

# THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY.

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## Foreword.

As the new year is approaching, it is proper that the THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY should for a moment halt in its regular work and consider the whence and whither of its course. In speaking of its past, it will be remembered that the THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY is a continuation of the *Theological Quarterly*, which was founded in 1897 and changed into a monthly in 1920. We may justly say, then, that our journal now is thirty years old and that this is certainly a fitting occasion for a glimpse backward and forward. No one will take it amiss when we say that our periodical has had an illustrious past. While from the very start the whole faculty of Concordia Seminary has been responsible for its contents, its first editor-in-chief was that eminently gifted and learned scholar Dr. A. L. Graebner, who, almost single-handed, wrote the first volumes, the first four embracing 512 pages each, and whose articles embodied many of the results of his exhaustive researches. When toward the end of 1903 illness took the editorial pen out of his hands, Dr. F. Bente, for over a year, in addition to his other duties, attended to the management of the *Quarterly*, whose volumes at that time were 256 pages strong. In 1905 Dr. W. H. T. Dau became a member of the faculty of Concordia Seminary, and having been called as English professor of dogmatics, he, as a matter of course, was entrusted with the editorship of the *Quarterly*. These paragraphs are intended, in a way, as a tribute to the splendid services which Dr. Dau rendered the Lutheran Church as editor of this journal. Immediately when his articles began to appear, it was seen that in him the Church possessed a writer of rare fascination and skill, and throughout Synod commendation of the excellent workmanship exhibited in his literary productions could be heard. His style was not only correct, it was usually highly beautiful and ornate. What was most praiseworthy was, of course, that, as had been the case with his predecessors, the *norma normans* of all Dr. Dau's writing was the Bible and the *norma normata* the Confessions of the Lutheran

temple here on earth!

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## Ex Corde Prayer.

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EDITORIAL NOTE.—As the esteemed author states, this article was written with the purpose of creating discussion of a subject which has great practical significance. It is with the same design that we herewith submit it for the perusal of our readers.

I have chosen the subject of “Ex Corde Prayer” for the simple purpose of arousing discussion on a question which to my mind needs ventilation among our clergy. Our church has been termed

“a ritualistic Church,” and whereas in a sense this is true, it is not true in a sense which usually makes a ritualistic church, one that is bound to definite customs and forms and is therefore apt to become encased in cold formalism. The Lutheran Church is what, in the vernacular of some writers, is termed “a free Church.” The congregation is sovereign, also in the selection and arrangement of its form of service and its order of worship, a fact which also has its discouraging features, evidenced by the large number of hybrid, home-made services in our churches. This subject of public prayer was suggested to us by the question repeatedly asked as to why Lutheran pastors almost invariably read their prayers from a book of forms and do not adapt them to the circumstances of the occasion. Realizing full well the objections to, and the abuses of, so-called “free prayer” as practised in the sectarian churches, we nevertheless feel that in the careful avoidance of the dangers we have gone to the other extreme of almost entirely banishing the original prayers of the pastor from our church services.

In using the term *ex corde*, or “free prayer,” or “extemporaneous prayer,” we want it plainly understood that we do not mean the impromptu utterance of an unprepared person, but rather a “conceived prayer,” which has received suitable premeditation as to its purpose, its substance, and its form.

All true prayers, even those read out of a book, must be in a sense *ex corde* prayers. Any prayer that is not *ex corde*, that is, really an expression of the sentiments of the heart, is an abomination unto the Lord. Every memorized prayer must be *ex corde* if it is to be acceptable unto God. He makes it very plain that the vain repetitions, as practised by the heathen, shall not be heard. It is a subject of the Master’s bitter reproach regarding the cold formalism of the Jews: “This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth and honoreth Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me.” Any prayer which is not *ex corde* had best remain unspoken. These are facts which hardly need repetition.

But when we speak of *ex corde* prayers, we have in mind particularly those prayers which are not read from a book, but are spoken from the heart as the occasion warrants and circumstances call for.

If any person, in any calling, has full reason to be fervent and incessant in prayer, it is the minister of the Gospel. The non-praying pastor is a monstrosity. It is significant that in the three qualifications of the true theologian the *oratio* is mentioned

first, before the *tentatio* and the *meditatio*. The preacher who does not pray cannot hope for success. He may build up a sort of temporary mushroom success, based on his personality and certain mental and physical qualifications, but he cannot be successful in what the Lord counts success, in real soul-winning. This real and lasting success no minister, no matter what his gifts, can accomplish by himself and of himself. It is something which only God can give and for which God wants to be asked. After all, the successful minister is successful only because, and in the measure in which, God has blessed him. And this blessing must be asked for in earnest prayer. It is particularly true of God's attitude towards the minister: "Ja, er will gebeten sein, wenn er was soll geben." The exigencies of the minister's office demand that he be in constant communication with God, and the true pastor, overwhelmed with the solemn responsibility of his office, realizing that not dollars and cents, but human souls are at stake, recognizing his own weaknesses and the sinfulness of his own heart, the danger of the temptations so peculiar to his office, will and must pray. His daily needs will drive him, per force, as a humble petitioner to the throne of God. He will have to cast before the Throne of Mercy a daily load of sins of omission and commission. His problems, upon the proper handling and solution of which so much depends, will urge him to come to the Lord for guidance and wisdom and strength. He wants divine help to combat the weaknesses of the flesh, which, like a heavy load on his feet, hinder him in the faithful execution of his office. He wants to rid himself of the load of depression which so often assails him. For the glory of God and the salvation of souls he wants to be really efficient, and he keenly realizes his inefficiency and the need of a more powerful hand to uphold and lead him. Will he, then, in order to bring his petition before God, make use of a *Gebetsschatz*? Hardly! "Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh." Prayer is the communication of the heart with God. The minister will want to pray, not in words some one else has written or spoken, but he will want to tell God his need in his own words. His needs are so intimate, so private, that another's words will sound cold and unsuited. He is a child coming to his Father with his stammering plea. If he prays after certain forms, there is a danger of his lapsing into formalism, and he misses the warmth and consolation and uplifting peace of a real heart-to-heart intimacy with God. How good a child feels when it has unburdened itself of its troubles to its mother or father! And it will not unburden itself in

a memorized form or in a confession found in a book, but the full little heart will gush out its troubles, perhaps in broken sentences, but in its own words. So our prayers to our heavenly Father should be the overflow of a full heart, an intimate speech of a child to its father. These things seem self-evident. Yet it is true that we preachers do not pray enough. Luther calls prayer an art, *eine Kunst*, and an art can be acquired and perfected by practise. This art can be learned only in the school of the Holy Ghost. There is no doubt that we miss much because we as ministers do not pray enough. It is true of us particularly: "Oh, what peace we often forfeit, Oh, what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry Everything to God in prayer." Faithful *ex corde* praying on the part of the minister is necessary for a faithful and efficient ministry, and if he is sincere in his office, it will follow naturally, as a matter of course.

How far shall a minister carry the *ex corde* praying into his public ministrations, first of all into the service? Sometimes we are almost inclined to deplore that there are so many printed prayers at the disposal of the clergy. We do not in any way wish to belittle their value and importance. The regular *Kirchengebet* forms an important part in our order of service and should not be abolished. It is a general prayer, in which the congregation brings before God the needs of the Church, the country, the unconverted, the youth, and the suffering. It is a true church-prayer. Through weekly repetition people learn it and, we hope, follow it devoutly. The collects, too, are an established cog in our system of worship. It is also right and proper that our church-books contain special prayers for special occasions. Judged by what we have read in church-books of other denominations, our prayers, especially the German prayers, cannot be excelled. Be that as it may, we hold that our pastors, as a rule, have neglected the *ex corde* praying in the services.

A sermon on a particular subject, a special sermon, a sermon in which a doctrinal or practical point has been driven home, seems almost to call for an *ex corde* prayer. If the sermon has been on repentance, one in which both the Law and the Gospel have been forcibly brought home, does it not seem natural that the congregation should immediately upon its close bow in repentance and prayer before God's throne? If it has been a sermon with a jubilant note in it, portraying the glory of God and the blessings of His mercy, does it not seem natural that the congregation should desire immediately, as a congregation, to lift its voice in praise and

adoration? And it seems a little stilted and out of harmony with the spirit of the moment when, after his impassioned address, the pastor gropes for his *Agenda*, looks through the pages, and then reads a prayer some one else has conceived and which sometimes not at all or only to a degree fits in with his sermon. The *ex corde* prayer seems especially called for after the evening sermon, where our common service provides no prayer.

"Free prayers" often add to the solemnity, the symmetry, and the impressiveness of the service. Take, for instance, a confirmation service. Here are a number of children to whose hearts I have, if I am a faithful pastor, for months laid earnest siege, whom I have learned to love, and for whose souls, since I know their weaknesses, I have learned to tremble. With the thunder of the Law I have tried to show them their sinfulness and with the voice of the Gospel to lead them to Jesus, their Savior. The time for their public reception into the church has come. Surely I have spoken from my heart in my address to them, and they have kneeled at the altar and vowed undying allegiance to their Redeemer, and now the moment has come when the congregation is to commit them on bended knees in earnest prayer to the loving care of Him who alone can lead them aright. And in this solemn moment I am to pray out of a book which some one else has written, seated at his desk! It seems like a cold draft upon the whole service. At such a time I want to pray, and I believe the children and congregation want to join, in heart-felt expression of my thoughts. They know my style of prayer, for they have prayed with me before, and therefore will easily follow. The prayer of another seems cold and incongruous. Take a Lenten service. We have perhaps been with the Master in Gethsemane and beheld His mortal anguish or have accompanied Him on the way of sorrows and have once more been brought face to face with the crushing truth that He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. The old and yet ever new story has deeply impressed us. We are almost overpowered with the significance of that career of suffering. And after the preacher has with earnestness applied the lesson of his glorious text and now wants to lead his congregation in prayer to the throne of the Lamb, he reaches behind him for a book and reads from a printed page a prayer in a style totally different from his own. A foreign note seems to disturb and mar the whole service. On Good Friday he has led his hearers to Calvary. He has shown them the crucified Redeemer. They have contemplated the most stupendous scene in all history,

the scene of God dying for sinners. He has tried to point out the everlasting significance of that scene. With mingled feelings of sorrow and joy the congregation is ready to bow down in prayer and adoration at the feet of Him who died for their transgressions, and the minister takes his book and reads a prayer which has been carefully thought out by another, which has been rewritten and filed and polished. There is nothing of the grandeur of the unhewn granite, but a piece of polished marble with a good deal of the marble's coldness. No, let the minister pray! His heart is warm with the precious subject he has proclaimed. He is in the proper mood of, let us call it, exaltation. Let him pray from his heart. Who cares if he makes a grammatical break? Who cares if a harsh sentence creeps in? Who cares for a *lapsus linguae*? God and man will overlook it.

The pastor will want to give expression to the spirit of Christmas and Easter in his own words. If he has caught the spirit of the occasion, if he can really say: "Mein Herze geht in Spruengen Und kann nicht traurig sein, Ist voller Freud' und Singen, Sieht lauter Sonnenschein," he will want to leave the book in its rack and pray *ex corde*. Let us practise free pulpit prayers more extensively.

If it is true that *ex corde* praying is somewhat neglected in our circles, why is it true? One reason, to our mind, may be found in the great number of excellent printed prayers in our midst. It is certainly easier to take a book and read a prayer than it is to pray a suitable prayer *ex corde*. A read prayer always seems to spread a degree of coldness, to put a sort of damper upon the fervor which the sermon may have aroused. Even when it is properly read, — and a large part of the reading is of a slovenly, perfunctory, and sometimes almost irreverent character, — but even where the preacher is an artist at reading, it seems like bringing in something foreign, like disturbing the cohesion of the whole service. I mention this as my personal feeling. You may dispute it to your heart's content. A desire to avoid a special effort, ordinarily called laziness, may to some degree account for some preachers' failure to pray *ex corde*; but I believe that this is not the common reason.

There is, no doubt, among us a degree of honest timidity. It is not easy to pray *ex corde* before the congregation where a certain degree of fluency and command of language is required. We may be really afraid of trying *ex corde* praying, afraid of delivering *Gewaesch*, and a printed prayer that says something is better than

an extemporaneous prayer that is only a noise. Particularly may that preacher be shy at attempting free prayer who, because of lack of self-confidence or for other reasons, has become accustomed to reading his sermons. A sermon reader will hardly be efficient in free prayer. He is the slave of his manuscript and dares not trust himself to speak even in prayer without some mental crutch. To one so afflicted it may indeed be legitimate to write out a prayer appropriate to the sermon and to make extensive notes as to the line of thought he wants to follow. We can hardly get away from the fact that using the words of others is not so valuable for growth in grace as expressing one's own thoughts. We cannot abolish the exercise of thinking for prayer. It surely requires a distinct effort on the part of the congregation to rivet its thoughts reverently upon a prayer with which it has in the course of years become thoroughly familiar. If, however, the worshiper does not know what the prayer of the preacher will be who utters a free prayer, his mind is kept on the alert. The use of a form is so easy that natural inertia would lead to the disuse of free prayer and perhaps to the pastor's spiritual enfeeblement.

We want to emphasize very strongly the fact that *ex corde* must not be a formless jumble, and therefore an *ex corde* prayer must be prepared. One of the chief objections to free prayer is that its form usually is poor, its language inelegant, its periods ill-rounded or not rounded at all. It is often not rounded in form, logical in thought, or finished in expression. Too often an extemporaneous prayer is formless, chaotic, long-strung-out, disconnected, a sort of medley of phrases devoid of intelligible order. An *ex corde* prayer, however, should be as orderly and consecutive in thought as a discourse, well prepared and carefully developed, and always expressed in graceful and appropriate language. Let us again emphasize that *ex corde* does not mean unprepared. It means the free utterance of digested and prearranged thought, just as in extemporaneous preaching. Very often one hears an extemporaneous prayer with many subjects introduced and none of them completed, nor the whole arranged in such proportions as to have a distinct effect. Such prayers are often a bundle of scraps no more like an organism than a parcel of legs, arms, fingers, and ears resembles the human body. A preacher who in a public service dares to approach the throne of God without knowing what he is going to say or what he is going to ask for, is offering an affront to the Lord and an insult to his congregation. You must know



your story before you may tell it. You must prepare your sermon before you can effectively preach it, and for a similar reason you must conceive more or less fully your prayer before you can utter it. It is by no means objectionable to have the full prayer written out. This seems to have been done by Dr. Walther, who apparently prefaced his sermons with a prayer of his own. At the very least a general plan of the whole prayer made in earnest premeditation is necessary to attain the proper form and unity.

Professor Dabney writes: "Some affect to think that the spiritual nature of the exercise ought to preclude preparation, that because it is the Holy Ghost which teaches us to pray, we should not attempt to teach ourselves. This argument is renewal of fanatical enthusiasm. Should we not also preach with the Spirit? Why, then, do we not extend the same sophisms to inhibit preparation of the sermon? The answer is that the Holy Spirit does not suspend the exercise of our own faculties. He works through them as instruments and in strict conformity with their rational nature. He assists and elevates them. He helps us also in permitting us to help ourselves. Bethink yourselves, my young brethren, that it is no slight undertaking to guide a whole congregation to the throne of heavenly grace and to be their spokesman to God. To speak for God to man is a sacred and responsible task. To speak for man to God is not less responsible and is more solemn." The following quotation is from Professor Broadus: "He who leads a great congregation in prayer, who undertakes to express what they feel, or ought to feel, before God, to give utterance to their adoration, confession, and supplication, assumes a very heavy responsibility. We all readily agree, and sometimes partially realize, that it is a solemn thing to speak to the people for God. Is it less so when we speak to God for the people? Whatever preparation is possible for performing this duty ought surely to be most carefully made. And yet, while very few now question the propriety of preparation, both general and special, for the work of preaching, it is feared the great majority still utterly neglect to prepare themselves for the conduct of prayer." Prof. W. S. Blaikie says: "It is undoubtedly a grave charge, for which there is but too much occasion, that in our churches the devotional part of the service is often conducted with little care and preparation. It may happen that if a preacher has fluency enough of the language of prayer to carry him on for the usual time without difficulty, he does not think of what he is to pray for until he rises with the congregation to begin the exercise. It may possibly be an excellent

prayer, but is it conscientious? Is it respectful to God? Is it fair to the congregation or the man who is to be their mouthpiece at the throne of grace to rush into so solemn and momentous a service with hardly a thought of it beforehand? He may do it well enough, remarkably well under the circumstances; but can it be that he will do it in the best manner possible? Is this a service that a conscientious servant of God should be content to do except in the best possible way? Will the prayer be free from repetition, clumsiness, circumlocutions, and other encumbrances which Bible prayers never contain? Who can say that it will? Or who can say that it is right to trust all to the Spirit's helping us at the moment if we neglect what we might do beforehand towards more thorough preparations of the duty?"

Washington Gladden writes: "Inspiration is not caprice. It must follow the law which conditions all divine intervention in behalf of man. God helps those who help themselves. The grace of God is not given to relieve us from effort or to discourage us from responsibility, but to supplement our powers and to stimulate our activity. Luther has said that prayer is study, and it is true; *bene orasse est bene studuisse*; but it is not less true that study is true prayer. The diligent preparation of the mind for the heavenly gifts is the indispensable condition of the bestowment of these gifts."

A prayer must not only have the necessary form and unity, it must also be pertinent. It should confine itself to the subject which the occasion presents and to subjects directly related to it. We have often had an impression, when listening to *ex corde* prayers in sectarian churches, that the preacher was resolved to overlook no single person or situation in the realm of the world. He prayed for everybody and for everything and foresaw every possible contingency. This accounts for the wearying and inordinate length of prayers which we often hear. Such prayers invariably speak of lack of thought and preparation. We are not to stand before the Lord and give an exhibition of jumbled thought and utter often meaningless words as they happen to come to us.

It might also be mentioned here that *ex corde* prayers often sound as though the minister were giving Almighty God good and sound advice and at least hinting to Him how the affairs of the universe should be conducted and how best certain problems might be solved. Such prayers often sound as though the preacher were telling God things and reciting facts with which the omniscient Lord is thoroughly familiar. *Ex corde* prayer must, of course, be

governed by the principles which govern our worship of God. A congregational prayer is based on no other principles than those which regulate the prayers of the individual to God. "Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh." The rules of humility and of entire subjection to the will of God must govern also the public prayers of the pastor.

Naturally the personality of the man who is praying must never obtrude. It need not to be stated, of course, that the objections and resentments and disappointments of the minister have no place when he steps before God in the name of his congregation. References, no matter how veiled, to certain persons and to certain untoward conditions with which the pastor has had to contend will naturally be resented by the people, no matter in what pious and humble phrases they may be clothed.

Another danger is that a prayer may become a preaching prayer. These are prayers which give the impression that they are addressed not to God, but to the audience. The preacher seems to be exhorting his hearers instead of carrying the needs of his hearers to the throne of grace. Prayers also must never become too doctrinal. A prayer must not sound like a sermon. That doctrine must underlie, and appear in, devotion is inevitable; but we ought to shun the introduction of didactic matter, which makes it seem as though we were talking past the Lord at the audience. A prayer must never degenerate into a lecture to the people, and it must never be made a cloak for scolding the people. Personalities are out of place in public worship. Attack is cowardly, and flattery is servile. All diversion of thought from God is injurious. Devotion is the object of prayer, and devotion should be instrumental in drawing the audience closer to God. Sarcasm and wit are to be avoided. It is wicked to make pretended worship an act of slander or an occasion of reproof. These things are, of course, self-evident, but deserve mention.

Nor must the minister ever forget that his prayer is to be a congregational prayer. He is not praying for and by himself. His prayer must therefore be simple. The simplest and most ignorant must be able to follow, must in his pastor's prayer be able to present to the Lord the needs of his own heart. Some prayers sound like a sanctimonious soliloquy, a spiritual solo, to which the congregation can listen, but in which many cannot join. The melody is intricate. The scale runs too high. Not only in our sermons, but in our prayers we must come down to earth, so that the man from the shops and the woman from her housework may

follow us. We must try to see their needs. It is not enough that we see ours. The minister is speaking for the people before the throne of grace. He is not there for personal display. Spurgeon says: "It is little short of blasphemy to make devotion an occasion for display. In the presence of the Lord of hosts it ill becomes a sinner to parade the feathers and finery of tawdry speech with a view of winning applause from his fellow-mortals." That, of course, is very true. Just as the minister who in his sermons draws attention to himself instead of to his message, who is plainly posing and fishing for the applause and admiration of hearers, is a disgrace to his profession, just so that preacher is absolutely contemptible who in his *ex corde* prayers makes a parade of his knowledge and accomplishments and draws attention to the fluency of his diction.

The objection is sometimes made that during a free prayer people are apt to listen only to the language of the preacher and take note of the fluency of his speech and his aptitude for finding words and will not follow him in the spirit of prayer. We would say that in such a case both the hearers so inclined and the preacher who inclines them so have reason for serious self-examination. Some people listen to a sermon in the same spirit. They may admire or condemn the preacher's diction. They are in church for that avowed purpose. Spiritual benefit they do not gain. They may speak of a sermon as a splendid one. They may tell the preacher that they have enjoyed it, yet their enjoyment has been all intellectual. The spirit of devotion was absent. It is to be feared that when we preachers are in the pews, our attitude of hearing is often more critical than devotional. We are also more inclined to judge favorably or harshly the external form of the preacher's *ex corde* prayer. But if such a tendency to judge the form of the preacher's prayer is more general, it is probably to a great extent the preacher's own fault. His earnestness, his whole devotional attitude, ought to make the people forget his diction, his fluency, and make them think only of the solemn business he, with his congregation, is engaged in. If he has in his sermons gripped their souls, if the divine power of the Word has gotten hold of them, they will be able, yes, eager to follow him in earnest prayer. If he has preached naturally and his sermon has not had the stamp of studied effort, an intellectual parade, a grandiloquent, polished piece of oratory, the people will naturally be in a mood to follow him in prayer. A preacher's earnestness will prove contagious, and if his own attitude shows that he realizes that he is in the presence of God, his hearers will not think of things so

frivolous as the niceties of speech and well-rounded phrases. If the minister does, the people will. If he wants the people to admire his well-turned sentences and studied eloquence, they will probably do it; but that is not prayer, neither on the part of the preacher nor on that of the congregation. Some *ex corde* prayers are indeed as tinkling cymbals and sounding brass, and you cannot blame the people for admiring the resonance of the metal. A prayer which is merely a conglomeration of pious phrases and polished generalities had best be left unprayed. Such a prayer is not *ex corde*, but *ex capite*. That is why *ex corde* prayers are usually too long. It does not take us long to pour out our little tenpenny heart. The trouble is that we try to pour out our head, and our human thoughts are indeed as a babbling brook, ceaselessly flowing, and it is water that makes the noise. We are not in the pulpit to show off, neither in our sermons nor in our prayers. We are humble, insufficient servants, unworthy in every sense of the sacred office to which we are called, and in our prayers we are standing before the throne of Him whose eyes penetrate all sham and pretense, pleading our own and our congregation's needs. Our own attitude towards Him whose emissaries we are will determine the character and aptitude of our prayers in public. If we ourselves are sin-stricken, if we ourselves, through the chastenings of God, have become small in our own eyes, conscious of our shortcomings, working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, and are really earnestly concerned about the souls' welfare of our audience, imbued with a burning desire to bring souls to Christ, then the plea for forgiveness spoken in the name of our congregations will come naturally from our hearts. If our own souls do magnify the Lord and our own spirit does rejoice in Christ, our Savior, then the note of joy and thanksgiving will come naturally from our lips. If our sermon has been *ex corde*; if it has been really our heart's message, delivered with a holy earnestness, in the fear of God; if we have really thrown ourselves into our Sunday work with a sacred zeal; if our preaching has really been a wrestling for the souls of men; if we have preached "as though I ne'er might preach again, a dying man to dying men"; if our sermon has been really soul-stirring, not a mere recitation of a memorized essay or the reading of a religious dissertation, a cold recital of Biblical facts, — then a real *ex corde* prayer ought not to come hard. If we have really preached *ex corde*, then an *ex corde* prayer, the real earnest pleading of a shepherd for and with his flock, ought not to be such a difficult matter. If the minister is really

full of his subject, a prayer appropriate to the subject ought to flow freely from his lips. It means practise; it means earnest meditation; it means work. But also in our prayers we shall gradually learn to be ourselves and to give the stamp of our personality also to this part of the service.

It need but be mentioned here in passing that the effectiveness of *ex corde* prayer is, in a measure, dependent upon the character of the man who utters it. No matter how fluent the speech, how well-rounded the phrases, and how beautiful the sentiments expressed, the public prayer of the minister will be without any effect unless it is backed up by the unblemished character of his life. This is true naturally also of the sermon; but whereas the sermon is a discussion setting forth objectively certain truths and often a dissertation on various doctrines and their application to everyday life, the prayer is a formal and solemn approach to the throne of God for direct communication with Him. Even more than in the sermon it is true of prayer that, if the character of the minister is not blameless, his people will be apt to say: "What you are, thunders so loud that we cannot hear what you say."

Should the pastor pray *ex corde* at sick-beds? There are books on the market containing prayers for the pastor when visiting the sick. We may be wrong, but we could never become enthusiastic over them. As models they may serve a purpose, but for practical use they ought to be left at home. If there is any time during his pastoral duties when a minister ought to pray *ex corde*, it is, to our minds, at the sick-bed. There are never two cases in which the needs are the same. Nothing has been accomplished if the minister reads a general prayer (and a printed prayer must be of a general character) when the case requires a particular prayer. A pastor must stand ready to adapt his prayer to the circumstances. I need not enlarge on this.—Furthermore, a sick person in great spiritual and physical distress, perhaps with eternity staring him in the face, expects the pastor's sympathy, expects the pastor to understand him and his needs, expects particularly a sympathetic prayer, a statement of his case to the Lord, which he feels himself unable to put into words, and he is no doubt, consciously or unconsciously, depressed when the minister pulls a book out of his pocket and reads a prayer. Perhaps the patient is still able to read himself. A read prayer in such a case seems cold and unsympathetic. Surely the ministrations at the sick-bed are difficult, and we all probably have times of depression when leaving the sick-bed of people because we feel that our words have not been just

the right ones for the case, that we have been woefully insufficient in our ministrations. But it certainly will not make us feel any better to read our prayers.

Let us state another case. A man comes to us in great spiritual distress. He tells us his troubles and asks us to pray with him. Having stated his case, he naturally presupposes pastoral sympathy and understanding of his case on your part. And if the pastor says: "Wait, till I get my prayer-book; there is a prayer in there for those who are spiritually troubled," that man will henceforth go elsewhere for spiritual consolation.

There are printed prayers for congregational meetings. These, no doubt, are of value when the meeting must be opened by a layman during the pastor's absence; but as a rule the pastor should open the meeting with a prayer of his own. This does not mean an unprepared prayer, but every meeting has its peculiar situation; hence an *ex corde* prayer seems most natural. The same general rule holds good also regarding meetings of societies, Sunday-schools, etc.

Carefully, then, avoiding the dangers and pitfalls which have brought *ex corde* prayer into disrepute, let us not neglect or abolish an institution which has the characteristics of propriety and naturalness and which may be made a very valuable agency in enhancing the beauty and solemnity of our public service.

NOTE. — In preparing this paper for the Northwestern Pastoral Conference of the English District, the essayist made use of Dr. Marshall P. Talling's *Extempore Prayer; Its Principles, Preparation, and Practise*.

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