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REVIEW SECTION.

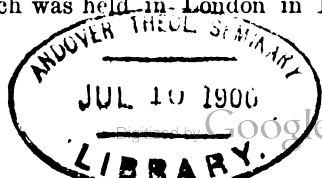
I.—THE ECUMENICAL MISSIONARY CONFERENCE OF 1900.

BY FRANK F. ELLINWOOD, D.D., LL.D., NEW YORK CITY, SECRETARY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS.

No other event in recent years has received a more universal verdict of "success" than the great convocation in New York during the last ten days of April, 1900. The most sanguine hopes of its projectors were more than fulfilled. Foreign delegates from all lands were surprised and delighted. The religious press was unanimous and enthusiastic, and the secular press, even including many papers from which only criticism and possible sneers might have been expected, joined in characterizing the conference as a great intellectual and moral phenomenon of the times. The general conference committee had for the last three years been planning—not without some fears and misgivings owing to the traditional belief that the city of New York is about the worst place for week-day religious gatherings. For, however favorable the particular environment may be for less worthy sensations, one can not forget that the religious and eleemosynary "anniversaries" of forty years ago had gradually declined and become extinct in the boasted metropolis of the nation. The executive committee and the program committee had spent many months, holding many laborious sessions and often of long duration. Other committees, particularly those of finance and hospitality, tho beginning their work somewhat later, had as the time approached put forth still more assiduous efforts, and the hospitality committee especially, with a large corps of clerks and volunteer helpers, were wellnigh overwhelmed with their complicated tasks.

It would be easy to point out many, many things in each of these departments which in the light of present experience might have been improved; but that so little criticism and almost invariable commendation should have appeared on all hands, no one would have dared to hope. Delegates from abroad expressed their enthusiastic admiration at the American "genius for organization."

The Mildway Conference which was held in London in 1878 was



perpetual inspiration in grasping all the world of pertinent facts, and the nobler processes of thought will take to them exhaustless and irrepressible wings and move spontaneously and joyfully along all systematic and logical lines, and so the man will make easy conquest of the world of truth and hold it at ready command.

Constructive study, constructive development, constructive training, are the need of the hour for all men in the schools of instruction, and most of all for the man who aims to become an effective preacher.

2d. There is a brief word that may help the preacher who feels conscious of failure in his preparatory work: it is never too late to begin for oneself the work of constructive study and training.

The ruin may not be wholly repaired, but something may yet be saved; perhaps the dead line may be pushed forward. Let the work of grasping things systematically and thoroughly be begun at once and prosecuted vigorously. The writer has realized the benefits of this method, and he has known others to profit by it. One of the ablest and most brilliant thinkers and preachers now living acquired his facility in mastering and handling great themes in the pulpit by mastering and reconstructing for the pulpit weekly some great work on some great subject. Such works are almost without number, along all lines, Biblical, theological, philosophical, poetical, ethical, practical. The attempt is worth the while of any earnest man.

If the schools and the preachers can be induced to consider this fundamental change of method, it will assuredly result in a sensible and speedy reduction in the present superabundance of poor preachers. The loud complaints, coming from so many quarters, that the average preacher is lacking in mental grip and in mental drill and furnishing, and incapable of handling the problems now pressing

for answers from the pulpit, will be silenced. The hearer will find his need for vital, quickening truth abundantly met, and for the ordinary man in the pulpit the dead-line will be pushed forward a score or more of years.

THE SERVICE OF PRAYER.

BY REV. R. Q. MALLARD, D.D., NEW ORLEANS, LA., EDITOR OF "THE SOUTHWESTERN PRESBYTERIAN," EX-MODERATOR OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH [SOUTH].

WHETHER free or restricted, extemporaneous or liturgical, there is among all denominations absolute uniformity in assigning joint prayer a large and prominent place in the devotions of the sanctuary. Indeed, in some it, with the sacraments, is given the chief position, and preaching relegated to comparative obscurity, the fact expressing itself in architecture, the altar occupying with its furniture the entire front end of the audience-room, and the pulpit hung to a side pillar, or on wheels (a fact), and rolled aside when not in use, so as not to obstruct the view.

We know no better definition of prayer in general than that of the Westminster Assembly of Divines: "Prayer is the offering up of our desires to God, for things agreeable to His will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of His mercies." As joint and public prayer, it is ordinarily prayer offered audibly by a leader, commonly an ambassador of Christ and in the house of God, with the silent or audible concurrence of the worshiping congregation, responding fully, or, as the New-Testament Church seems to have done, with closing collective and spoken Amen (1 Cor. xiv. 16).

As for the language of public prayer reason would dictate that, if not a mere charm, the congregation should be able to join silently or audibly, but intelligently, and it should therefore al-

ways be in the vernacular. The Psalms, which were many of them prayers, were chanted in tabernacle and temple worship in Hebrew while it was a living tongue. The Aaronic blessing was pronounced in the speech of the common people. Solomon's dedicatory prayer was understood by the multitude that thronged all the space around his platform of brass. Paul, altho treating of another essential part of divine worship, establishes the principle that intelligibility should characterize every part of it, when he says: "I thank my God that I speak with tongues more than ye all, yet in the church [ecclesia, assembly, for there were then no church edifices] I had rather speak five words with my understanding that my voice might teach others, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue" (1 Cor. iii. 14-18).

A second point demands larger consideration. Should public prayer be free or prescribed, with or without book, spoken or read?

There is nothing wrong as to principle in a liturgy. The use of a form must be admitted in the prayer-psalms, the Aaronic blessing and its successor the apostolical benediction, in the brief ritual prescribed to be used in the offering of the first-fruits (Deut. xxvi. 5), and in the Lord's Prayer. No conscientious scruples, therefore, should prevent one from joining in liturgical forms when chancing to attend such services in an evangelical church. The writer has on two occasions in former years used both gown and ritual in conducting services in a Huguenot Church. In this we contend for largest liberty, while at the same time decidedly convinced that free prayer is at once the most Scriptural, and for all the ends of worship the better, method.

To take our appeal to the Word, it is found that, besides the three or four liturgical forms alluded to above (and no one would limit an assembly to their exclusive use), there seems to be no Scripture for it, either in the

way of precept or example, but the contrary. No expositor, so far as we are aware, construes the language in which our Savior introduces the Lord's Prayer, "After the same manner also pray ye," as confining individual or church to the *ipissima verba* of this form, in all cases and circumstances. If this were the meaning we should be driven to the acceptance of the Roman Catholic doctrine of "intention," and would say so many *Pater Nosters* as penance for sin or petition for recovery from sickness, or as thanks for deliverance, or as prayer for an abundant harvest.

On the contrary, all the prayers recorded in the Bible, whether offered in closet, synagog, or temple, seem to have been the divinely guided but unpremeditated utterances of devout spirits and suggested by the passing circumstances of the hour. Abraham's famous intercession takes various shapes, in accordance with the different answers given. Even the Pharisee's prayer in the Temple received its local coloring from the presence of the downcast fellow worshiper, "or even as this publican."

But to restrict ourselves to united public prayer, Solomon's prayer, at the dedication of the Temple, was not from book or scroll. There is in it evidence of premeditation, such as will be found in prayers on similar occasions now, but the graphic picture of the scene forbids the idea of anything approaching a liturgy. He is represented as standing, then kneeling upon a platform of brass, five cubits square and three cubits high, and with both hands upraised to heaven pouring out this magnificent prayer, in the hearing and with the concurrence of the multitude, to the God of Israel. We do not read of its employment in the dedication of the second Temple.

When we come to the New Testament, the absence of all intimation of use of prescribed forms of prayer is still more marked. Christ gave to His disciples one prayer that has been pre-

served, but rather as a directory and model. The prayer preceding the choice of an apostle to fill the vacancy made in the apostolical college by the treachery of Judas was clearly extemporized and suggested by the exigencies of the occasion. The prayer of the assembled infant church, when the apostles reported the threats of the rulers of condign punishment if they persisted in preaching the Crucified, introduced by the words of the historian, "And when they heard that they lifted up their voice with one accord and said," etc., was a splendid outburst of lofty devotion and resolute fidelity, and, so far from being even premeditated, was manifestly suggested by the arraignment before the Sanhedrin, from which the preachers had just come. The all-night prayer-meeting, held in John Mark's house for the liberation of imprisoned Peter and kept up till the apostle himself knocked at the gate, surely was not endless repetition of "A prayer for prisoners," already prescribed as a part of worship! Even the Lord's Prayer was given more as guide than form, since there is no mention of its subsequent use in public worship, and it was given with variations by the Savior Himself on two different occasions. Free prayer certainly has the advantage over liturgical in Scripturalness.

As for the advantages and disadvantages, they are found in both systems. A prescribed liturgy secures uniformity, insures decency by guarding the worshiper from shocks to devotional feelings, by unauthorized liberties taken with grammar, Scripture, and the Lord. If the sermon is poor and unedifying, the liturgy is rich and profitable; but, on the other hand, its inflexibility is a manifest and serious defect. When a pastor comes into the pulpit burdened with the sins and manifold troubles of his people, or from a household overwhelmed by some calamity of extraordinary severity, surely the prescribed ritual will be found to be hampering, rather than

helpful, in enlisting all hearts in common supplication suited to the case in mind. Another disadvantage of a prescribed form is its tendency, hinted in the very terms we employ, to formalism, or lifeless use of expressions of sentiment to which the heart gives no response. Aside from its Scriptural warrant, free prayer has over liturgy the superior advantage of flexibility, and coloring of the present rather than the antique. When rightly managed (and our comparison contemplates neither as slovenly done, but with the best interpretation of each) it has a freshness and adaptability to present wants and feelings and events which a liturgy made up of the best prayers can not possibly have.

And now a word as to proper posture. This is by no means a matter of indifference. Our bodies as well as our souls are ourselves. Christ assumed both, redeemed both, owns both, should be worshiped with both. This is matter not simply of inference, but of positive precept: "Your bodies washed with pure water": "present your bodies a living sacrifice." The body beyond its cleanliness can only share with the spirit in worship by using ear and tongue and assumption of reverent attitude. All agree that attitude must be reverential in prayer. Is the modern one of bowing only the head while seated reverent? Is it Scriptural? Is it an attitude of respect in any other circumstances to any other being?

Three postures of prayer only are mentioned in the Bible, or, to be more accurate, four: kneeling; its modification, kneeling but sitting upon the heels; falling prone upon the ground; and standing. Christ in the garden first knelt, then prostrated himself on the sward. David "sat before the Lord." Solomon knelt on raised platform while the congregation stood. Pharisee and publican stood in the Temple. Jesus said, "When ye stand praying," etc. The first seems to be the best adapted to closet exercises;

the second to be used in long-continued private devotion; the third only under overwhelming emotion, as in Gethsemane and in the Wilderness, when Moses and the elders, crushed by Israel's appalling guilt, fell on their faces before the Lord; and the last most suitable for public worship. But, as David says, "Come, let us worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker," evidently the choice is between standing and kneeling. Not long since we were invited to make an opening prayer at an evening entertainment given at the Bethel in New Orleans, to about a hundred British seamen from a ship carrying from America thousands of pack-mules to the South African War, and the words, "Let us stand and pray," were taken out of our lips by the superintendents, "Let us now all bow our heads and pray!" "Their backs were not," as in Dickens's character, "queer." And there was no reason to require of these stalwart men the lazy attitude so fashionable in our day, and a compromise with the worldly who prefer sitting upright and open-eyed! This is not a posture under any circumstances respectful or reverential. Why use it in divine worship? The

posture assumed, whether kneeling or standing, ought to be uniform throughout the congregation. To one belated, it is displeasing, as, possibly, to the angels who look over an assembly, to see some sitting bolt upright with open or closed eyes, others leaning with hidden face, resting forehead upon pewledge in front, and a few standing here and there like scattering trees of a forest swept by cyclone. If the custom of the church is to stand, let all stand; if to kneel, let all kneel. "Let all things be done decently and in order." And, above all, let the preacher, whether he use book or not, as faithfully prepare heart and lips to be the people's mouthpiece to God as when he comes as God's mouthpiece to them. And the congregation, whether the prayer be familiar as a twice-told tale, or fresh as the air of the new Lord's day, adopt and so make their own (which in either case is easily done) the leader's word, whether spoken or read; and then, altho but one voice be audible to heaven's ear, it will, as in golden censer, carry up the supplications of the entire congregation of worshippers to the bended ear of the Hearer of prayer.

EDITORIAL SECTION.

SERMONIC CRITICISM.

Truth? Or Sensationalism?

THE Wise Man's advice is: "Buy the truth, and sell it not." Paul's exhortation to Timothy is, that, "Speaking the truth [or following the truth, or dealing in truth, or being the truth, or truthing it] in love, [he] may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." These two teachers—one of the Old Dispensation, the other of the New—seem to have had a pretty clear conviction that truth is of some importance, and that a teacher of sacred things is under some obligation

to search it out, to adhere to it, and to teach and live it.

How marked the contrast between this and the sensational methods of many who at the present day undertake to deliver God's messages! How astounding the present apparent disregard for truth and clear thinking and the moral obligation that rests upon the preacher to speak the truth!

Here is a recent utterance in point:

"When one has deftined anything he has destroyed its force. Analyze a watch, and in all probability it will never run again. Here is where our theologians are making