

Contributions.

Prayers.

The study of the prayers of the different peoples inhabiting the world is at once interesting and instructive. Among the primitive races of mankind there are many most touching prayers; and, considering the benighted condition of these people, never having known of God's revelation to man, nor of the blessed Gospel, they are beautiful illustrations of man's "feeling after God," and powerful examples of his conscious helplessness and inferiority.

The daily prayer of a Watja negress was, "O God, I know Thee not; but Thou knowest me; I need Thy help." This is not much like a heathen prayer. "Compassionate Father, here is some food for you. Eat it, and be kind to us on account of it," is a prayer offered by chiefs in the Island of Tanna, when sacrificing the first fruits. So also in the Samoan Islands at the evening meal the head of the household prays, "Here is ava for you, O gods. Look kindly on this family; let it prosper and let us be kept in health. Let our food grow and let us be a strong people." Do you think the Omniscient Father would have difficulty in interpreting these childlike cries? "O Great Spirit above! have pity on my child and on my wife. Let them not mourn for me. Let me succeed in this enterprise; slay my enemy and return in safety to my dear family and friends, that we may rejoice together," prayed a Delaware Indian. A negro on the Gold Coast prayed, "God, give me, to day, rice and yams; give me slaves, riches and health. Let me be brisk and swift." The natives of Central Africa pray, in time of drought, "Hear Thou, O God, and send rain." Sometimes in taking medicine they pray, "Heaven Father! bless this medicine which I take." Judson reports this prayer of the Karens to their harvest goddess: "O grandmother! thou guardest the fields. Look out sharp for thieves. If they come, bind them with this rope." The Algonquin Indians, in crossing Lake Superior for the first time, prayed thus to the Great Spirit: "You have made this lake; and made us your children. Cause this water to be smooth while we pass over." An Osage Indian prayed: "Pity me Master of Life! for I am poor; give me good success against my enemies. Let me take many scalps, many horses." Similar to this was the prayer of Darius when informed that the Athenians had taken and burned Sardis. He said: "O Supreme God, grant that I may avenge myself on the Athenians." We all know the answer to his request. A preacher among the Disciples, who had come from the Methodists from very questionable motives, not long since dismissed a temperance meeting with these words: "May Thy blessing descend and abide upon Thy people, O Lord, and may Thy withering curse descend upon all those who know Thee not." It will be a relief to the brethren to know that this preacher of primitive Christianity (1) has exchanged the theological for the political arena. Some of David's prayers might be classed with these just quoted; for instance, where he says, "Pour out Thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known Thee and upon the nations that have not called upon Thy name."

Here is a most childlike prayer manifesting the spirit of submission and faith. It is the prayer of a native of Hindostan. "O, Boora-Penner, who created us and made us to be hungry, who gave us corn and taught us to plough, when we go out in the morning to sow, save us from the tiger and the snake. Let not the birds eat the

seed. Let our plow go easily through the soil. Let the corn be so plentiful that we shall drop it on the way. Let our cattle be so many that there shall be no room for them in the stalls. You know what is good for us. Give it to us." The Zulus pray to their ancestors and say, "People of our house, cattle!" "People of our house, good luck and health!" Here is a very old prayer of Indians of Central America: "Hail! O Creator, Maker! Thou seeest us and hearest us. Do not leave us; do not desert us. Grand-mother of the sun, grandmother of the light, hear us and help us!" "Lord bless us all, and help us to do our work light and bright and in large quantities," was the prayer of a young man in a Y.P.S.C.E. lately.

Among the more enlightened races we find many prayers that would be suitable for a Christian liturgy with little change. Here is a beautiful prayer of the great King Ashur-banapal, a Gentile sovereign of the seventh century before Christ: "May the look of pity that shines in Thine eternal face dispel my griefs. May I never feel the anger and wrath of the God. May my omissions and sins be wiped out. May I find reconciliation with Him for I am the servant of His power, the adorer of the great gods." Here also is an excellent hymn to the Supremo God of Thebes: "Hail! thou lord of the thrones of the earth, the oldest existence, ancient of heaven, support of all things, lord of the truth, father of the gods, maker of men, beasts and herbs; maker of all things above and below; deliverer of the suffering and oppressed, judging the poor; lord of wisdom, lord of mercy, most loving, opener of every eye, source of all joy. Hail to thee! thou one with many heads; sleepless when all others sleep; adoration to thee."

Very striking are the prayers of that triumvirate of Roman Stoics. Seneca, the philosopher, says, "We worship and adore the framer and former of the universe; governor, disposer, keeper; him on whom all things depend; mind and spirit of the world; from whom all things spring; by whose spirit we live; the divine spirit diffused through all; God all powerful; God always present; God above all other gods; thee we worship and adore." Epictetus says, "Dare to lift thine eyes to God and to say, 'Use me for what Thou wilt. I agree, I am of the same mind with Thee. I refuse nothing that seems good to Thee. Lead me where Thou wilt, I will go.'" In the fifth century, before Christ, lived the Stoic Cleanthes who wrote this hymn: "O, thou who hast various names, but whose essence is one and infinity; O, Jupiter, first of immortals, sovereign of nature, who governest all, and subjectest all to one law, I salute thee. All that lives, all that moves, all that exists as mortal upon the earth, we all are born of thee, we are a feeble image of thee." When we remember that Jupiter is the Latin name for the Greek, Zens pater, meaning Heaven Father. This name as applied to God does not seem irreverent.

The negroes of the Gold Coast address God as "Our great friend," or, "He who made us." In the Zend Avata, the sacred book of the religion of Zoroaster, the prayers breathe still more a Christian spirit. These supplications are for a better life, for goodness: "May we, by means of good thoughts, good words and good actions, resist evil thoughts, evil words and evil actions." "Let me know the fulness of life-purity, immortality." "May power and strength come to me that I may maintain purity in thought, in word and in action." Such prayers are frequent. Here is a Buddhist prayer: "Thou in whom innumerable

creatures believe! thou, Buddha, victor over the hosts of evil; thou all-wise being, come down to our world! made perfect and glorified by innumerable by-gone revolutions, always pitiful, always gracious toward all creatures. Look down upon us, for the time has come to pour out blessings on all creatures. Be gracious to us from thy throne in thy heavenly world. Thou art the eternal redemption of all creatures; therefore, bow down to us with all thy unstained heavenly societies." The Koran is full of beautiful prayers. Here is part of a prayer of a pious Muslim in the twelfth century: "O, thou who art in the interior and in the exterior of the soul! In thy presence reason grows dizzy. All beings are marked with thy impress, but thyself hast no impress visible. Be merciful unto us." A saint of the Sufis sect cries out, "How long, O my God, art thou pleased that I should remain between the myself and the thyself. Take away from me the myself, that I may be absorbed in the thyself."

The following is a formula of prayer to be repeated by the candidate for baptism among those remarkable people, the Ti-Pings: "I, kneeling down with a pure heart, repent of my sins and pray the Heavenly Father, the great God, of His abundant mercy, to forgive my former sins of ignorance in repeatedly breaking the divine commands, earnestly beseeching Him also to grant me repentance and newness of life, that my soul may go to heaven, while I henceforth truly forsake my former ways, abandoning idolatry and all corrupt practices, in obedience to God's commandments. I also pray that God will give me His Holy Spirit to change my wicked heart, delivering me from all temptations and granting me His favor and protection, bestowing on me food and raiment, and exemption from calamity, peace in this world and glory in the next, through the mercies of our Saviour and Elder Brother, Jesus, who redeemed us from sin." In every household in the Tao-Ping Territory the following prayer was hung up for the use of the children: "Supreme Lord, our Heavenly Father, forgive all our sins that we have committed in ignorance rebelling against Thee. Bless us brethren and sisters, Thy little children. Give us our daily food and raiment; keep from us all calamities and afflictions, that in this world we may have peace and finally ascend to heaven to enjoy everlasting happiness. We pray thee to bless our brethren and sisters of all nations. We also pray, Heavenly Father, that Thy will may be done on earth as it is in heaven, for Thine are all the kingdoms, the power and glory. Amen." Here is a most beautiful prayer of a poor cripple named Butene, who had lost both his hands and feet by disease, but who was led to believe the Gospel by hearing his neighbors talk of the sermon of the missionary in his Island home in Raratonga: "O Lord, I am a great sinner; may Jesus take away my sins by his good blood. Give me the righteousness of Jesus to adorn me and give me the good spirit of Jesus to instruct me and make my heart good. Make me a good man of Jesus and take me to heaven when I die." This is the prayer he repeated to Mr. Williams when the missionary saw him for the first time and asked him if he ever prayed.

Towering above all these prayers and all prayers from Christian pulpits and homes, in lofty grandeur and inimitable simplicity, is the prayer which Jesus of Nazareth taught His Disciples. I forever stands the model of prayers, the pearl of prayers, the *brevium evangelii*. "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done

on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen." E. R. BLACK

Action The Law of Life.

With every opportunity for good there comes a corresponding danger of evil, and the power of the evil would, if allowed to operate to the fullest extent, be as great as would the power for good with the same condition. If one is lifted to where he may see far he may also be in danger of falling far. Furthermore, it is true that to obtain or possess any opportunity we must undergo the corresponding danger, for everything comes at a price which can not but be paid. "By the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return unto the ground" is no less a law of spiritual and intellectual life than it is of physical life, and of all blessings found in either realm.

All common good has common price,  
Exceeding good exceeding;  
Christ bought the keys of Paradise  
With cruel bleeding.

We say of liberty that it is every man's birthright. The British colonies once declared their independence of Great Britain and one of the first declarations in that document is that men are born free; and yet, some great one has truly said, "the price of liberty is eternal vigilance." Thus we purchase every opportunity by balancing accounts with danger, and it should be our chief concern to so improve the opportunities that the dangers do not swallow us up. Here is a man who enjoys the advantage of knowing the truth. Beside the increased responsibility there is also the possible danger of his concluding he has found it all, and that beyond his foot prints none will ever go. This would be a vain remark if there were no bigotry yet on earth. The man who knows it all is of the timber of which whipping-posts and fagots were formerly made, and though he can not now squelch thought by these means, such a mind will, to the extent of its power, by shackling minds by chains of opinion or creed which is none the less baleful in its effect because it is not written, stop the warm flow of the soul's life-thought.

The consequence to the man himself is a stagnation or a crystallization. When some substances come to rest they at once begin to crystallize. Now a crystal may be very beautiful to behold, but it is only a dead thing after all. It has ceased to change. Only God can change not and not die, and even He is not idle. "My Father worketh hitherto," says our Lord, "and I work," as we may see in the myriad forms of energy that cluster upon the earth. Action is the law of life, development is the end of acting. We do not live just that we may be said to live, but that we may use this opportunity to make the most of ourselves, for life is a grand opportunity to prepare men to be angels. Not by "letting good enough alone" but by using "good enough in producing better." The activity of our powers is the polishing and sharpening process. The nugget of gold sleeping in the mountain's lap is gold all the time but it is not the beautiful thing it can become when once the finer and graver begin their work. Neither do we think it is just the thing God intended it to be until it is brought up and transformed into some useful or beautiful object. Now it seems to be so with us. We are men with faculties divine all the time, unlike the nugget in this that we soon become less golden by inaction. But we are not yet what God intends we shall be when, "By

reason of use our senses shall be exercised to discern good and evil" and have "ceased to speak of the first principles of the gospel of Christ," and pressed on "unto perfection." And inactivity will never bring us to perfection unless it be perfect uselessness, if uselessness may be said to be perfect.

This obligation to act would seem to be particularly strong in the knowledge of God's will. We are likely to feel when we have found one truth that we have found all. That sweet song "The half was never told" does not express a deep sentiment of half the people who sing it. We sort of mean that somebody else hasn't learned half of it but we have.

God's word is an endless research. This does not signify that there is no final truth upon which we may plant our feet and say "This is the eternal rock." Christ, Immanuel, is the truth and to Him we turn and in Him abide. But when we have found Christ, the truth, it does not follow that we have found all the truths He would have us learn. It simply means that we have found our centre and there lies around and about every centre an illimitable territory of height and depth, length and breadth yet to be explored, their relations to the centre understood and applied. The question settled by the man who submits to Christ is not what is all truth or knowledge, but what is the key to it all? And the Christian so far from being a man whose mind is fettered by chains forged by the unrelenting hammer of a God who delights in slaves is the one freeman having found his lost liberty to think and now he has a fulcrum by the use of which he can do what a certain ancient worthy boasted that he could have done had he had a fulcrum, move the world. Shame on the man who when his jubilee is declared and he is free in Christ shall bow down at any man's door-post and suffer an awl to be thrust through his ear to make him a slave perpetually. Yet that is just what we do when we accept some man as our interpreter or some custom as our master. I wonder how many of our "free" disciples are wearing awl-holes in their ears.

I am not one of those who think the sum of Bible truth is known but it seems more probable that there are depths of truth in the Word of God unfathomed yet that must be brought up and applied to life. The Bible is a book for all men in all ages. It must then be deep enough for the profoundest and plain enough in its simple workings for the simplest so that none can say "I can not work, it is too deep," and none can say "there is nothing in it to do." It meets the requirements of that law of life, activity. Activity in learning what he means and in fulfilment of the same in life. Never can we say it is all learned or it is all done. But every truth that Christ leads us to see only lifts us to where we discover unexplored fields and heights of truth to scale, and every work accomplished for Him only shows us many more, to which we may bend our energies, beckoning us on to labor more, thus being truly active, developing, living, realizing to the satisfaction of the natural desire of life to act, that as a poet says of education, so it is with Christian progress.—

Hill peeps o'er hill and alps on alps arise.  
F. W. BAUGHMAN.  
Bowmanville.

In the throng  
Of evils that assail us, there are none  
That yield their strength to Virtue's  
struggling arm  
With such munificent reward of power  
As great temptations.—J. G. Holland.