

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SPIRIT IN PUBLIC WORSHIP.

“For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”—*Paul to the Philippians.*

THE worship of God in private and in public, as it is prescribed in the Scriptures, requires our active attention always to the two grand divisions into which the service has been divided: the visible or tangible instruments to be used, and the effective power which is to be appealed to in the use of these instruments. In considering the worship of God and the surest means of benefit from it, it is necessary to recognize the outward ordinances as the only authorized method of our approaching him, and the only means by which we may expect his favor in benefits to ourselves. This dictates due care to have the ordinances as exactly conformed to the requirements of the law as it is possible to secure them. It is also indispensable to apprehend clearly, and then to act practically, on this knowledge of the correlated Scripture doctrine of the only agent and efficacious power by which the divinely-appointed ordinances can be made effectual. There can be no acceptable worship except in the use of those ordinances and actions in employing them which God himself has appointed. No man, or organized body of men, has a right to invent any action for the worship of God, and to challenge his blessing on the use of it. He would lay himself open to the cutting question, “Who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts” therewith? Every earthly monarch claims the right to settle the etiquette of his own court, the dress and acts of homage and ceremony by which strangers and his own servants are to

approach the royal presence. To alter those prescriptions for others entirely different, or to make changes by addition or subtraction in the prescribed forms, would be considered an invasion of the king's right, and a personal affront to his majesty. Much more has the King of kings the right to order the etiquette of his court, and the acts by which he would be approached. His ordinances must be observed, as nearly as possible, according to his own prescriptions, without additions to or subtractions from them. But the teaching of the Scriptures is unequivocally clear, that even the ordinances appointed of God have no power in themselves alone to work the needful effects on the soul of the worshipper, unless accompanied by the efficacious influences of the Holy Spirit. The gospel must come, not in word only, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. Our present object, however, is not to illustrate the general doctrine of the relation of the Spirit to the ordinances of worship and the means of grace, but the particular doctrine of his relation to the public worship of God in the regular assemblies of the people for Sabbath service. The assertion of the text is, that one characteristic mark of a true believer is that he "worships God in the spirit." This includes all kinds of worship, whether secret, social, or public, whether in the use of prayer, or praise, or preaching, or sacraments, or any other ordinance. The presence and the exerted influence of the Spirit is essential to the right and profitable use of them all. The special presence of the Holy Ghost, then, in the public assemblies for divine worship, is a *fact* certified to us in the word of God. The expression used by our Lord in reference to the Holy Spirit, "he dwelleth with you and shall be in you," points to a distinction, which, perhaps, cannot be fully understood in its complete, actual application. But it evidently implies both a dwelling with and a dwelling in the believer. The dwelling with has been applied, and with obvious propriety, to the presence of the