

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL & GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

NEW SERIES,
Vol. X. No. 49.

HALIFAX, N. S., WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 1865.

WHOLE SERIES,
Vol. XXIX. No. 49.

Religious.

Forms of Prayer.

In Mat. 6: 9-13, and Luke 11: 2-4, we have what has long been called by way of eminence, "The Lord's Prayer." The question has often been debated along the ages, whether the Great Teacher gave this as a form of prayer to be used by His followers, or whether He intended it simply as an illustrative specimen of the essential elements of prayer. That question is still in debate, and not likely in our day to be dismissed from the field of controversy. It is not one of the most important, but it has claims to consideration.

To those who have insisted that Christ, as Head of the church, appointed this prayer to be used *verbatim*, the reply has been, and still is:

1. That He does not, in this connection, or elsewhere, declare or even intimate any such purpose. In one instance, as we have it in our translation, He prefaces the prayer by the direction, "After this manner, therefore, pray ye." The adverbial phrase, "after this manner," is in the Greek one word, an adverb of five letters, meaning *thus* or *similarly*, that is, substantially in this way. The most we can make, by fair interpretation of His language, is, that He would have His disciples regard these few expressive, comprehensive sentences as containing a specimen of suitable, acceptable prayer. A reference to the record preceding may aid us in understanding His design. He was giving instruction on the subject of prayer, and warning those who heard him against two objectionable kinds—the ostentatious or pharisaic, and the unmeaning, or heathenish, where words are used without heart, mere verbosity. To make still plainer His lesson, he put together these few sentences as illustrative of what prayer should be. "Pray not like the Jewish hypocrites or the pagan chattering, but after this manner, pray ye." In relation to the other instance, Dr. Bloomfield says, "This prayer, as we learn from Luke 11: 2, was uttered at the request of one of Christ's disciples, who entreated that a form of prayer might be given them, such as John delivered to his disciples." Let the reader turn to the place, and observe the shape and purport of the request, "Lord, teach us to pray," &c. Is that asking a form of prayer? They heard Him pray, and were doubtless interested in the ease, the fluency, the fervor, the pertinacity, of His *ex tempore* and varied devotions. As ignorant beginners in that department, they sought instruction, such as John the Baptist had given to his converts, and their Lord framed, in fitting words, such a prayer as they might suitably offer. The direction thus to address their Heavenly Father, we do not understand to be an order to use the precise words and no others. It was as if He had said, "You ask to be taught to pray. This is my first lesson; not as to the form, but as to the essential elements. When ye pray, say, 'Our Father, &c.' In the few words I furnish an outline of what prayer should be." Here, as in the other instance, we find an address of adoration, six petitions and a doxology; and the beautiful whole is put before learners as what, in both substance and spirit, constitutes appropriate prayer. We find nothing in the Master's language, as interpreted by the circumstances and manifest design, that prescribes it as a form.

2. That we do not find an instance in which Christ used this prayer Himself, or any other as a form. We have quite a number of His prayers recorded by His biographers, some shorter and some longer than this; but none resembling this in phraseology. We cannot prove that he never used a form; but in the absence of all proof, we see no authority even for the inference that He repeated His prayers in any set words. Had He wished His disciples to use a form, it is reasonable to infer, not only that He would have explicitly declared His will, but also that He would have conformed His own practice to that end.

3. That in none of the recorded prayers of the Apostles do we find a single repetition of the Lord's Prayer, or the use of a single expression contained in that prayer. So, in all their recorded teachings, we find not the first

reference to that prayer, or any other, as required to be formally used, either in private or in public. Dr. Bloomfield says, "There is every reason to think it always formed a part of the devotions of the first Christians;" and then he adds, "See Acts 1: 42; 2: 24." The reader can examine for himself, and will oblige the writer of these paragraphs by indicating in these passages, or any others from inspired pens a sentence or a phrase belonging to the Lord's Prayer, or anything that would lead to the suspicion that "the first Christians" had ever known that prayer. The Apostles may have used the exact words of that prayer hundreds of times; but of that we have not a particle of evidence, not a remote intimation; and the absence of all mention of such use is strong presumptive proof that they did not understand their master as prescribing a form. Whatever they may have done as beginners, it is very certain that they were soon able to frame their own prayers independent of book, independent of memory—prayers varied in expression, pertinent to occasions, with no borrowed phraseology, no verbal repetitions.

A candid Episcopalian, an intelligent layman, recently endeavored to dispose of my reasoning, as above expressed, by an *ad hominem* argument; better fitted to some other end than conviction. He seemed to think that a Baptist could not thus interpret any of Christ's practical lessons without a breach of consistency. The point of his criticism was directed to the known fact that we as a denomination insist upon a literal construction of one of the Saviour's commands, and upon exact obedience in letter as well as spirit. He had reference, of course, to our views and practices in relation to the ordinance of baptism, making immersion necessary to its validity. On that point he understood us rightly; but when he assumed that consistency requires us to pray according to a prescribed form, as well as to be baptized according to a specified form, he greatly mistook the two as parallel cases. We have Christ's instruction to offer prayer in a certain way only twice mentioned, and in both instances the prayer is essentially in the same words. If He commanded that prayer to be used as a form, it is the only one authorized, and there can be no other. But He and His Apostles did pray in other words, and there is no evidence that either He or they offered the same prayer a second time. In their recorded prayers there is the greatest possible variety, with no intimation that any one of them was to be repeated by others. The whole argument rests upon the two directions "After this manner pray ye," and "When ye pray say." Both directions pertain to one very short prayer. If they are binding as to the form, then we are limited to that single prayer, and have no authority, even by inference, to offer any other. Could we accept that interpretation, we should in that department be "literalists," and confine ourselves in all our devotions, to that one prayer. Hardly can we be rationally told that the duty of baptism is imperfectly taught us. That service is commanded in words that define the form. Christ and His Apostles exemplified it in form. The cases are numerous where the sacred record describes it as repeated in form. The evidence is incontrovertible that it was continued three centuries without any change of form. The two cases, then, are in no respect parallel. Prayer was prescribed, exemplified, and practised, but not in form. Baptism was prescribed, exemplified, and practised as only one thing, always in a certain form. Prayer was acceptable without respect to form. Baptism was valid in only one form. Prayer might have an indefinite variety of verbal expression, and was a duty binding upon all persons, at all times, in all places. Baptism was a single act, to be performed once only by every believer, and by no others. In prayer, the *spirit* is commanded, the *mode* is optional. In baptism, both the *spirit* and the *mode* are commanded and illustrated by examples.—A Disciple, in W. & R.

Had Timothy a Liturgy?

On a recent Sabbath a pastor, in the opening services of public worship, read with other selections of Scripture, the first eight verses of the second chapter of Paul's letter to Timothy: "I exhort, therefore, that first

of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men," &c. The whole paragraph seemed to me as Apostolic instruction with respect to intercessory prayer, plainly indicating for whom it should be offered, the reasons why it should be made a prominent part of Christian worship, and the spirit and manner in which it should be offered. And the question arose, if Timothy had a liturgy? If he had not, why these instructions, rendered unnecessary by the forms already in his possession, and which he had but to follow and teach others to follow? If he had not, then why did not Paul furnish him with one rather than give such instructions? At the time this letter was written, Timothy was probably serving the church at Ephesus as temporary pastor. If Paul had given that church a liturgy, why did he not refer to it, and exhort Timothy to see that it was faithfully used as containing all the necessary forms, and specifying all the important objects, of prayer? Taking a common sense view of the subject, the inference seems just that neither Paul nor Timothy knew anything of a liturgy.—B.

Ready to die for Christ.

The martyr spirit has not yet died out in heathen converts. They are willing to take the spoiling of their goods or the loss of life for the cause of Jesus. Mr. Thomas gives an interesting illustration of this in the *Missionary Magazine* for October:

Among the converts was a middle-aged woman who has suffered not a little from the opposition of her unconverted husband. He has threatened to go before the magistrates, to kill her, and other similar things. But not moved by these threats, she has continued firm with three of her children. I shall not soon forget my first interview with this woman. I went to her house immediately after arriving in the place. Her husband was away. I stopped a few moments, but quite long enough to know that the woman was all I had heard—a true, humble believer in Christ. I said not a word about baptism. At the examination of candidates I almost feared to ask this woman if she wanted to be baptized. I feared the question might cause her some effort to answer. On coming to this humble-appearing woman, I said:

"And do you desire to be baptized today?"

With an earnest look that I shall never forget, she replied, "Why, yes. I have been waiting and longing to have the teacher come for months. I do want to be baptized."

I again asked, desiring for a time to avoid mentioning her husband, "You think, then, you believe in Christ?"

"Yes, teacher, I believe from the first time I heard of Him. God's word went into my heart the very first day I heard. And now I desire to acknowledge Christ before the world."

"But, I said, your husband is opposed to your being a Christian. Suppose he comes home and finds you have been baptized in his absence—he may be very angry. Have you thought of these things?"

Then, with a look which seemed to say, "O, do not suppose I am afraid of persecution," she said, "Teacher, I can die for the sake of Jesus Christ."

An Important movement in Boston.

For several years past, Tremont Temple has been used on Sunday evenings by other denominations or associations for preaching or lectures, thus preventing one great object had in view by the founder of the Temple enterprise. Both pastors and laymen have felt that this was unwise; that Baptists ought to avail themselves of the immense congregations which assemble here, for hold-

ing forth the truths of the gospel. We rejoice that our lay brethren have taken hold of this matter, and arranged for a series of denominational sermons to be preached in the Temple on Sunday evenings during the Winter. Rev. Dr. Eddy preached the first of this series last Sunday evening. The *Journal* reporter says of this sermon:

The preacher announced his text in 1 Tim. 2: 15, "The church of the living God—the pillar and ground of the truth," and introduced his discourse with a general consideration of what should constitute a just claim to be the church of God—a claim not to be allowed to any that could not prove itself to be the pillar and ground of the truth. Proceeding to discuss the mission and polity of the Baptists, Dr. Eddy first gave a historical sketch of the origin and progress of the Baptist faith, from the earliest times, presenting statistics of the increase in the number and membership of the Baptist Churches from the landing of the pilgrims until now. The distinctive principles of the Baptists were then enunciated and considered, viz: Christ the sole Head of the church; the Bible as the only standard of authority in matters of faith and practice, as opposed to the traditions of men and the usurpations of councils; a regenerated church membership; personal faith pre-requisite and essential to baptism; freedom of conscience and soul liberty; loyalty to Christ as opposed to the prevalent ideas of non-essentialism; and baptism in apostolic form, or immersion. For the defense of these the Baptist Church was set, and holding them she presents herself to the world as the pillar and ground of the truth. The preacher mentioned a few things which seemed to him to be needed in the denomination. They wanted a more aggressive disposition, a broader public spirit, a deeper missionary enthusiasm, a grander conception of their work. They wanted unity of action, a central organization, a consolidated public sentiment. A brief but eloquent appeal to those who had not yet found Christ to seek the salvation of their souls and be reconciled to God, concluded a most able and interesting discourse.

This association under whose auspices these sermons are being preached, is the *Social Union*, composed of the "Solid Men" in our denomination in Boston and vicinity. We understand that it is the purpose of this Union to have our denomination represented in these sermons, by some of the ablest Baptist ministers in the land. This is as it should be; and the influence of such a series of sermons must be productive of good.—*Christian Era*.

HALIFAX, DECEMBER 6, 1865. A Christ-like work.

A late number of the *National Baptist* contains the following paragraph:

Rev. W. D. Siegfried late pastor of the Twelfth Baptist Church in this city, has felt himself impelled by a solemn sense of duty and the call of God, to bestow his labors in this direction, to visit the poor in their own homes, to care for the children of want and woe, and to minister, so far as he can, to the temporal and spiritual welfare of those who would otherwise be neglected. We are not informed of all the details of his contemplated work; but among other agencies he has commenced the publication of a small weekly sheet called *The City Evangelist*; and bearing the motto "Go out into the streets and lanes of the city and bring hither the poor, the maimed, the halt and the blind."

This is a noble way to use property which God may have given to the preacher. We understand that Mr. Siegfried has been blest with wealth, and proposes to devote his services to the poor. What could be nobler or more Christ-like? The poor of great cities are in some cases left as destitute of religious privileges as are the Burmans or the Karens. Something must be done for the poor. Some way must be devised to reach the sheep that have no shepherd, and who are lost on the cold mountains, and in the heated deserts. Are there not men, who have money to devote to city missionaries? Are there not men who will build chapels, support missionaries, and do the work which ordinary family churches are leaving undone?