

VI. NOTES.

THE REVISED DIRECTORY.

THE question of revising the Directory of Worship was broached by the General Assembly in 1864, but nothing was done in the matter until 1879, when it was entrusted to a committee consisting of Revs. J. B. Adger, D. D., B. M. Palmer, D. D., G. D. Armstrong, D. D., Stuart Robinson, D. D., T. E. Peck, D. D., James Woodrow, D. D., J. A. Lefevre, D. D., R. K. Smoot, D. D., and Messrs. Thomas Thomson and W. W. Henry. The draft of a new Directory was reported the next year, and ordered to be sent down to the Presbyteries for criticism. The revision was rewritten in 1881, and again referred to the Presbyteries. In 1882 the names of Drs. Girardeau and Boggs were added, and those of Drs. Robinson and Smoot and Mr. Thomson dropped, and the labor of revision proceeded. In 1885 the work was again laid before the Presbyteries. These courts approved the Directory, but recommended a continuance of the work; and in 1886 a new committee was formed, consisting of Rev. Drs. Hoge, Witherspoon, J. Henry Smith, and Armstrong, and W. W. Henry, Esq.

In the hands of this last committee the work of revision has been brought to a sufficiently perfect state for it to be approved by the General Assembly, and by that body to be laid before the Presbyteries for their adoption or rejection, by a vote of *yes* or *no*.

As this "Revised Directory for Worship" is formally before the Presbyteries to be voted upon, and if accepted by them, becomes a part of the constitution the church, it will not be out of order to subject it to a little criticism; for to introduce any composition into the constitution of the Presbyterian Church is to place it on a very high plane of literary standing. The present work is a great improvement on the old Directory, and no doubt will be adopted either as it stands or with some modifications. Whether it is best just now to adopt it, or to wait until it can be a little more carefully chiselled out, is a question which the Presbyteries will have to decide before the next meeting of the General Assembly. If it should be necessary to postpone its final adoption for a short time, no important interest of the church would suffer, and there would be abundant compensation at the

end if the delay resulted in the improvement of the form and style of the work, and in making it, like the other parts of our constitution, a standard of which we might justly be proud.

It is well that on page 6 “ the standing posture in public prayer” is recommended, because it is a scriptural, decorous and convenient one, and has the honor of having been the custom in Presbyterian churches of other days; but there is little probability of its being restored. It has gone or is going, and nearly all of our people sit during prayer, only showing their reverence by bending forward and leaning the head upon the back of a pew. There can be no question but that whereas standing is the Presbyterian posture, and ought to be maintained, sitting is not to be commended.

In the directions for the “ prayer before sermon,” ordinarily called the “ long prayer,” on page 7, where five paragraphs of subjects are given, the mere enumeration of which would constitute a rather lengthy orison, it would not have been amiss to insert a word of advice to the minister, that he should guard against becoming too lengthy.

On page 9 the number (6) in brackets ought to be 5 without brackets, and the numbering of the succeeding paragraphs of that page and the next should be changed accordingly, and read 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, instead of (7), (8), (9), (10), (11). This was an oversight merely on the part of the penman.

As the morning service for a Lord’s day is so explicitly laid out, it would perhaps have been well to give some directions for the evening service also.

Under the head, “ The Sabbath,” page 11, where the study of the Scriptures and of the catechisms of the church is recommended, it would have been well to include also the “ Confession of Faith.”

It was with consternation that we read, on page 14, near the bottom, that “ baptism is. . . . the washing IN water !” This would give great satisfaction to our immersionist brethren ; but let them not rejoice prematurely; we are not going over to their side ; this was only a typographical error, and will be corrected.

In the same paragraph, continued on the next page, the phrase “ *parties* baptized,” might be improved to read, “ *persons* baptized.”

In giving directions, and most excellent ones, on page 18, for the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, reference is made to certain well selected passages, one or more of which may be read as introductory to the ordinance. It would be a convenience to the officiating minister to have these scripture selections printed in full in the book.

In chapter V., section 1, page 22, copied from the old Directory, the rhetoric might be changed to advantage where it reads, "It is the indispensable duty of each person, *alone, in secret,* and of every family, *by itself, in private,* to *pray to* and *worship* God." It seems unnecessary to write, "*in secret*" after "*alone,*" and "*in private*" after "*by itself*" and to put "*to pray to*" before "*and worship God.*"

It is a good suggestion, on page 23, that a person too diffident to pray extemporaneously may with perfect propriety "make use of a form of prayer."

On page 24 it is said, "Therefore *we* highly disapprove." Who are "*we*"? It might better read, "The paying of unnecessary private visits on the Lord's day *is* highly disapproved."

We now come to a feature of the Directory which is a real advance and improvement on what has gone before. There has long been a demand for a form of funeral service, not obligatory, but optional, to serve as a model, and to be used by laymen as well as ministers when occasion renders it necessary. Chapter VII., page 25, begins with an excellent series of directions for conducting a funeral. At the conclusion of this is appended "A Funeral Service." This form is, in the main, a good one, and the prayer at the end is of a very high order.

It does seem strange, however, that a funeral service should be prepared without the use of the whole or a large part of the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians. Of all things written about death in human and divine literature, this is the finest. It is the great Christian pean of victory over the tomb, and of the triumph in eternal life of the whole man, body and soul. It may be urged that this would not be appropriate to read in the obsequies of a man who died impenitent. Yes, but when a man departs in Christ, this ought to be used. Such embarrassment could be avoided, as is done in some liturgies, by having the opening sentences of such a general nature as would make it proper to use them on any occasion, and then for the body of the service to have a number of selections from which the minister could choose for each occasion. This would not only relieve the difficulty mentioned, but would also give variety.

This idea has been well carried out in the last revision of the Liturgy of the Reformed Church of France, which now lies on the writer's table. This work has recently been prepared by Rev. Eugene Bersier, D. D., of Paris, at the request of the General Synod of France, and has been sent down by that court to the "particular synods" for their adoption or rejection. The book is an admirable one, furnishing valu-

able forms for all public services. The funeral service begins with an extemporaneous invocation, followed by the reading of "All flesh is grass," &c. (Is. xl. 6-8.) If the service is at the house, it begins, "It is better to go to the house of mourning," &c. (Eccl. vii. 2.) Here follows a prayer of adoration and confession, drawn largely from the Scriptures. After the prayer, the minister says, "Let us hear the leading of some passages of God's Word." Then follow Psalms xc. 1-13; xxxix. 5-8 and 10-14, and cxxx. This constitutes that part of the service which is used on all occasions. There are then what are called the first, second, third, and fourth "*Series*," being four collections of passages, giving liberty of choice for any occasion. At the conclusion of this reading an opportunity is given for a funeral address if the minister desires to make one. A prayer comes next; then the minister says, "Why art thou cast down within me O my soul," &c. (Ps. xlii. 6), and gives out a hymn. The hymn is sung, the benediction pronounced, and the service at the house or church concludes with these words, "Go in peace, remember the poor, and may the God of peace be with you all. Amen."

The service at the grave is arranged on the same plan, giving opportunity for choice in a part of it, and ending with a prayer and benediction.

While we are referring to the French Liturgy, which is a remote descendant of one prepared by John Calvin, and which could be studied with profit by any minister, it will not be uninteresting to note that in ancient times in Reformed Churches of the continent, except in the Church of the Canton de Vaud, there were no funeral services; and in the Genevan Liturgy of to-day there is no provision made for the burial of the dead. Dr. Bersier, in a foot-note, quotes from chapter X. of "The Discipline," as follows: "There shall be neither prayer, preaching, nor public alms-giving, at interments, to avoid all superstitions." Dr. Bersier adds, "The result of this was that in countries where strictly Calvinistic traditions have prevailed, there have been at interments no religious services whatever. . . . The use of religious services at funerals was only introduced into the Reformed Church of France, at the beginning of the present century." It is easy to see that this was an extreme reaction from the Romish superstitions in connection with burial.

The chapter on marriage in our new book partakes somewhat of the nature both of a directory and of a marriage service. It is a combination of the two things. The questions proposed to the bridegroom

and bride might be made to end with a more cheerful word than "death." How would "as long as you both shall live" answer? The preceding chapter on the burial of the dead contains a directory and a service. This chapter on marriage is almost a service. Would it not be just as well to have both of these simple directories, and place the *forms* of service for marriages and funerals in the appendix? If this book be accepted as it now stands, and the forms for marriage and funeral services ordered to be prepared by the committee be also adopted and added, we will find ourselves provided with a Directory containing two funeral services and one and a half for marriage.

There is no danger to be apprehended from the adoption of the proposed forms. Such a conservative and able committee as the one which has the work in hand could well be trusted to do nothing un-presbyterian. The church is practically unanimous as to the propriety of our having optional services for funerals and marriages, as it is also that we should have a form for the admission of members. It would be well to make the form for the baptism of infants a little more complete, and to place that, together with the others, in the appendix.

There seems to be every reason for our having well prepared, but optional, forms for funerals and marriages. It is evident, too, that the mind of the church is prepared for it. It is a question, however, whether it is wiser to adopt the revision in its present form, and then add an appendix in subsequent years, or to wait until it can be made as near perfect as possible before it becomes a part of the constitution of the Presbyterian Church.

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THE ORIGIN OF PSALM LXVIII.

It is an amusing conceit of the Jewish poet, Immanuel Romi, which represents King David as summoning before him in Hades the commentators upon the Psalms, that he may award the prize to the most successful; and then, when they eagerly rush forward with their commentaries, confounding their hopes by assigning them Psalm lxviii. as their task. But the Christian expositor of the psalm has a difficulty unknown to the Jewish, for, besides the inherent difficulties of the psalm itself, he must account for the Apostle Paul's unexpected application of it, as well as his alteration of its language. (Eph. iv. 8-10.) And yet, is the poet right? Because subsequent generations find