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I.—LITERARY.

THE DEACON'S OFFICE AND WORK.

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It has been suggestively said by Prof. Witherow of Londonderry that, "all offices in the Christian church take origin from the Lord Jesus. He is Himself the author and embodiment of them all." Not only were they appointed by His authority; they were embodied in His person, and illustrated in His ministry. This follows as a corollary from the familiar New Testament doctrine that the church is the Body of Christ. The expression is not figurative, nor, as some would have it, anticipative; it is the statement of a real, present fact.

Two phrases occur in the New Testament which seem, at first sight, synonymous, but which are never used interchangeably. The one is the "Body of Jesus" or the "Lord's Body." This always has reference to that material body in which he tabernacled during his earthly ministry; which was nailed to the cross, laid in Joseph's tomb, raised from the dead and afterward received up into glory. The other is the "Body of Christ." This, if I mistake not, is always used to denote his Mystical Body, the church. The church is not simply likened to his body, but in a most real sense it is his body. It is the body of which he is the animating, guiding and ruling Head; in which he dwells by his Spirit; through which he perpetuates his presence among men, and carries on his work. In order that he might discharge his personal ministry as our

THE ORDINANCE OF SONG.

PROF. C. R. VAUGHAN.

“Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Col. 3: 16.

The praise of God is to be distinguished in its *essence* from the *modes* of its expression. In its essence it is the mental state produced by the apprehension of the qualities of his character, or the acts of his providence; it is the feeling produced by the sense and conception of his glory as it is manifested to us. Without this feeling in the heart, no mere mode of expressing adoration, no matter how grandly employed, will partake a single element of genuine praise. With this feeling, there is true praise no matter how imperfectly expressed, or under what form of expression, or whether expressed at all. The *modes* in which this instinctive delight in the manifested glory of God may be expressed are conceivably, at least, manifold. The notion, which is perhaps very general, that God can only be praised by musical sounds, vocal or instrumental, is altogether too restricted. Gratitude for kindness, and admiration and love for adorable qualities, may be expressed in ordinary conversational tones and phrases. Even in the public worship of the church, God might have restrained the thanksgiving and adoration of the worshippers to that verbal expression of it which he has authorized in prayer. He might have prescribed the public expression of praise to mere signs or pantomime, or to be an united and inarticulate shout of the worshippers. He might have prescribed a musical expression of it as he has done. He might have made that musical expression of it vocal and articulate, or exclusively instrumental and inarticulate; he might have prescribed either or both, exclusively or in combination. The mode of expressing the feeling is one thing, the feeling itself is another; and the peculiar use and function of the mode prescribed is still another. The feeling is a natural and instinctive effect on the human heart as it is actually constituted when the beauty and grandeur of God are apprehended under any suitable manifestation. Of course the right to express

the feeling is warranted by the instinctive origin of the feeling. But that any expression of it should become a part of *divine worship* and still more, that it should serve the purpose of a means of grace and positive benefit to the worshipper depends exclusively on the prescription of the divine will. God alone has the right to appoint the ordinances of his own worship and give them binding force upon the conscience. His authority alone can give the worshipper the assurance that the act by which he essays to approach God in worship is or will be really acceptable. Suppose there were no prescribed acts giving assurance of their acceptability; men would of course be left to the suggestions of their own minds, and infinite difference of opinion would introduce confusion and prevent all comfortable assurance of acceptability. One class would probably resort to bloody and burnt offerings. Another would wreath altars with flowers; yet another would sit in silence before the Lord. But not one would have any assurance that what he was doing—the act of worship in which he was engaged—might not be an offence, instead of an acceptable action. God alone can settle such questions, for he alone has authority to prescribe the method in which he will be approached. Even earthly monarchs claim the right to settle the etiquette of their own courts. They claim this with justice, because as determined by others, many an act disagreeable to their own feelings might be prescribed. This right to appoint ordinances of worship is exclusively in God, and is indispensable to the comfort and assurance of the worshipper.

This Divine appointment of ordinances is still more necessary, if in addition to the character of the act as an ordinance of worship, it is to have the added character of a *means of grace*—an instrument of positive blessing to the worshipper. No one but himself has the right to pledge God to any such engagement as this. To do it would be not only an act of boundless presumption towards him, but a certain fraud and disappointment towards man. An ordinance of worship is not necessarily a means of grace. It is easy to conceive an order of worship like that of the angels in heaven prescribed by the King and obligatory on the worshipper, yet carrying no special benefit or pledge of benefit beyond the natural reaction and influence of the acts themselves. But where the two characters of ordinance of worship and means of grace are

to be joined together in any special act of worship the necessity for God to decree the act, and invest it with both the sublime characters it is to wear becomes doubly imperative; otherwise all service to God in the use of the action is abolished. "Know ye not," said the apostle, "that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey?" Service stands related to will: this is common sense and a necessary logical result. A father commands his son, but the mother gives an opposite order; and the son complies with the latter. He is in this case necessarily the servant of the mother. Law, other than his own, when obeyed, is not service to God. If the church prescribes where God has not commanded, the obedient servant is the servant of the church, but not the servant of God. *There cannot be service to God except by compliance with his will.* He alone is the rightful lawgiver. What he ordains is to be done just as he has prescribed it without additions or subtractions from it. As expressed in the law of Moses: "*What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.*" Otherwise all service to God in the act is banished from it.

But the other character attached to the act—its value as a means of grace is also abolished unless God prescribes the act. No one has the right to pledge him for a blessing on an unauthorized act, and it is madness to expect it. Hence the strictness with which the Presbyterian church has always stood for the simple rites and acts of service prescribed in the scriptures. It has always deemed it not only necessary for the honor of God, to require his appointments to be observed without change by addition or subtraction, but as equally necessary to secure the benefit of the worshipper. Paul in Colossians settles this question—the bearing of strict compliance with the divine prescriptions on the true interests of the worshipper. His language carries the keenest possible rebuke to those who, weary of the simple dignity of the divinely appointed worship, seek to improve on the legislation of God by all sorts of fancied enhancements of the splendor and attractions of the service. "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why are ye subject to ordinances after the commandments of men, which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship and humility." He evidently implies it is only a shew of wisdom. He says plainly

again, "let no man beguile you of your reward in this voluntary humility." The sum of all this is the infinite importance for the honor of God as the lawgiver, and for the well-being of men as his servants to stand steadfastly and with resolute fidelity by the ordinances and means of grace, just as nearly as he has prescribed them, as it is possible to discover in the teachings and examples of his word.

Now God has prescribed the use of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs as the authorized mode of giving expression to the sentiment of praise in his worship, both in public and in private. He has ordained it as an ordinance of worship. He has also invested it with the additional and most invaluable character as a means of grace, adapted to produce certain effects on the soul of the worshipper, which cannot be produced in any other way. It is designed to be used in the public, social and private worship of God, in the household worship of his people, and in the solitary communing of the individual christian. The full development of its influence and effects in each of these spheres of communion with God might well occupy more than one discourse in the pulpit. The bearings of this ordinance used in accordance with prescriptions of the divine word, on the growth, activity, and especially on the comfort and hopes of christians cannot be exaggerated in their practical importance. Let us draw out the lessons of the Word of God upon the uses and obligations involved in the ordinance of song.

1. The first prescription of the sacred law in reference to its position as one of the acts ordained for public worship is to place this ordinance in the hands of *the people*—the general mass of the worshipping assembly. "Let the people praise thee, O God: Let all the people praise thee." "Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." The people are appointed to be God's priests and ministers to conduct this part of the divine service. The law not only appoints the ordinances, but the officials who are to use them. The rule and discipline of the church are placed in the hands of the Ruling Elders. The care of the poor, the protection of the widows and orphans of Christ, and the executive administration of the finance of the church are placed in the hands of the deacons. The preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments are intrusted to the Teaching Elder. The ordinance of song is committed

to the people; they are the ministers of the sanctuary to conduct this part of the service. From this prescription of the law in relation to this ordinance several consequences flow out of an inestimable, practicable importance. These are as follows: *First*, that the people have no right to refuse to do what is assigned to them, either by neglect or inattention, or by throwing it exclusively on any selected portion of themselves. If the minister should neglect or refuse to do his part in teaching the people, or the elders should refuse to do their part in governing the church, there would be no difficulty in seeing that they would be in neglect of their duty. This is equally clear if the people neglect their duty to the ordinance of song. If the minister should refuse to preach himself, and turn over his public function to a deputy; if the deacon should practically abdicate his office and leave its duties to be done by another, there would be no difficulty in discovering the essential unfaithfulness involved in such an evasion of duty. In precisely the same manner the mass of the people are in the neglect of their plain obligations under the law of the Kingdom in turning over the music of the sanctuary to a select portion of themselves. They could as safely appoint a committee to do all their praying for them. The true relation of choirs to the worship of the church can be defined in very few words. As the leaders, examples and guides of congregational singing, they are eminently useful and even necessary to the highest development of popular song. As substitutes for it they are in direct violation of the divine law on the subject; they destroy the acceptability of the worship as a consequence of their violation of the law, and prevent the high spiritual benefits the ordinance designed to impart. In many places the introduction of godless paid choirs of professional singers has turned the sanctuary of God into a show-house and made the service a mockery, the worship a worship of the devil. The only demand for the exclusion of the people from their divinely ordered relation to the service of song in the interest of more cultured musical taste has only sprung from the neglect of the people to do their duty to the ordinance.

2. This brings us to a second practical consequence from the committal of this service to the people. This is their indispensable duty to prepare themselves to give the highest possible development to this service by a training and disci-

pline of themselves as thorough and complete as steadily maintained and as widely diversified as that development may demand. If the minister gives no attention to his preparation to preach, seeks no training for the office before he entered it, and used no diligence in his special preparation afterwards, his offence would be clear in the eyes of all. In like manner the people must make conscience of preparing themselves by every available means to conduct their part of the worship in a manner suitable to the dignity of the service and adapted to give full effect to the grand and stirring instrumentality. The people should all feel that they are specially charged with the right conduct of a most important part of divine worship. An incidental advantage of great worth would grow out of this feeling. In coming to church each one would soon learn to feel that there was something for him to do; and instead of feeling that his relation to divine worship was merely passive and receptive, he would soon recognize with infinite enhancement of his interest and pleasure in the service that he had a part to take—that he was going up as God's appointed servant to attend to one grand department of his public service, and that he had something to give to others for their edification, as well as to receive for his own. This thorough discipline and training of the whole mass of a congregation is altogether practicable. It only needs a proper appreciation of their duty and their profound interest in the matter, and the spirit, energy, and generous enthusiasm which will resolve that the law shall be honored, and its benefits gained, and will spare no time, pains or expense which will give a just development to this part of the worship of God. It is practicable as I have seen tested in two churches at the opposite ends of the social scale; one a large and wealthy city church, the other a church the majority of whose members lived in log cabins or in houses not worth \$500. I had been fifteen years in the ministry before I had any conception of what congregational singing could be. As I listened to the disciplined melody of 1,200 voices in the first of these churches, my blood stirred with astonishment and delight. The method by which this result was obtained as given me afterwards by the pastor, Rev. Stuart Robinson, was to employ a teacher on a small salary, and require him to throw open the lecture-room twice a week and teach all comers to sing, and train them by practice to sing together. The bulk

of the congregation learned to sing simply by ear; and the experiment was a demonstration how effective the discipline by simple unity of practice could be made. The method pursued by the other church was one practicable in any church. It was simply the adoption of a praise meeting which ought to be as permanent and constant an institution in every church as a prayer meeting. On every Sabbath morning when the Sunday school was in operation during the warm season the school was promptly organized at nine o'clock; it was promptly dismissed at ten o'clock; and from that time until the hour for public worship the people met for praise and trained themselves and kept themselves in training for the worship of God. I have heard fine singing in many places, but the best I have ever heard was in Dr. Robinson's church in Baltimore; the next best was in the old Hat Creek church in the county of Campbell in our own state. It is a valuable addition to the general instruction of the people touching what they are required to do by the law of God—to instruct them *how* they can and ought to do it. The example of the modest church just cited gives the lesson how we may do it if we shall be wise and energetic enough to undertake it.

But this enterprise is still more powerfully recommended by its profound practical bearing on the development of the Christian life and the experience of Christian people. It is not only an ordinance of worship divinely appointed and obligatory on the conscience, *but it is a means of grace to the worshipper*. Not only are *all* the ordinances also means of grace, but each ordinance is appointed to exert one or more lasting effects on the soul and in the development of the gifts and graces of the Spirit. Consequently if a man cuts himself off from the use of any particular ordinance he cuts himself off from all the benefits that ordinance was intended to confer; and the loss will be especially conspicuous in *the special effects* connected with that ordinance. The public preaching of the word was designed to convey clear and impressive ideas of gospel truth. If a man absents himself from the preaching of the gospel, his knowledge of the truth will cease to grow, and his impressions of its significance will gradually fade out. If a man abandons the reading of the Scriptures which is designed to allow of a more deliberate consideration of the truth than is possible under the rapid oral instructions of the pulpit, the same effect will be produced. If he suspends the or-

dinance of prayer and ceases to pray, the spirit of devotion will die out of him, and he will lose all other benefits of prayer. In like manner and for the same reason, if the ordinance of song is suspended and the man ceases to sing the praises of God in his public or private worship, his losses will be just as certain and they will be defined by the benefits which this ordinance was appointed to secure. To estimate these benefits, and form some conception of the bearings of this ordinance on our personal interests, let us look briefly at the uses and practical advantages of the instrumentality.

The power of music over the human soul and even over the animal creation is marvellous. Serpents are charmed by it; horses will pause to listen to it; birds sometimes seem thrown into ecstasies of delight by it. Its mastery over the whole scale of human passions is one of the most wonderful phenomena of our wonderful nature. It can excite or soothe anger; it can melt to tears or excite to laughter or exhilarate to intensest joy. It can soothe despondency; it can animate energy; it can rouse courage, it can temper grief. It can stimulate the sensual and the spiritual passions with equal power. Consequently music has been an important agency in every form of human life from the beginning of human history. It has been subsidized by war and peace. It has charmed the courts of princes and the homes of private men. It has been made the minister of human joys and human sorrows and been powerful in its stimulus in the religious uses of mankind. In constituting a musical ordinance and means of grace in his grand system of remedial love, God has laid his hand on some of the most mysterious but powerful principles of human nature, and subsidized to the gracious purposes of his kingdom one of the most effective energies which can be employed to mould the feelings and determine the conduct of men. Music indeed seems to be the only adequate form of expression to many kinds and degrees of human feeling. Words are often most incompetent vehicles of human thought; still more for human feeling especially in its more exalted and impassioned form. An inarticulate cry is commonly the only mode in which intense and suddenly excited emotions of honor, fear or great joy are or can be expressed. The melody of music can often express what words fail to utter. Men have always celebrated great and heroic deeds in poetry—the music of words, and in melody, the music of

sounds ; and surely it is fit that glorious strains of both should exalt to our conceptions the splendor of redeeming love and power.

The ordinance of song is a *teaching* ordinance, co-ordinate with the ministry and the word. So the text asserts. The office of teaching is two-fold ; first, to inform us what is the truth ; and, second, to enable and quicken our conception or realization of its true significance. This latter function is the one which is mainly accomplished by the ordinance of song. The force of the combined melody of words and sounds often enable a higher and more touching sense of such truths as the Love of God, the preciousness of the promises and the glory of heaven. All prospect of entering into those richer and sweeter views of the truth must be abandoned by him who abandons the use of the ordinance of song. Hence it was the Apostle used the words of the text *teach one another* in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

It is an ordinance of admonition and warning. The call to vigilance and caution in the christian walk—to zeal and activity—the warning against temptation and the tempter—the exhortation to faithfulness and fulness of obedience—often come home with great access of power to the heart, in the stirring melodies of sacred song. This advantage too is lost where the ordinance is misused or neglected.

It is an ordinance of great power in *resisting temptation*. Sir Walter Scott well knew the power of music in this respect, when he makes the belated huntsman drive off the evil spirits who in the garb of hunting virgins, robed in green, tried to seduce him to destruction. The Christians of our day do not seem to appreciate the power of the tempter or the danger of temptation as did the Christians of a former age ; nor the power of sacred song as a repellent. Luther used to say the Devil cannot stand the music of praise to God. Oftentimes the very best relief of the pious soul from the influx of unholy thoughts and feelings is to raise some joyous and gallant song of hearty praise to the glorious throne.

It is emphatically—and this is the chief and special function of the ordinance—an ordinance of comfort and hope. As every ordinance is designed to exert some special influence, and to develop some special result, the ordinance of song is designed to develop the feelings of joy in the Christian soul. It is the expression of delight in God, and is designed to de-

velop and intensify the feeling it expresses. We verily believe one main reason why there are so many drooping and despondent Christians in our day is that they have allowed the ordinance which is specially appointed to breed hope and joy in the Christian soul, to fall into a sad decay in their use or out of use altogether. The best remedy for despondency in a pious soul is to sing resolutely some joyous song of faith and hope.

This ordinance is powerful in quickening energy and courage, rousing all the heroic element of the human heart and stirring all the energies into enthusiastic activity. The songs of God's glorious praise have often proved the most ardor-breathing melodies that ever rang over fields of heroic battle. The persecuted Huguenots of France always followed the white plume of Henry of Navarre with the songs of the sanctuary ringing in glorious ardor over their ranks, and the chivalry of the royal persecutor went down before them. The grave and devout soldiers of the great infidel prince, Frederick the Great, moved to the greatest of his victories through the carnage of Lenthen singing the songs of their old German fathers. The invincible warriors of old John Zisca, the persecuted followers of John Huss year after year, met and routed the choicest chivalry of Middle Europe with the flails of their threshing-floors in their hands and the high praises of God in their mouths. The Ironsides of Cromwell always charged with this species of music: when the gray steel lines began to move the psalm was raised and rose higher and higher as the speed increased, and rang highest when the deadly shock occurred. The proudest chivalry of England was beaten small as the dust before the busy steel whose clash was lost in the grand song of the appeal to the god of justice. The ordinance is equally powerful in spiritual conflict, in exalting courage, in cheering trials, in guiding through perplexity, in animating through danger, in intensifying hope, and every christian feeling. It is a great assistance in the hours of solitary meditation, and the communion of the individual soul with God. It will always be an acceptable action in the worship of God; and its disuse or misuse will always involve a loss to God and angels in heaven as well as to the waiting soul on earth.

A little child,
 A little meek-faced quiet village child,
 Sat singing by her cottage door at eve,
 A low sweet Sabbath song,
 No human ear caught the faint melody.
 No human eye beheld the upturned aspect of the smile,
 That wreathed her innocent lips
 The while they breathed
 The oft-repeated burden of the hymn
 Praise God! Praise God!

A seraph by the throne
 In the full glory stood
 With eager hands he smote the golden harp-strings
 Till a flood of harmony on the celestial air
 Welled forth unceasingly.
 Then with a great voice he sang
 The Holy, Holy evermore
 Lord God Almighty!

And the Eternal Courts thrilled with the rapture!
 And the Hierarchs, Angel and rapt
 Archangel throbbled and burned
 With vehement adoration!
 Higher yet rose the majestic anthem without pause;
 Higher with rich magnificence of sound to its full strength.
 And still Infinite Heaven
 Rang with the Holy! Holy! Evermore!
 Till trembling with excess of awe and love
 Each sceptered Spirit sank before the throne with a mute
 Hallelujah!

But e'en then while the celestial song was at its height
 Stole in an alien voice—a voice that seemed
 To float—float upward from some world afar.
 A weak and child-like voice—faint but how sweet
 That blended with the Seraph's rushing strain
 Even as a fountain's music with the roar of the reverberate
 thunder.

Loving smiles lit up the beauty of each angel's face
 At the new utterance.
 Smiles of joy that grew more joyous yet
 As ever and anon was heard
 The simple burden of the hymn.
 Praise God! Praise God!

And when the Seraph's song had reached its close
And o'er the Golden lyres
Silence hung brooding.
When the ethereal courts
Rang with but echoes of the chant sublime.
Still through the abysmal space
That wandering voice
Came floating upward from its world afar,
Still murmured sweet on the celestial air.
Praise God! Praise God!

The lesson of these beautiful lines is true, and the simple song on human lips, when it embodies the true emotions of the human heart, no matter how humble that heart may be, will be as acceptable an offering as the grand worship of the heavenly hierarchy. To neglect the songs of Zion is not only to injure ourselves but to rob heaven and angels and God.

This ordinance of song diligently developed to its highest capacities will not only infinitely enhance the interest and pleasure of public worship, but will equally develop the graces and multiply the joys of Christian people. No christian can afford to be without it; the losses involved in its disuse or its misuse are too great. Even those who cannot sing ought to follow with close absorbed attention the current of the song and pour their feelings silently into it. It ought to come into more constant and resolute use in social and family prayer and in the hours of solitary communion with God. The songs of the sanctuary ought to become so familiar and so precious to all classes of the people as to grow into familiar association with all the actions and events of life. They ought to be on the lips of our mothers as they hush their babes to sleep. They ought to cheer the thoughts of the brave workman as he turns the furrow in the field or reaps the golden sheaves of the harvest and mingle with the tramp of his teams as they plod the highway to the market town. Even the unconverted heart which cannot enter into the spiritual element of praise should use this ordinance just as the sinner ought to pray and read the Bible in order that he may be led into the capacity of a true communion with God in his appointed ordinances of worship.