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For the Christian Magazine.

THE DUTY OF ALL TO UNITE IN SOCIAL PRAISE.

MR. EDITOR: If you have nothing more important with which to fill your pages, I wish to call the attention of your readers to the following inquiry: *Is it the duty of the whole congregation, ordinarily, to unite with their voices in public praise; or is this part of social worship more acceptably and profitably performed by a select choir of skilful musicians?* Some thirty or forty years ago, this subject was frequently discussed, and became almost hackneyed. But for many years past it has received less attention, and I have scarcely observed any allusion to it, either from the pulpit or the press. The former is explicitly recognized in our standard, and I hope is brought into practice, in some good measure, in all our churches; while the latter is strictly prohibited. But as the opposite course obtains almost universally in many other churches, and as example is contagious, it may not be amiss to inquire into the *merits* of the subject, to which, perhaps, some of your readers may never have adverted. Many are liable to fall in with the prevailing custom, and to be carried along with the current, without asking themselves whether it is right or wrong. While firmness and consistency are ornamental to the christian character, it is highly desirable that we make an intelligent profession, and distinctly understand the ground and reasons, both of our faith and practice.

It will be readily admitted, that it is the imperative duty of all professing christians—of all intelligent creatures, to praise God with their hearts; to cherish lively emotions of gratitude for their countless blessings; to awaken in their souls, elevated thoughts of his perfections and glory, and of the riches of his love: to call upon their *souls* and all that is *within* them, to bless his holy name. This is undoubtedly the principal thing—the substance of the duty. The *heart*, the affections of the soul, are what God pre-eminently requires. “My son, give me thy heart.” Without these internal exercises, the outward expressions of praise, however grateful to the sense, can be no better than a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal: and it is only as they minister to the devotional feelings of the soul, that external acts of worship possess any value.

Adam the good news and glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

Permit me now to close these congratulations—you may perhaps hear a word of counsel and direction again, in view of the evils that abound, for you are as sheep in the wilderness, needing a shepherd's care—may He who feeds his flock like a shepherd, gather you and provide for you pastors and teachers to feed you with knowledge, and make with you a covenant of peace; and cause the wild beast to cease out of the land, and ye shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body, be preserved blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with you all. AMEN.

Yours, affectionately,

ANDREW BOWER.



RECOLLECTIONS OF THE REV. JOHN M. MASON, D. D.

He used to say, "There is no virtue in bearing a cross, if you make it, and fit it to your own back."

When erroneous opinions were rife among a people, he thought it right to combat them; but was wont to say, "that preachers should never give NEW knowledge of OLD errors, merely to refute them;" and "that there is no courage in fighting a dead enemy."

He attended the commencement of Yale College in New Haven, I think in year the 1808 or 1809, and at the house of William Leffingwell, Esq. became intimately acquainted with the Rev. Dr. Azel Backus, then of Bethlehem in Connecticut, and afterwards President of Hamilton College in New-York. Dr. Mason and Dr. Backus in the family were alternately laughing and crying in their social intercourse, at the pungent, sprightly, and tender anecdotes, with which they entertained one another, and all the guests of the family. Their meeting occasioned a lasting friendship. On this visit to New-Haven, Dr. Mason delivered his famous sermon on the preaching of the gospel to the poor. It so happened that I sat next to Dr. Backus, in church, during the delivery of it, and Dr. Backus, now and then smiling, but almost continually bathed in tears, insensibly kept pinching my thighs and my arms, to express his own feelings, and make me as susceptible of impressions from the sermon as himself. Had I not been quite a young man, I should have pinched him in return, and doubtless he would have been delighted, even with such an expression of emotion; for I never heard any discourse delivered with more effect than that. On Dr. Mason's return to New-York, he was asked what he found in Connecticut; and he replied, that "he had found one man, Azel Backus, who had a bushel of brains."

To a young infidel who scoffed at christianity because of the misconduct of some professors, Dr. Mason said: "Did you ever know an

appear to be made because an infidel went astray from the paths of morality?" The infidel admitted that he had not. "Then," said the Doctor, "don't you see that you admit that christianity is a holy religion, by expecting its professors to be holy; and that you pay it the highest compliment in your power?"

At the table of a distinguished merchant of New-York, a young British officer attempted to gain consequence by bringing the Doctor into collision with himself. Dr. Mason in a few words put all his arguments in favor of infidel liberality to flight. The officer, who was a member of the church of England, then attempted to cover his retreat, by raising a laugh; and said, "Well, Dr., I believe the old adage is true—the nearer the church the farther from grace." "Aye, that may be," said Dr. Mason, "but you will please to remember, that I am a dissenter."

He often said, "the grand business of a theological seminary is, to teach young men to think."

"A brief outline of the mode of instruction" pursued by him, "in the theological seminary lately under his care in the city of New-York," was published in New-York in, 1828, by the Rev. James Arbuckle, "a student of said seminary;" which happily illustrates many of Dr. Mason's peculiar attributes. He made, as this *Outline* informs us, the study of the original scriptures of the Old and New Testament, in the Hebrew and Greek languages, the basis of his whole system of instruction. He went to the word of God for his knowledge of human nature, his mental philosophy, his moral science, and his polemic and didactic theology. This was the man of his counsel in all matters, whether they relate to time or eternity. He taught his pupils, while reading the original scriptures, to ascertain the meaning of the words used, to explain the figures of speech employed; to understand the natural objects, habits, and customs referred to by the different writers; to criticise difficult, dark and apparently contradictory passages; to answer objections; to analyze the argumentative parts of the New Testament; to elicit the great moral lessons inculcated; and to state and defend the doctrines taught, either directly or by implication.

Many of his students learned to think; but of others we say, as he did, that it was not the business of teachers to furnish his pupil with brains as well as with instruction.

His manner of preaching was his own: many of his pupils attempted to imitate it, but all could see the ass in the lion's skin.

The following anecdote will illustrate Dr. Mason's reluctance to give offence by an improper speech, and his disposition to make the most honorable amends for an injury which he might have done. He was accustomed to visit, occasionally, the small congregations of the Associate Reformed Church in Orange county in New-York. Before steamboats were invented, he was returning to New-York, through the Highlands, from one of these excursions; and having stopped for a little refreshment near the narrows, was furnished with bread and milk, which he ate with an iron spoon. Soon after, he mentioned

this circumstance to one in a circle of acquaintance, who asked how he had fared on his journey. His remark, that he had got some bread and milk with an iron spoon, from such a good old lady, soon reached the ears of her who had entertained him; and she replied with much grief, "that she was sorry Dr. Mason had made himself merry at her expense; for if she had possessed a silver spoon, Dr. Mason should certainly have used it; as it was, she furnished him with the best she had." This was subsequently related to the Doctor, and his feelings were in turn deeply wounded, so that he mounted his horse and rode more than fifty miles to apologize for his heedless speech and ask the old woman's pardon. This is the man, whom malicious and mean enemies called "proud and haughty," merely because he walked erect, had a commanding mien, possessed shining talents, and spoke his sentiments without hypocritical deference "to the superior learning and better judgment" of blockheads.

To the persons of errorists and offenders, Dr. M. always showed great tenderness, but to their follies and vices he manifested no mercy. No Roman Catholic, for instance, could ever say, that Dr. M. showed him any personal indignity; but he would evince his dislike to his kneeling before a crucifix in the streets, and to a stumbling horse at the same time, by saying, that he could not bear a Roman Catholic horse.

He was a good judge of a horse, and being invited to look at one for a clerical friend, discovered that his knees had been marked by the ground, and said that was a good sign for a minister but not for his horse.

He rode well, and was fond of a spirited horse; but after he had suffered from paralysis, his horse ran away with him in Carlisle, threw him, fell upon him, and fractured his hip bone near the socket, so that he went upon crutches during the residue of his days.

Dr. Mason, as a pulpit orator, resembled the works of God: and comparing him with artificial declaimers, I have often thought,

"God made the country, man the town."

He had now and then a sandy, barren spot, in his public performances; but generally he spread out before us the luxuriance of forests and well cultivated fields, with here and there the grandeur of a cataract, or of a lofty mountain, or of a mighty river, bearing the abundance of a wide-spread country to the metropolis. He was uniformly varied as the face of nature.

At the bedside of the sick and the afflicted he often wept with tenderness, and the living were in many instances deeply impressed by his deportment in such scenes.

He believed and taught the doctrine of human depravity, but in his intercourse with men, no man was more unwilling to impute dishonorable motives to his fellows than himself. He was indeed rather credulous than suspicious; while he could repeat the proverb, "if a man deceives me *once*, it is his fault; if *twice*, it is my own."