

“After this manner therefore pray ye”: Puritan Perspectives on the Lord’s Prayer

By Brian G. Najapfour

Let us have a great esteem of the Lord’s prayer; let it be the
model and pattern of all our prayers.

Thomas Watson

When Jesus says, “After this manner therefore pray ye,” what does He mean? Is He telling His disciples to pray the exact words of the Lord’s Prayer, is He telling them to just use this prayer as a pattern, or perhaps both? Is the Lord’s Prayer a set form (a set order of words to pray), a pattern (a sample of prayer), or both? This article, after briefly surveying some works on the Lord’s Prayer from patristic to Puritan periods, will deal with these questions, specifically focusing on how the Puritans understood Jesus’ words concerning how to pray.

I. Panorama of the Lord’s Prayer from Church Fathers to Puritans

A wealth of commentary on the Lord’s Prayer exists in the patristic period. Richard Stuckwisch says, “Treatises on the Our Father [i.e., the Lord’s Prayer]—whether in the form of catecheses, sermons, lectures, or written commentaries—are not uncommon in the history of the church, especially after the fourth century.”¹ Church father Tertullian, for example, wrote a tract called *On Prayer*² (ca. A.D. 192), in which he expounded the Lord’s Prayer. Origen’s *On Prayer*³ (ca. A.D. 233) also contains an exposition of Our Father. Likewise, Cyprian had a

¹ D. Richard Stuckwisch, “Principles of Christian Prayer from the Third Century: A Brief Look at Origen, Tertullian and Cyprian With Some Comments on Their Meaning for Today,” *Worship* 71 (1997) : 2.

² Tertullian, “On Prayer,” in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, reprint, 1989), 681-91.

³ Origen, “On Prayer,” trans. Rowan A. Greer in *Origen: An Exhortation to Martyrdom, Prayer and Selected Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 81-170.

treatise *On the Lord's Prayer*⁴ (ca. A.D. 252). And as it has been pointed out already, other church fathers touched on the Lord's Prayer in their catechetical lectures, sermons, and commentaries of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.⁵ Medieval theologians such as Thomas Aquinas also devoted pages to *Pater Noster*.⁶ Similarly, the Reformers wrote about this prayer. Luther elucidated it in his *An Exposition of the Lord's Prayer for the Simple Laymen*⁷ (1519), *Personal Prayer Book*⁸ (1522), Large and Small Catechisms (1530), and *A Simple Way to Pray*⁹ (1535). Calvin discussed it in his *Institute of the Christian Religion*¹⁰ and gave comments on it in his *Harmony of the Gospels*.¹¹

References to the Lord's Prayer are also scattered in the works of the Puritans. The Westminster Assembly's Larger¹² and Shorter¹³ Catechisms, which were composed by Westminster Divines, have sections on this prayer. In fact, some Puritan works on the Lord's Prayer available today were products of an exposition of these sections in the Shorter Catechism. Thomas Watson's *The Lord's Prayer*¹⁴ is an example of that work. John Flavel also spelled out

⁴ Cyprian, "On the Lord's Prayer," in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, reprint, 1989), 447-57.

⁵ For the definitive list of all extant patristic writings on the Lord's Prayer, see *Appendix* of Robert L. Simpson, *The Interpretation of Prayer in the Early Church* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965), 175-77.

⁶ Saint Thomas Aquinas, *The Three Greatest Prayers: Commentaries on the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, and the Apostles' Creed*, trans. Laurence Shapcote (Manchester, New Hampshire: Sophia Institute Press, 1990).

⁷ Martin Luther, "An Exposition of the Lord's Prayer for the Simple Laymen," in *Luther's Works: Devotional Writings 1*, vol. 42, ed. Martin O. Dietrich, trans. Martin H. Bertram (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 19-81.

⁸ Martin Luther, "Personal Prayer Book," in *Luther's Works: Devotional Writings 2*, vol. 43, ed. Gustav K. Wiencke, trans. Martin H. Bertram (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 29-38.

⁹ Martin Luther, "A Simple Way to Pray," in *Luther's Works: Devotional Writings 2*, vol. 43, ed. Gustav K. Wiencke, trans. Carl J. Schindler (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 187-211.

¹⁰ John Calvin, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 2, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), Book 3, chapter 20, sections 34-49.

¹¹ John Calvin, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries: Matthew, Mark and Luke*, vol. 1, eds. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, trans. A. W. Morrison (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 204-13.

¹² "The Larger Catechism," in *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1646; reprint, Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publication, 2001), Questions & Answers 186-196 [hereafter LC Q & A 186-196].

¹³ "The Shorter Catechism," in *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1646; Glasgow: Free Presbyterian, 2001), Questions & Answers 99-107 [hereafter SC Q & A 99-107].

¹⁴ Thomas Watson, *The Lord's Prayer* (1692; reprint, London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1972).

the Lord's Prayer in his *An Exposition of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism*.¹⁵ Likewise, William Fenner,¹⁶ Richard Baker,¹⁷ and Robert Hill¹⁸ did treatises on this prayer in the form of catechism. John Dod,¹⁹ Lancelot Andrews,²⁰ and Thomas Manton²¹ had preached on it, and later their sermons were published. Puritan commentators like Matthew Henry²² and Matthew Poole²³ gave notes on it in their commentaries of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.

This brief survey shows that the Lord's Prayer was not ignored among church fathers, medieval theologians, Reformers, and Puritans. In what follows we shall see how the Puritans interpreted this prayer's preface:²⁴ "After this manner therefore pray ye."²⁵

II. Puritan Perspectives on the Lord's Prayer

Puritans were not united in their understanding of the Lord's Prayer. John Bunyan, for example, would suggest that this prayer is only a pattern or a model that does not need to be repeated. Others would claim that while the prayer is a pattern, it is also a form, and thus can be

¹⁵ John Flavel, "An Exposition of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism," in *The Works of John Flavel*, vol. 6, (Edinburg: Banner of Truth Trust, reprint 1997), 293-317.

¹⁶ William Fenner, *The Spirituall Mans Directory* (London: Printed by T. F. for John Rothwell, 1651), 66-106.

¹⁷ Richard Baker, *Meditations and Disquisitions upon the Lords Prayer* (London: Printed by Anne Griffin, 1637?).

¹⁸ Robert Hill, *The Path-way to Prayer and Pietie* (London: Printed by Richard Hodgkinsonne, 1641), 1-212.

¹⁹ John Dod, *A Plaine and Familiar Exposition on the Lords Prayer* (London: Printed by M. D., 1635)1-234.

²⁰ Lancelot Andrews, "Nineteen Sermons of His, upon Prayer in Generall, and upon the Lords Prayer in Particular," in *The Morall Law Expounded, 1. Largely, 2. Learnedly, 3. Orthodoxly* (London: Printed for Sparke, Robert Milbourne, Richard Cotes, and Andrew Crooke, 1642), 39-136.

²¹ Thomas Manton, "A Practical Exposition of the Lord's Prayer," in *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton*, vol. 1 (London: James Nisbet & CO., 21 Berners Street, 1870), 1-254.

²² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary: Matthew to John*, vol. 5 (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., reprint 2003), 59-62.

²³ Matthew Poole, *Matthew Poole's Commentary on the Holy Bible: Matthew to Revelation*, vol. 3 (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, reprint 1990?), 27-28.

²⁴ The Larger and the Shorter Catechisms consider the preface to be "contained in these words, *Our Father which art in heaven,*" see LC Q & A 189 and SC Q & A 100. However, in this chapter, I employ the term "preface" to refer to "After this manner therefore pray ye."

²⁵ This is the preface found in Matthew 6:9 (KJV), and I am aware that Luke has a different wording: "When ye pray, say." Later we will find out that John Dod interpreted the preface in Luke to mean that the Lukan version of the Lord's Prayer is a form, while the Matthean version is a pattern. Therefore, according to him, this prayer is both a pattern and a form.

recited word for word as a prayer to God. Basically, three Puritan perspectives on the Lord's Prayer exist: (1) the Lord's Prayer as both a pattern and a form; (2) the Lord's Prayer as a pattern only; and (3) the Lord's Prayer as an exceptionally God-given form.

A. The Lord's Prayer as both a pattern and a form

The Westminster Shorter Catechism asks, "What rule hath God given for our direction in prayer?" Then it answers, "The whole word of God is of use to direct us in prayer; but the *special rule of direction* is that *form* of prayer which Christ taught his disciples, commonly called *The Lord's Prayer*."²⁶ The answer to the question suggests that the Lord's Prayer is both a pattern ("special rule of direction") and a form ("form of prayer"). It is important to note that not all Puritans were against the use of fixed prayers. Richard Baxter, for instance, published written prayers called *Forms of Prayer and Praises, for the use of Ignorant Families that need them*.²⁷ Similarly, Matthew Henry wrote "Some short Forms of Prayer, for the use of those who may not be able to collect for themselves out of the foregoing Materials."²⁸ Baxter and Henry, however, were not part of the Westminster Assembly. Yet since most of the members of this assembly were Presbyterians, it is not a surprise that the Shorter Catechism regards the Lord's Prayer as both a pattern and a form, because, even if the Presbyterian divines believed this prayer to be a pattern, they used it as a form in their public worship. Edmund Calamy, though, tells us that in the early eighteenth century, not all Presbyterians employed this prayer in public worship: "Some

²⁶ SC Q & A 99 (italics mine except for *The Lord's Prayer*).

²⁷ Richard Baxter, *The Poor Man's Family Book* (London: Printed by R. W. for Nevill Simmons, 1674), 346 ff.

²⁸ Matthew Henry, *A Method for Prayer*, ed. Ligon Duncan (Greenville, S.C.: Reformed Academic Press, 1994), 209-49.

ministers use the Lord's Prayer constantly, others frequently, others seldom or never, as reckoning it rather given for a Directory, than to be used as a Form."²⁹

The Larger Catechism further confirms that the Shorter Catechism regards the Lord's Prayer as not only a pattern, but also a form: "How is the Lord's prayer to be used? The Lord's prayer is not only for direction, as a pattern, according to which we are to make other prayers; *but may also be used as a prayer*, so that it be done with understanding, faith, reverence, and other graces necessary to the right performance of the duty of prayer."³⁰ While the Larger Catechism does not explicitly proclaim that the Lord's Prayer is a form, it permits the use of this prayer as a prayer itself. This point is also seen in *The Directory for the Public Worship of God* of the Westminster Assembly: "And because the prayer which Christ taught his disciples is not only a pattern of prayer, but itself a most comprehensive prayer, we recommend it also to be used in the prayers of the church."³¹

Therefore, the Westminster divines understood the Lord's Prayer as both a pattern and a form. For them the use of this prayer as a form, though not commanded, is commendable, and even recommended. However, aware of the danger of its use as a form, the Puritan divine John Flavel warns,³² "That form of words may be lawfully used, but it is plain its intention was to regulate our petitions by it; and therefore they that use it in spells and charms, as the Papist; or those that think nothing is prayer, but that form of words; abuse Christ's intention in it."³³ Flavel is convinced that the Lord's Prayer is a pattern; however, he is not totally against its use as a form so long that it is not abused. This is also the position of Matthew Poole, who argued that we

²⁹ Cited in Horton Davies, *The Worship of the Puritans* (1948; reprint, Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1997), 101.

³⁰ LC Q & A 187 (italics mine).

³¹ "The Directory for the Public Worship of God," in *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1646; reprint, Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publication, 2001), 382.

³² To avoid confusion, in this article, I use the term 'Puritan divine' to refer to a Puritan who was not part of the Westminster Assembly.

³³ Flavel, "An Exposition of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism," 295.

can pray “[n]ot always in these words [of the Lord’s Prayer], but always to this sense, and in this manner. None ever thought Christians obliged to use no other words than these in prayer, though none must deny the lawfulness of using those words which Christ hath sanctified.”³⁴ Thomas Boston echoes the same view: “The Lord’s prayer is given [to] us as a directory for prayer, a pattern and an example, by which we are to regulate our petitions, and make other prayers. . . . [But] [i]t may also be used as a prayer, so that it be done with understanding, faith, reverence, and other praying graces.”³⁵

Here two things can be noted. First, the Westminster divines both allow the use of the Lord’s Prayer as a form, and recommend it. Second, other Puritan divines, such as Flavel and Poole, while persuaded that this prayer is a pattern, permit its use as a form, provided that it is not misused. Hence, we have seen that some Puritans regarded the Lord’s Prayer not only as a pattern but also as a form.

B. The Lord’s Prayer as a pattern only

While some Puritans approved the use of the Lord’s Prayer as a form, John Bunyan did not. Bunyan utilizes both Matthew’s and Luke’s gospel to argue against the idea of the Lord’s Prayer as a form:

As to that called a form, I cannot think that Christ intended it [the Lord’s Prayer] as a stinted form of prayer. He himself lays it down diversely, as is to be seen, if you compare Matt. 6 with Luke 11. Whereas, if he intended it as a set form, it would not have been so laid down, for a set form is so many words and no more. We do not find that the apostles ever observed it as such; neither did they

³⁴ Poole, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, 27.

³⁵ Thomas Boston, “Of the Rule Direction in Prayer,” in *The Complete Works of The Late Rev. Thomas Boston* (1853; reprint, Wheaton, Ill.: Richard Owen Roberts, Publishers, 1980), 558.

admonish others to do so.... Christ by those words, 'Our Father, &c.', instructs his people what rules they should observe in their prayers to God...³⁶

For Bunyan, the Lord's Prayer is just a pattern given to instruct Christ's "people what rules they should observe in their prayers to God."³⁷ Bunyan strongly rejects fixed prayers. In fact, his treatise, *I will pray with the spirit and with understanding also* (1662), is an attack on the use of any set forms of prayer, especially the forms found in the *Book of Common Prayer*. Bunyan insists that prayer should be spontaneous from the heart. His rejection of the use of written prayers is a result of his pneumatological emphasis on prayer. For him to pray with these forms is to thwart the Holy Spirit:

We ought to prompt one another to prayer, though we ought not to make forms of prayer for each other. To exhort to pray with Christian direction is one thing, and to make stinted forms for tying up the Spirit of God to them is another thing. The apostle gives Christians no form in which to pray, yet directs to prayer (Eph. 6.8; Rom. 15. 30-32). Let no man therefore conclude, that because we may give instructions and directions to pray, therefore it is lawful to make forms of prayer for each other.³⁸

Bunyan therefore disagrees with the Westminster divines' view on the Lord's Prayer, which advocates utilizing the form in the act of prayer. Additionally, Bunyan differs from the position of Flavel and Poole who tolerate the practice of this prayer as a set form. Bunyan is persuaded that this prayer is only a pattern. However, Richard Greaves, a leading Bunyan scholar, suggests that even though Bunyan "did not explicitly prohibit use of the Lord's prayer, he warned that supplicants who recite it without the requisite faith face condemnation, whereas those who pray with the Spirit and the understanding offer their groans, sighs, and petitions... One word uttered in faith is better... than a thousand prayers read 'in a formal, cold, lukewarm

³⁶ John Bunyan, "I will pray with the spirit and with understanding also," in *Prayer* (1662; reprint, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), 46.

³⁷ Bunyan, "I will pray with the spirit and with understanding also," 46.

³⁸ Bunyan, "I will pray with the spirit and with understanding also," 44-45.

way,' including recitations of the Lord's prayer without living faith. ³⁹ Horton Davies, who has done much study on the worship of the English Puritans, remarks on the division present amongst differing Christian factions:

The Lord's Prayer, it should be noticed, becomes the crux of the liturgical problem. Since both radicals and conservatives regarded it as the model prayer, it was all-important to determine whether it was intended as a set form of prayer or merely as a pattern to which prayers should conform. The Separatists, who dispensed entirely with all forms of prayer, maintained that the Lord's Prayer was a pattern; the supporters of the Prayer Book, on the contrary, held that it was a liturgical formula and the charter of set forms of prayer.⁴⁰

Separatists such as Barrowists "would not even repeat the Lord's Prayer, which they regarded as the perfect model of prayer."⁴¹ They "believed that all liturgical forms, the Lord's Prayer included, were a hindrance to the operation of the Spirit of God."⁴² Basically, Bunyan would argue the same way, and thus sided with the Separatist Barrowists in this issue.

William Fenner shares Bunyan's sentiment, but he is not as strict as Bunyan. Fenner gives six reasons why this prayer should not be taken as a set form:

First, because the Apostles prayed in other words, and did more specialize their Petition, *Act.1.24*.

Secondly, this prayer is diversly set downe by the Evangelists, one way in one, *Math.6.11*. another way in *Luke, Luke.11.3*. one way in one, *Math.6.12*. another way in the other, *Luke 11.4*.

Thirdly, who knowes this is all that Christ uttered, *John.21.25*. we see plainly *Mathew* sets down more, than *Luke* doth; it may be Christ spake more that either hath expressed, *Math.6.13*.

³⁹ Richard Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory: John Bunyan and English Dissent* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002), 155.

⁴⁰ Horton Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans* (1948; reprint, Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1997), 69.

⁴¹ Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans*, 81.

⁴² Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans*, 81.

Fourthly, Christ himself did not use these very words ever, when he would pray *Lazarus* alive, he did not say the Lords prayer over the grave, *Joh.11.41*. when he would pray for his Apostles, he did not say the Lords prayer over them, *John.17.1*.

Fiftly, our speciall sinnes and wants, doe require that we should pray more specially then so, *2 Kings.19.15*.

Sixtly, we read of praying all night, we cannot think that the Lords prayer was said over and over againe and againe *Luke.6.12*. we are to continue in prayer, what by going over and over the Lords prayer? No, *Col.4.2*. neither is it necessary to conclude our prayers with this, *Act.4.30*. and yet we may if we will, *Luke.11.2*. neither is there any thing against it. No, though it be Scripture, the same thing may be Scripture and the word of God, and yet the prayer of a man, *Psal.90.12*.⁴³

Note that, in his sixth point, Fenner does not *strictly* or completely prohibit the use of the Lord's Prayer as a form. Listen to him again:

[W]e are to continue in prayer, what by going over and over the Lords prayer? No, *Col.4.2*. neither is it necessary to conclude our prayers with this, *Act.4.30*. and yet we may if we will, *Luke.11.2*. neither is there any thing against it. No, though it be Scripture, the same thing may be Scripture and the word of God, and yet the prayer of a man, *Psal.90.12*.⁴⁴

Thus, while Fenner does not concur with the use of the Lord's Prayer as a form, he does not see anything wrong if one concludes his prayer with it. The ending our prayer with this prayer is not necessary, says Fenner, and yet we may if we will. He backs up his argument with Luke 11: 2: "When ye pray, say...." The citation of this verse implies that Fenner takes the Lord's Prayer in Luke as a form.

The aforementioned interpretation is also held by John Dod, who believes that the Lord's Prayer is both a form and a pattern. Dod justifies his view as follows:

The Evangelist *Mathew* being to set down the holy Prayer, saith after this manner, Therefore pray you: but in *Luke* it is, when you pray, say The difference betweene the Evangelists is thus reconciled, that St. *Mathew* makes it a forme or

⁴³ Fenner, *The Spirituall Mans Directory*, 67.

⁴⁴ Fenner, *The Spirituall Mans Directory*, 67.

patterne according to which all our prayers and praises are to bee directed: and St. Luke proposes it as an excellent and heavenly prayer to be used by all Gods servants. Whence we learne that the Lord's prayer, is both a forme and patterne to guide us in prayer, and a prayer itselfe.⁴⁵

Noticeably, Dod refers also to the prayer in Luke as a form, an interpretation that Fenner himself uses to open the door for the use of the Lord's Prayer as a form. For Fenner there is not anything against the utterance of this prayer. He explains that we can pray this prayer, and make it our own prayer. Praying in this manner is like quoting other Bible verses in our prayer. But again as Fenner appeals, it is not "necessary to conclude our prayers with this prayer."⁴⁶ Robert Hill puts the concept this way:

Is it necessary ever to repeat all this prayer? It is surely a good conclusio[n] for our ordinary course of praying both publikely and privatly, because those things which we cannot at such times crave, or give thanks for in particular, are all contained in this platforme: but that every petition should ever be used, it is not necessary.⁴⁷

Hence, while Fenner and Hill admit that nothing is wrong in the use of this prayer as a form, for them, to do so is not necessary. This fact presupposes that Puritans who take the Lord's Prayer as a pattern only can be further narrowly categorized into two groups: extreme (Bunyan), and moderate (Fenner). The former will prohibit the use of the prayer as a form, while the latter will make arguments against the use, but nonetheless remain tolerant.

C. The Lord's Prayer as an exceptionally God-given form

One unique Puritan perspective on the Lord's Prayer is that of John Owen, who like Bunyan, gave a strong pneumatological emphasis on prayer. In fact, Owen's treatise, *The Work*

⁴⁵ Dod, *A Plaine and Familiar Exposition on the Lords Prayer*, 5.

⁴⁶ Fenner, *The Spirituall Mans Directory*, 67.

⁴⁷ Hill, *The Path-way to Prayer and Pietie*, 5.

of the Holy Spirit in Prayer (1682), is similar in nature to Bunyan's *I will pray with the spirit and with understanding also*. Like Bunyan, Owen also defended the practice of free or extemporaneous prayers: "*We are expressly commanded to pray, but are nowhere commanded to make prayers for ourselves, much less for others.*"⁴⁸ Owen adds, "*There is assistance promised unto believers to enable them to pray according unto the will of God; there is no assistance promised to enable any to make prayers for others.*"⁴⁹

Nevertheless, Owen, who differs on this point from Bunyan, considers the Lord's Prayer an exception. For him this prayer is a God-given form and therefore can be used by the church: "*Whatever forms of prayer were given out unto the use of the church by divine authority and inspiration, as the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms or Prayers of David, they are to have their everlasting use therein, according unto what they were designed unto.*"⁵⁰ So while Owen ardently repudiates the use of any set prayers, he sanctions, as an exception, the use of the Lord's Prayer as a form.

III. Conclusion

As observed, among the Puritans there are three primary perspectives on the Lord's Prayer: (1) that it is both a pattern and a form, which the Westminster divines support;⁵¹ (2) that it is only a pattern. But as we have noted, this second position can be further boiled down into two classifications: extreme (Bunyan) and moderate (Fenner); and (3) that it is an exceptionally

⁴⁸ John Owen, "The Work of the Holy Spirit in Prayer," in *The Works of John Owen* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, reprint 1967), IV: 240 (italics his).

⁴⁹ Owen, "The Work of the Holy Spirit in Prayer," 240 (italics his).

⁵⁰ Owen, "The Work of the Holy Spirit in Prayer," 240 (italics his).

⁵¹ Matthew Henry also affirms this view: "The Lord's prayer being intended not only for a form of prayer itself, but a rule of direction, a plan or model in little, by which we may frame our prayers." See Henry, *A Method for Prayer*, 189. Similarly, Thomas Manton states: Christ taught "his disciples to pray, not only as directing them what they should pray for [pattern], but putting a form of words into their mouths [form]." See Manton, "A Practical Exposition of the Lord's Prayer," 39.

God-given form, a view held uniquely by Owen. Davies, in his book, *The Worship of the English Puritans*, gives a helpful summary of the history of the controversy concerning the use of the Lord's Prayer: "The history of the discussion tends to show that the more radical Puritans and Separatist regarded the Lord's Prayer as a pattern and held that it was not intended that it should be repeated. The Anglicans interpreted it as a literal command for the repetition of that particular prayer. The Presbyterians combined both views and therefore held themselves free to repeat it and to model their extemporary prayers on it."⁵²

These various views imply that the subject of prayer is important for the Puritans. The issue discussed in this paper may appear insignificant for some, but, because of their remarkable concern to fashion their prayer after the Bible, for the Puritans the issue of the Lord's Prayer is of great seriousness. These different positions are a result of their struggle to have a precise or scripturally-based prayer. Sadly, today prayer has become less important in the lives of many believers. Many are indifferent about the manner and matter of their prayers. They pray only for the sake of praying. For this reason, we need the Puritans to teach and guide us to pray—to pray biblically.

I personally uphold Fenner's position. I believe that the Lord's Prayer is to be taken as a pattern; however, like Fenner, I do not see any problems if one uses it as a form in prayer, given that it is not ritually abused. I also suggest that our prayers ought to be indeed modeled after the Lord's Prayer. Doing so provides us two benefits, as Watson beautifully articulates:

Let us have a great esteem of the Lord's prayer; let it be the model and pattern of all our prayers. There is a double benefit arising from framing our petitions suitably to this prayer. Hereby error in prayers is prevented. It is not easy to write wrong after this copy; we cannot easily err when we have our pattern before us. Hereby mercies requested are obtained; for the apostle assures us that God will hear us when we pray 'according to his will.' I John V 14. And sure we pray

⁵² Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans*, 99.

according to his will when we pray according to the pattern he has set us. So much for the introduction to the Lord's prayer, 'After this manner pray ye.'⁵³

"Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1).

⁵³ Watson, *The Lord's Prayer*, 2.