

The Episcopal Church in Alabama.; AN IMPORTANT ORDER BY GEN. WOODS.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF ALABAMA, MOBILE, Ala., Sept. 20, 1865.

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GENERAL ORDERS, No. 38. -- The Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States has established a form of prayer to be used for "the President of the United States and all in Civil Authority." During the continuance of the late wicked and groundless rebellion, the prayer was changed to one for the President of the Confederate States, and so altered was used in the Protestant Episcopal Churches of the Diocese of Alabama.

Since the "lapse" of the Confederate Government and the restoration of the authority of the United States over the late rebellious States, the prayer of the President has been altogether omitted in the Episcopal Churches of Alabama.

This omission was recommended by the Right Rev. RICHARD WILMER, Bishop of Alabama, in a letter to the Clergy and Laity, dated June 20, 1865. The only reason given by Bishop WILMER for the omission of a prayer, which, to use his own language, "was established by the highest ecclesiastical authorities, and has for many years constituted a part of the liturgy of the Church," is stated by him in the following words:

"Now the church in this country has established a form of prayer for the President, and all in civil authority: the language of that prayer was selected with careful reference to the subject of the prayer -- all in civil authority -- and she desires for that authority prosperity and long continuance. No one can reasonably be expected to desire a long continuance of military rule. Therefore the prayer is altogether inappropriate and inapplicable to the present condition of things, when no civil authority exists in the exercise of its functions. Hence, as I remarked in the circular, 'we may yield a true allegiance to and sincerely pray for grace, wisdom and understanding in behalf of a government founded on force, while at the same time we could not in good conscience ask for its continuance, prosperity, &co.'"

It will be observed from this extract, first, that the Bishop, because he cannot pray for the continuance of "military rule," therefore declines to pray for those in civil authority; second, he declares the prayer inappropriate and inapplicable, because no civil authority exists in the exercise of its functions. On the 20th of June, the date of his letter, there were a President of the United States, a Cabinet, Judges of the Supreme Court, and thousands of other civil officers of the United States, all in the exercise of their functions. It was for them specially that this form of prayer was established, yet the Bishop cannot, among all these, find any subject worthy of his prayers.

Since the publication of this letter, a Civil Governor has been appointed for the State of Alabama, and in every county judges and sheriffs have been appointed, and all these

officers are, and for weeks have been, in the exercise of their functions; yet the prayer has not been restored.

The prayer which the Bishop advised to be omitted is not a prayer for the continuance of military rule or the continuance of any particular form of government or any particular person in power -- it is simply a prayer for the temporal and spiritual weal of the persons in whose behalf it is offered -- it is a prayer to the High and Mighty Ruler of the Universe that He would with His power behold and bless His servant, the President of the United States, and all others in authority -- that he would replenish them with grace of Holy Spirit that they might always incline to His will and walk in His ways, and that he would endow them plenteously with heavenly gifts, grant them in health and prosperity long to live, and finally after this life to attain everlasting joy and felicity. It is a prayer at once applicable and appropriate, and which any heart not filled with hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness could conscientiously offer.

The advice of the Bishop to omit this prayer, and its omission by the clergy, is not only a violation of the canons of the church, but shows a factious and disloyal spirit, and is a marked insult to every loyal citizen within the department. Such men are unsafe public teachers, and not to be trusted in places of power and influence over public opinion.

It is theretofore ordered, pursuant to the directions of Major-Gen. THOMAS, commanding the Military Division of the Tennessee, that said RICHARD WILMER, Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the Diocese of Alabama, and the Protestant Episcopal clergy of said diocese be, and they are hereby suspended from their functions, and forbidden to breach or perform divine service, and that their places of worship be closed until such time as said Bishop and clergy show a sincere return to their allegiance to the Government of the United States and give evidence of a loyal and patriotic spirit by offering to resume the use of the prayer for the President of the United States and all in civil authority, and by taking the amnesty oath prescribed by the President.

This prohibition shall continue in each individual case until special application is made through the military channels to these headquarters for permission to preach and perform divine services, and until such application is approved at these or superior headquarters.

District Commanders are required to see that this order is carried into effect.

By order Major-Gen. CHAS. R. WOODS.

FRED. H. WILSON, A.A.G.