

THE HOME MISSION JOURNAL.

VOLUME I.

ST. JOHN, N. B., APRIL 25, 1899.

NO. 10

The Home Mission Journal.

A record of Missionary, Sunday-School and Colportage work. Published semi-monthly by the Committee of the Home Mission Board of New Brunswick.

All communications and subscriptions may be forwarded to
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Carleton, St. John.

Terms, - - - 50 Cents a Year.

Who Should Use The Lord's Prayer?

By J. M. FENDLETON, D. D.

The answer which a man gives to this question is a pretty good index to his theology. If, for example, he takes the view of the late F. W. Robertson of Brighton, England, namely that all persons are by virtue of their birth children of God, he will of course say that all may use this prayer. If, on the other hand, it is believed that regenerate persons alone can claim God as their Father, it follows that this prayer should be restricted to them.

While I adopt no view because any man holds it, I am glad to find Mr. Spurgeon and Mr. Moody on what I consider to be the right side of the question. The latter in an address on "Heaven" says, "we say 'Our Father which art in heaven.'" A great many people are lost by that prayer. It is not the Lord's prayer but the disciples prayer. The Lord's is in the seventeenth chapter of John. Satan rocks many off in a cradle to sleep on that so-called Lord's prayer. None but a disciple of Christ can use it and say 'Our Father.' To the unsaved Christ said 'Ye are of your father the devil.'"

I am glad that Mr. Moody has expressed these views. I have long been grieved at the indiscriminate use of the Lord's prayer, so-called, not because he prayed thus, but because he gave it to His disciples as a model of prayer. There is a sense in which we refer to God as the universal Father. We mean that He is the creator of all and therefore, we speak of His creatures as His children. God Himself said to the Jews, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." But in the evangelical sense of the term children it can be applied only to the regenerate. They are sons of God, and Paul says, "Because ye are sons God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

There is a passage which is, if possible, more plain than this. God commands his people to separate themselves from the impenitent, saying, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, said the Lord, and touch not the unclean; and I will receive you, and I will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Here we see who can say, "Our Father." They are not unbelievers, but those who must come out from unbelievers that God in the spiritual sense may be their Father and they his sons and daughters. The Jews claimed God as their Father, but Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father ye would love me," thus showing that a filial relation to God is inseparable from love to Christ. How then can the impenitent honestly and sincerely offer "the Lord's prayer? No impenitent sinner can truly say to God, "Hallowed be Thy name," for he does not hallow it; nor can he honestly say "Thy kingdom come," for he is not identified with the interests of the kingdom; nor can he sincerely say, "Thy will be done," for if he could he would at once cease to be an impenitent sinner.

It will be inferred that I object to the use of the Lord's prayer in promiscuous assemblies, Sunday-schools, etc. I certainly do. When wicked men, as is often the case, unite in the services of the Episcopal church and say, "Our Father which art in heaven," etc., it is an abomination for it is a falsehood. It would be well for every such man with a sense of his wickedness

to pray, "God be merciful to me a sinner." When Christians bow before God in prayer they may with the utmost propriety and should with holy unction say, "Our Father Who art in heaven."

Nehemiah Was a Noble Layman.

His portrait ought to be in the world's picture gallery among heroes and faithful men. He was a bright man and pushed his way up by his ability and integrity to a chief in the nation. He was a fine executive officer, a brave civil service reformer, and sagacious manager of men. He stopped leaks in the treasury, and declined the spoils of office, and accomplished a work in fifty two days that had waited to be done for more than eighty years.

Nehemiah carried his religion into secular life, and though he lived in a royal court, and a heathen one, too, he maintained his piety amid those environments. Few do this. Religion grows very pale and sickly when people attain lofty station and follow the customs of a worldly and fashionable life.

He never forgot his nationality and his religion, and was true to his own people and made large sacrifices in order to help them. His heart was warm towards Jerusalem, and he felt the reproach of her broken walls and burnt gates. He wept and prayed; his face became pale with sorrow on account of the desolation that was upon Israel. Nehemiah teaches us how to weep and pray, and labor for the repairing of the broken walls of the city of God. Every true revival of religion begins in the sorrow and tears of the godly who deplore the decay of piety, and the dearth of conversions in the church. He did not begin by blaming others for their shortcomings, but by humbling himself before God and offering himself in consecrated service. Tears and prayers preceded work, and when he saw the condition of the city he stirred the hearts of the people to rise up and build. Being on fire himself he soon set others on fire, and Jerusalem was girdled with earnest builders. One burning torch is enough to kindle a hundred other torches. Nehemiah started a great reform, and a great religious revival. But it all began in tears, confessions, and prayers. When he surveyed the broken walls his heart was deeply moved, and he resolved to wipe out the reproach upon the Holy City. Soon the lukewarm people caught the contagion of his zeal, and a seemingly impossible work was done in less than sixty days. What things might be wrought in our church during the next sixty days if the people "had a mind to work!"

The After Meaning.

When the Lord said to Peter, who was astonished at his washing the disciples' feet, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." He had no reference to the eternal future. He meant that the significance and lesson of the lowly act of washing their feet would dawn on his mind later on. It would be understood by and by. Just then it was a lesson in cipher, to which he had no key. The real significance of many of the events of life is not seen at first sight. It is afterward they disclose their meaning. After-means do not always tally with first impressions. Begin with childhood. We were placed under restrictions, and were forbidden many things we desired. We were not allowed to eat what we wished, or to go where we wanted. We are schooled in self-denial. Our mothers said "No" to our requests a hundred times. The result was that hot tears came to our eyes, and often resentment and resistance to our hearts. We did not know the reason of things; but as our judgement grew, and character ripened we began to see the meaning of it all, and we found that our hardships were concealed blessings. The process of education illustrates the same thing. We are only too ready to say; "What is the

use of learning these rules, and going through the drill and drudgery of the school?" There seemed to us no use in studying what we had no liking for, or complying with rigid rules imposed by our teachers. We did not know then, but later on meaningless things revealed their hidden wisdom. As we go through life, and our observation widens, and experiences multiply, we discover the real meaning of previously half understood words and un'toward events. Many things we least understood at first have turned out to be our greatest good. Our reverses and disappointments have often been God's kindnesses to us.

How to Have a Bright Meeting.

W. W. BARKER.

A bright meeting? Yes, that's it. And can we have one? Yes, it all depends upon those that form the meeting. In a meeting a few nights ago, after the leader had done his best to give a keynote to the people he "threw the meeting open" and then waited, waited, waited, but alas! one's imagination pictured a funeral, and people waiting for the corpse to be brought in or carried out. And this at a meeting of happy people, people who could have brought heaven to earth by their joyous singing and heart-moving testimonies. Well, if you've been to meetings like this you know the need of uplifting ones. Let us have Psalm 126 instead of Psalm 137. But who's responsible? The leader is not, alone, nor one or two people. All that go are. You are, reader.

Things don't happen, they are caused. Good meetings don't happen. To have a bright meeting *determine* to have one. Make up your mind that you'll do you share towards it. Say this: "If an ungodly person is present to-night so far as I'm concerned he or she shall know that the religion of the Lord Jesus is the only source of happiness, and that His people love to speak His praise." Yes, you're right, we've got to consider those that will be there. A gentleman took an unbeliever into a meeting saying: "I'll show you some happy people." But what a draggy meeting it was. People looked at the carpet pattern, pillars, ceiling and hymn books; they shuffled about, they coughed, and their faces wore expressions the very opposite of happiness. The Christian man had nothing whatever to say to the unbeliever about the meeting at its close, but he thought a great deal of what might have been.

Do your part then. Study the topic. Read with the meeting in mind. If you find anything in the newspaper that you can turn to good account, tell it. If you read a sweet piece in your denominational paper tell it, and thereby impress some heart with a spiritual lesson. If you've never spoken get up and recite a verse of Scripture. Next time give another, adding such an expression as this: "This verse has strengthened my heart to-day." Next time say a little more. You'll soon be able to speak freely. But keep on until you do it easily. Have a little bit of the right kind of pride, and make up your mind that all the meetings held in your church shall be as good as any held elsewhere, and such as will honor Christ.

A few words about other things. The singing. Let it be spirited. Sing hymns through in many cases; don't spoil the thought by cutting it off in the middle. Have the hymn books on a little table by the door, so that people can take them as they enter. If they are on the seats people will sit on them, and some will have to be bookless. I saw a stout person sit on three books not long ago and pick up a book from a seat in front to sing from. The testimonies—keep to the three minute rule if the meeting is a very large one. The prayers—let Psalm 27:8 (first clause), come in here: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after." Long prayers make some people think prayer a very unpleasant thing.