be performed as a solemn act of worship to almighty God; that the order as to the particular service, and its place in the service, is left with the session; that it should be made a separate and specific act of worship, to be preceded or followed by public prayer, invoking God's blessing upon the service and devoting the offerings to him.

The details of such a service must differ with every people and perhaps with the different occasions. In the church where I stately worship, the offerings of the people are gathered in the usual way, but by the young men of the church, from whom they are received by two of the elders, and while the young men and elders all stand before the people, the solemn act of devoting the gifts to God's work is done by public prayer. Such an order may be too much for some and too little for others. Each church congregation should so arrange for itself that the object shall be best attained of teaching that the gift is to God, that the same belongs as worship to the divine service of the sanctuary, and of receiving from the exercise the grace which ought to come from every act of worship of our God.

*New York.*

RALPH E. PRIME.