

## Messenger and Visitor

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### WHEN YE PRAY SAY FATHER.

Among men who are accounted wise according to the wisdom of this world there are many who deny the rationality and the value of prayer, and there are many others who are in doubt as to whether it is worth while to pray. But in spite of all philosophical doubt and learned reasonings to the contrary, the vast majority of mankind, to-day as in the past, manifest one way or another a practical belief in prayer. The disposition to worship some supernatural power and to seek help from some extrahuman source is common to all races of men. How indeed could it be otherwise? Shut up within so narrow bounds, afflicted and troubled in many ways, tortured by disease and affrighted by death, yet dreaming wondrous dreams and thinking "thoughts that wander through the Universe," is it any wonder that men have grasped instinctively after something unseen which should solve the great enigma, and that they have cried with a great and longing cry to some power beyond the veil that shuts them up within a world of sense? If indeed we must believe that there is no ground for prayer in man's relation to a higher power, if there is none to hear or to respond—no pity and no help—and all the long and yearning cry of humanity after God is but wasted breath, then surely human life would be a tragedy so unique and awful that the mind must reel and stagger at its contemplation.

In view of what has just been said and suggested, it was a deeply pathetic incident when the disciples of Jesus came to their Master saying, "Lord, teach us to pray." Surely these men went to the right school to learn what could be learned about prayer, and it is still to the same Master the world must go to learn how to pray. Among all who have spoken to men of the things unseen, who has been able to speak with such authority as did Jesus? Who has spoken with so deep and convincing knowledge of God and humanity as he? What other man speaks like this man, and if we leave him to what instructor shall we go? He speaks to men of redemption and immortality, and he speaks that the truth was his way to the hearts of those who listen with an open mind to his words.

If we go to Jesus with the question—Is it worth while to pray? we shall obtain no philosophically reasoned answer, but we shall perceive that his whole life and teaching affirm the value, the reasonableness, the naturalness of prayer. And what is the ground of prayer according to our Lord's life and teaching—why is it worth while to pray? The answer to this question is the most reassuring and comforting that human language can convey. It is that the power unseen, the answer to the world's cry is a Divine Father, and that the soul which comes to God with its confession of sin and sorrow, its cry for pardon, its aspiration after purity, its petitions for help, may utter its longings with the assurance not only that God hears but that he listens with infinite sympathy to the cry of the contrite heart, and that his almighty power is pledged for the help of everyone who in liberal trust and obedience casts himself upon the divine mercy. We do not here at all touch the question whether or not the term "fatherhood of God" can be properly used in reference to the impenitent and unbelieving. The essential, practical truth is that the penitent, coming to God, finds in Him a Father, that every soul which desires in truth and sincerity to call upon its God is taught by Jesus to call Him Father. "When ye pray, say 'Father.'" What a world of hope—what an infinite assurance of goodness and blessing are in this word! It is the gospel of the grace of God presented in one of its richest and most attractive aspects. For the declaration that God is Father to the soul which truly comes to Him carries with it the assurance that all that a Father infinite in love and power can do for that soul will be done. Such assurance ought to banish all misgiving and complaining. Surely Paul was right in believing that for those who are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ all things must work together for good.

The truth that God is Father to those who pray does not indeed mean that all their wishes will be gratified and all their expectations fulfilled. Fatherhood is not a weak, unintelligent benevolence which yields to every wish and whim of inexperienced, foolish childhood. The true fatherhood is strong and wise as well as benevolent. Because it works in love and wisdom, it can disappoint and chasten. It is the way of our foolish, petulant human nature to conclude that the Divine Father does not hear or does not care, because he does not always give us the things we desire. Doubtless if the question were put to us, we should say that we want the best that God has for us, but sometimes we perhaps find ourselves unwilling to let the Father in Heaven be judge of what that best thing is. The supreme commentary on the prayer which Jesus taught his disciples is his own life and death. He at least never forgot, never doubted that God is Father and that the will of the Father is the supreme law of human life. It is surely a great thing to pray this prayer which Jesus taught his disciples, to be able to look up and say "Father," to say it not only in the bright days but in the dark nights, and in the most trying and awful experiences of life to say "Father," and add "Thy will be done," even as did Jesus in Gethsemane.

### Editorial Notes

—The venerable and still vigorous Dr. T. L. Cuyler has lost none of his faith in the dignity and the unique opportunity of the Christian ministry. "Bear this in mind, said Dr. Cuyler in a recent address to his presidential chair, no emperor's throne was ever built high enough to be within ten leagues of the pulpit in which the fearless preacher stands winning immortals souls to Jesus Christ."

—The courtship between the Presbyterian and Methodist churches of Canada seems to be proceeding pleasantly. We do not hear that anyone is opposing the proposal to unite, and many are warmly advocating it. "Roswall" in *The Wesleyan* says: "The question of 'Union' gathers impetus as the weeks advance and as conventions at strategic points elicit more fully the sentiment of preachers and people. It is yet too soon to talk definitely of the question of a name. That will come as the ripening process develops. As to a discussion of details, prudence would suggest that that be left entirely to properly constituted committees when the 'good time' has really come."

—The sinking of the Russian warship *Petropavlovsk*, with some 600 or 700 men, is a terrible example of the horrors of warfare under modern conditions. The Japanese Admiral was acting within the recognized lines of modern naval warfare in causing mines to be laid at the entrance to Port Arthur harbor for the destruction of the Russian ships and if every vessel in the Russian squadron had shared the fate of the *Petropavlovsk* it would have been regarded as a still greater triumph of strategy. The horrors of war strike us more forcibly when hundreds die in a moment, and, as it were, at a single stroke. But it is no more unmerciful, and it is certainly somewhat less cruel to send many men to death, thus suddenly than to kill them more slowly and with lingering tortures. War, when it is seen in its reality, is always a horrible thing. It is so horrible, so repulsive to every humane and Christian sentiment, that we may surely hope the day is approaching when so terrible a method of settling international disputes will become a thing of the past and the nations of the world shall learn war no more.

—*The Independent* counts the death of Verestchagin the greatest misfortune thus far of the Eastern war. It considers that "beyond question he was the greatest artist that Russia has yet produced. He had painted scenes of battles on land, always with a view to teaching the horrors of war, and it was his desire to paint a naval battle. It was this desire that made him accept the invitation of his old friend Admiral Makaroff, to be his guest on the 'Petropavlovsk,' and he went down with the vessel and its more than seven hundred victims, himself a victim of the system he hated and painted. His technique was questioned by painters, but his great canvases were extremely effective, giving the most realistic representations of the scenes of Russian life and the ghastly work of war. We recall his picture of the blowing up of prisoners from the British guns in India, and another later composition showing Colonel Roosevelt leading his Rough Riders up the hill at San Juan. We shall insist on putting the men of peace before the men of war, Verestchagin before Makaroff, and count his death as the saddest loss of those terrible too minutes when twice four hundred men went down."

—It is evident that in certain important respects the very large College or University is at a serious disadvantage in comparison with colleges at which the number of students in attendance is smaller. In reference to this *The Congregationalist* very truly says:—"With several hundred students in a class and multiplied electives, the unity of the class cannot be fully developed. The students have too few common aims and interests. They divide and sub-divide into small companies, according to their studies, and some graduate with hardly more than a speaking acquaintance with many of their class mates, and with those of classes

immediately preceding and following them." The same journal says that "an experiment is about to be tried in the University of Chicago, to see if the college idea can be carried out somewhat along the lines of English universities. It is proposed not to have more than 200 students and a faculty of perhaps twenty in each. Each college will have its own special character. One will make arts and sciences prominent, another classics etc. The students will share in the general advantages of the University, and perhaps for the last one or two years of the course the greater part of their work will be in lectures and studies open to the whole University. It will require several years to test the full value of this plan, but it is to be tried with the conviction that the future development of higher education is to be through the smaller colleges as the best organizations for all around culture."

### From Halifax.

The winter harvest in the Halifax churches of all denominations has been small. A general and painful consciousness has existed among the ministers and the church members, that the spiritual power, necessary to great zeal and faith in Christians, and to the conviction and the regeneration of sinners, has not been present, operating through the ordinary public services of the churches. Extra efforts, however, have been made to persuade sinners to be reconciled to God. Weeks of continued meetings were held in the Tabernacle, the North Church and the First Church. The pastor of the North Church has baptized four candidates, but so far none have been received through this ordinance into the First Church or the Tabernacle. Never in our belief had there been a time in our history when the ministers worked harder than they do now. It would be no wonder if some of them broke down under the stress of their strenuous labours. This is true of the pastor of the churches referred to in the city. As to Dr. Kempton's labours especially in view of his years, they are abundant and quite sufficient for a young man. Since coming to Halifax he has seen his congregation more than doubled, the increase has not been fitful but steady and solid. His coming to Dartmouth from his too large country field was evidently of the Lord.

The series of meetings referred to have been well attended in all the churches, and, no doubt much good seed has been sown, which in due time will swell the harvest all are hoping and praying for.

The annual thank offering meeting of the Women's M. A. Society in the First Church was large and enthusiastic. The expression of thanks amounted to \$100. Mrs. William Freeman, daughter of the Rev. R. D. Porter, presided at this meeting. Mrs. R. N. Beckwith, nee Miss Randolph, who came to us from Lawrencetown is another devout worker among "the honourable women" in the church. And this reminds me that Mrs. Allison Smith, another mother in Israel, after a long life, a sister distinguished for her kindly, loving spirit, and always constant and sympathetic with her pastor, is now very weak and evidently nearing the end of her journey. Her last act of large benevolence was to give to Dr. Trotter \$3,000 toward the second forward movement.

The debt on the First Church, which began with \$15,000, has lately been reduced by a \$1000 leaving it at \$5,000.

The Hon. D. McN. Parker, for fifty years or more honored and universally beloved, not only in the church and community of Halifax, but in the denomination at large, has about reached his 83 birth-anniversary. Although not able to attend public services, regularly, yet in good weather he finds his way to the house of God once each Sabbath. He is at present worshipping with the Dartmouth Church on the side of the Harbour where he resides. His interest in all denominational work is undiminished—college, home and foreign missions, and the annuities for ministers are on his heart and have his support to the extent of his ability. His mind is active and his intellect keen and vigorous.

Mr. Curry of Windsor, some time ago, declined an offer of a place in the Senate at Ottawa. That act did much to level up other callings and labours to a relatively normal place with that of honorable Senators. Emphasis has of late been given to this by C. C. Blackadar of Halifax—a man well qualified for the position. He has on his hands, the Recorder, the oldest newspaper in Halifax, his banking business, beside much else; and although yet in the ripe prime of life, he chooses to forego the honors of a Senatorship and enjoy his pleasant home and full labors in Halifax. Doubtless a good man will be found to fill the place; but Mr. Curry and Mr. Blackadar have told the country that other callings, not quite so highly valued by current public sentiment, do in their estimation, carry with them just as much dignity and honor as the Senate of Canada. To such men the public are indebted for moulding and making healthy, public sentiments.

A painful item appeared this week in the reports of the police court. It is this—Nell Reardon in the last twenty-three years had been three hundred and twenty-three times before that court. This is heart-breaking. Is it necessary for the community to sit by with folded hands, and see an unfortunate woman tried and sentenced 321 times