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Abba Father



WILLIAM DE WITT HYDE

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Abba Father

ABBA FATHER

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Or, The Religion of Everyday Life

By

WILLIAM DEWITT HYDE



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P R E F A C E

TO walk and talk with God, as child with father, friend with friend ; lifting up life into the light of His love—this is religion. Instead of criticism of it, commentary upon it, controversy over it, philosophy about it, exhortation to it, of which the world is full, this little book offers religion itself, just as one would offer a picture, a story or a song.

Real religion is the offering up of each man's life, in its concrete setting, day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment, to the guidance and keeping of God. Thus each man's religion, like his life, is individual, unique.

As such, however, it is incommunicable. Consequently, when one would share it with others, as in public worship, many experiences and needs of many men must

Preface

be thrown together into a composite expression. This of course is the way liturgies and books of common prayer are formed.

Admirably adapted as they are for uniting at one time and place the many aspirations of many hearts, they too have their limitations. Amid such a kaleidoscopic variety and succession of petition and praise the mind, unless it be unusually nimble and alert, becomes distracted. As Mr. Arthur C. Benson has said, "To follow a service with uplifted attention requires more mental agility than I possess; point after point is raised, and yet, if one pauses to meditate, to wonder, to aspire, one is lost, and misses the thread of the service." Still for public worship, the liturgy, with all these obvious defects, is the best thing we have; even though it must ever be a service more of the emotions than of the mind.

Midway between the concrete religion of active life and the abstract, composite liturgy, there is a form of worship adapted

Preface

to the individual in the quiet hour. It takes a single aspect of our common experience at a time; holds it before the mind in logical development and sustained attention; and thus with mind and heart together lifts it into the light of the divine. As a result, one finds that when in concrete life a case arises which belongs to the class of experiences which has been made the subject of such communion with the Father, one's attitude towards that case is changed. In other words prayer of this sort is answered, if less obviously and directly, no less satisfactorily and surely, than prayer which offers the concrete situation of the immediate moment directly to the divine control.

These essay-meditations, or sermon-prayers, are the outcome of a year of enforced rest; cut off from ordinary work on the one hand, and attendance upon public worship on the other. They were conceived in the gardens and chapels of Oxford; and written in Switzerland, at Burghalde, the site of a mediæval castle

Preface

near Oberhofen on Lake Thun. If they shall reveal to any one the simplicity and comprehensiveness, the modesty and grandeur, the peace and power, of the Christian life, my period of exile will not have been unfruitful; I shall have proved a brother-workman of the Swiss peasants with whom I exchanged greetings as we met on the way to our different tasks; and Eiger, Monk and Jungfrau will not have reflected to my castle-site the Alpine glow in vain.

WILLIAM DEWITT HYDE.

*Bowdoin College,
Brunswick, Maine.
August, 1908.*

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FATHER

I THANK Thee that I am not a stranger in an alien world; the sport of chance; the slave of fate: but a child in an ordered home.

I cannot see Thee in any finite form or locate Thee anywhere in space and time. Yet in the adaptations of nature, in the developments of history, in the voice of conscience, in the lives of good men, in the character of Christ, I discern a struggle for fitness, a suggestion of beauty, an expression of reason, a tendency towards righteousness, a yearning for love, which stands over me as an authority, rises within me as an ideal, stretches out before me as a goal.

How shall I name this which is both without as law and within as ideal; at once source of my being and end of my life? Not matter, or force; for I

Father

find intelligence and purpose, akin to my own, but infinite. Not image or idea ; for these terms are contrasted with reality ; while that in which I live and move and have my being is solid as fact and real as life.

Let me then call Thee by the highest symbol of guiding wisdom ; kindly control ; larger life supporting, reproof, developing the lesser, derived, dependent life. Let me, as Jesus taught the world to do, call Thee by the dear human name of Father.

Help me to hear Thy high and holy call in every homely duty and every humble task : in the drudgery of housekeeping ; in the dreariness of accounts ; in the difficulty of study ; in the hardness of toil ; in the competition of trade ; in the claims of society ; in the fight with appetite ; in the struggle with poverty ; in the management of wealth ; in the love of friends ; in courtesy to foes. In all the common experiences of life help me to see Thy love going before me to point out the way my

Father

love must take: help me to feel Thy strength within me making hard things easy, and translating the otherwise impossible into accomplished fact.

Doing all things as Thou wouldst have me do them; bearing all things as Thou wouldst have me bear them, may I find Thee where alone Thou canst be found—in Thy world, Lord of its life, Solver of its problems, Saviour from its sin.

Teach me, then, to take eagerly, as from a Father's hand, every healthy human interest; every normal social pleasure; every wholesome practical pursuit: that in the beautiful world where Thou hast placed me, and the interesting work Thou givest me to do, I may ever see the face of the Father, and live the life of a child.

GRATITUDE

I THANK Thee for this glorious world in which I live ; for mountain and valley, rock and soil, forest and field, river and sea, sun and rain, flower and fruit, plant and animal.

I thank Thee for the great social institutions built like walls along life's highway to keep my feet from straying into sin ; home and school, church and state, law and custom, art and literature, history and science.

I thank Thee for the education that comes through parents and teachers ; through success and failure ; through legal compulsion and social expectation ; through rewarded right and punished wrong.

I thank Thee for the men and women walking by my side along the dusty road of life who do Thy will so patiently, so modestly, so sweetly that I cannot fail to feel its charm.

Gratitude

Most of all I thank Thee for Jesus Christ ; that He once for all revealed the eternal supremacy of love, truth, and purity over hardness and brutality, pride and hypocrisy, tyranny and superstition. I thank Thee that He won for the world this spiritual victory when it meant the crown of thorns, the scourging, the spear-point and the cross.

May I show my gratitude by the good use I make of all natural resources ; by my appreciation of the beautiful in nature and in art ; by my obedience to all just laws and beneficent institutions ; by struggling for the world's improvement ; by rebuking its injustices ; by helping its tried and tempted souls ; and doing all in my power to lead men in the direction marked out by the precept and example, the service and sacrifice of Christ.

Thus may I show Thy goodness to other souls ; that they too may come to the glad and grateful sense of being sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, in the divine-human family and home.

S I N

POOOR and perverse has been my use of Thy good gifts. Thy will is perfect love to all Thy children. All that falls short of such universal love is sin. Yet I fall short all the time.

In hours of dullness I cannot even so much as see Thy will; much less feel the promptings of Thy love. In moments when passion sweeps through me uncontrolled, I spread bitterness and sorrow far and wide in the hearts of Thy other children. In seasons of weakness I am unequal to doing the duty that I see. In fits of excitement I do not stop to think of the cruel misery my hasty words and deeds inflict. In periods of depression I give up all attempt to be more than the selfish animal my brute inheritance makes it so natural for me to be.

Thus opportunities for kindness slip

Sin

away unimproved ; sad hearts are left un-comforted ; wrongs are left unrebuked ; duties are left undone ; the world is the poorer ; Thy children the more wretched for what I fail to do.

Worse than all are the meanness, the selfishness, the greed, the lust, the malice, the jealousy, the pride that lead me to gain for myself some petty pleasure by another's pain ; some trifling profit by another's loss ; some gratification of passion, at the price of another's degradation ; some miserable gain for myself and my family bought by corrupting the government ; some ignoble sense of personal elevation won by pulling other people down.

For these outcroppings of inherited animalism ; for slothfulness and shirking ; for wanton self-indulgence in reckless sacrifice of others' rights ; for responsibility for the world's sufferings and wrongs ; forgive me, even as I in turn forgive those who do me injury.

THORNS

TO each child of Thine, as the price of the sensitiveness that feels Thy leading, or the effectiveness that does Thy will, Thou givest some thorn to prick the surface of pride.

Whether it be quick temper; intense passions; extreme shyness; physical defect; mental dullness; lack of early advantages; uncongenial relatives; unhappy marriage; a wayward child; loss of fortune; inability to get work; alienation of friends through hopeless misunderstanding, or bereavement tearing up the very roots of the soul;—to each Thou sendest his thorn; either secretly buried in the sensitive flesh, or woven into a crown to be worn openly upon the brow.

Help me to extract from mine its lesson of humility. If it unfits me for the large

Thorns

sphere I should choose, surely Thou hast some modest place for me to fill, some humble task for me to do, with which my defects, my misfortunes, my blunders, even my repented sins cannot wholly interfere. Help me to take it cheerfully; leaving to others the larger service I forego.

Grant that my own secret sorrow, my own keen disappointment, may make me sympathetic to discover, tactful to treat, the suffering that lies, hidden or exposed, in every human heart.

Thus even through sorrow, merited or unmerited, may I be drawn closer to Thee, closer to the suffering Christ, closer to my needy fellow men. Through a deeper tenderness, a profounder humility, a broader charity, a gentler helpfulness may I find in the heightened joy of the devoted spirit abundant compensation for the sufferings of the outward man.

P A T I E N C E

THOUSANDS of centuries Thou hast waited for the little good thus far achieved upon this earth. For Thou lovest the partial good painfully wrought out in freedom more than the greatest mechanical perfection. Thou hast trusted the welfare of Thy children to their own weak, erring hands. For ages, in brutal sensuality and barbaric cruelty, they have worked havoc upon each other, and brought shame upon themselves. Even now millions of Thy children are plunged in hopeless degradation. All around us, even in the most civilized races and the most cultivated lands, the lives of those we know and love are embittered by unconquered animalism in themselves, or surviving brutality in others.

When I join with others of like mind in efforts to do a little good, our labours are

Patience

thwarted by our own weakness, by the powers of evil, or by the indifference of those worst enemies of progress—the people who think themselves and the world good enough already.

In the face of difficulty, discouragement, misunderstanding, misrepresentation, help me to go on doing my best in patient perseverance; even though the only visible outcome is the continued victory of evil. Give me the assurance that every good as well as every evil influence counts; and that the resultant shall represent all the forces put forth on both sides, of which my effort for the right is one. Thus may I play an apparently losing game as steadily and bravely as one where I appear to win: knowing that Thou art on the side of the good; that good has a uniting, lasting, spreading, reproducing, conquering power evil can never have.

Toiling in Thy patience and Thy perseverance, may I share, even in the struggle, Thy triumph and Thy peace.

ENEMIES

FATHER of all ; we all are dear to Thee. Yet we are selfish, short-sighted, petty, continually tempted to be mean. Partly through my fault ; partly through the fault of others, I clash with them, and they with me ; and they become my enemies.

In so far as their enmity is due to any fault of mine, may I promptly humble myself, ask their forgiveness, and do my best to make amends. May I count no humiliation or sacrifice too great a price to pay for the restoration of good-will wherever by any act of mine, whether of omission or commission, it has been forfeited. May I remember that I cannot be right with Thee, so long as I am wrong towards any of Thy children.

When others are at fault ; when they hate me without cause ; when they persist in wronging me ; when they misrepresent as evil the good I try to do ; while I de-

Enemies

fend my rights with firmness, may I be free from personal bitterness. May I never forget that my enemy is more than his wrong attitude towards me ; may I remember that he is Thy child, my brother ; still has some good qualities, and is capable of more. Thus even when compelled to oppose him, may I in courtesy and kindness show myself a friend to his better self ; and win or at least deserve the restoration of his esteem.

While thus friendly even to my enemies, and peaceable with all men, when duty requires may I not shrink from making enemies. When the cruel oppress the innocent ; when the dishonest cheat the poor ; when the strong trample on the weak ; when the incompetent hold office ; when the licentious break down the family ; when the corrupt undermine the state ;—then may I be bold to rebuke, to prosecute, to punish ; welcoming their enmity as the price every brave man must pay, as Christ paid it, for living Thy life and doing Thy will in a world of selfishness and sin.

F O R G I V E N E S S

FATHER, Thou forgivest me, so far as I am truly penitent. May I likewise forgive all who sin against me; all who sin against society; all who sin against Thee; even as Thou forgivest me and them.

Help me to remember that the great evils are not wrought in deliberate malice, but in unimaginative selfishness; in wrath, greed and lust. Finding the survivals of savagery and animality within myself, may I have charity for the outbreaks of these hereditary traits in others, who perchance have had less help than I from home, school, society, moral influence and spiritual inspiration. May I count no sin too heinous to pardon; no man too hardened to reclaim; no woman too fallen to uplift.

When I forgive the penitent, help me to stand by him against a hard and unforgiving world. Help me in sacrificial sym-

Forgiveness

pathy to bear with him the penalties formal justice may deem it necessary to inflict, and to share with him the condemnation a merciless public is ever ready to impose. Thus may I make my forgiveness a reality in the actual world, and open the door of genuine social restoration to those who have gone astray.

Yet may I not lose sight of moral distinctions in a mush of sentimentality. When public protection requires the punishment of the criminal; the correction of the depraved; the discharge of the inefficient; the prosecution of the dishonest; the exposure of the corrupt, may I be stern and hard towards them, even while I have in my heart the tenderest charity for the men I cause to suffer, and in whose suffering I sympathetically share.

Thus may I in my little world, as Thou in Thy great universe, blend severest justice with gentlest mercy; inexorable penalty with absolute forgiveness; inflicting pain unflinchingly when love prescribes it for society's protection and the offender's good.

WORK

I THANK Thee for sunshine with its stored up heat in wood and coal ; for the power in falling water, expanding steam, and electricity ; for timber and minerals ; for wool and cotton, silk and linen ; for meat and grain, fruit and vegetable.

Still more I thank Thee that the final touch which transforms these materials into use, and gives to each his share in the produce of the whole world's work at the time and place where it is wanted—that agriculture, manufacture, transportation and exchange are left to be furnished by the hand and brain of man.

Help me to find my chief delight in work, wherein I join my hand, my brain, my heart, to Thy power, Thy laws, Thy love. May I choose that task which most taxes my highest powers, and best serves the world's deepest need. May I do it

Work

with such skill, such thoroughness, such joy, that it shall have about it the strength of the mountains, the freedom of the streams, the gladness of the sunshine, the fertility of the fields, the beauty of the stars and flowers. Thus may I become not a mere creature but a creator; not one of Thy works, but one of Thy coworkers.

Help me to do good, full-measured work, when poor, scant work brings equal pay. May I give a full equivalent for all I take; add to the world's wealth as much as I consume; and be a sound member of the economic order. May I be fair to my employer, whether he treats me well or ill; considerate to my employees, whether they love or hate me; loyal to my fellow-workmen whether they stand by me or not; just to those remote consumers of my product who will never know to whose honesty and honour they owe the sound quality of the goods I make and the services I render them.

PLAY

THOUGH it is honest work that gives me my place in Thy great universe; yet what I can do is so little, what I can do well is so monotonous, that when I devote myself to work alone I become a mere pin-point in Thy mighty mechanism: I lose tone of nerves, resourcefulness of mind, decisiveness of will, range of imagination, quickness of sympathy: I offer my friends, I hand down to my children, a shrivelled heart and a deadened mind.

Therefore I thank Thee for the great privilege of play: for the sports that take me to the field, the forest, the river and the sea: for the games that call out courage, endurance, skill, in friendly contests, physical and mental. I thank Thee for the ordered play of mind and soul in art: for architecture, sculpture and painting; for music and poetry; for the novel and

Play

the drama : for the power they have to set before us beauty and harmony ; to interpret love and heroism ; to take us into the intense, typical experiences of humanity, and send us back to our individual lives, enlarged, enriched ; with a clearer vision of the noble ; a truer scorn of what is base.

At the same time save me from making play the end of life, to the distaste of work, and the neglect of duty. Save me from the base desire to gain in play what others lose. Save me from all pleasure that involves loss, pain or degradation to another. May work and play in healthy alternation become expressions of my joy in using the powers Thou hast given me, and my delight in the world which Thou hast made.

Help me to keep on gaining new interests through life ; and carry the child's heart into old age. Grant me the strong constitution, the cheerful disposition, the steady will, the sympathetic heart which are play's appropriate gifts : that I may be what Thou wouldst have me be, as well as do what Thou wouldst have me do.

HEALTH

THOU hast made health the normal condition of every child of obedient parents, who himself obeys Thy laws of diet, exercise, rest, recreation, cheerfulness, trust, and love. Teach me to obey these laws; and, when I disobey, to profit by the swift, sure penalty which mercifully follows.

Save me from the folly of treating the bodily symptoms which spring from spiritual sins by drugs, opiates, narcotics and intoxicants; in a futile endeavour to call in matter and mechanism to make good defects of mind and heart. May I cure gluttony by temperance; idleness by exercise; overwork by rest; anger by gentleness; worry by trust; depression by hope; fear by faith; hate by love.

Yet when accident, exposure, or overstrain has broken or deranged the normal

Health

structure or working of my body ; when contagion has introduced hostile organisms and noxious substances into my blood ; then may I treat broken bones and depleted tissues as I would a broken bridge or a washed-out road-bed, by appropriate material means ; then may I fight bacteria with physical weapons, as I would wolves and lions.

In this fight may I use with gratitude all the aids of medical skill and science Thou hast placed within reach ; honouring the men whose study and practice of this beneficent art make victory possible, where without it defeat would be probable or inevitable.

Thus with mind and heart rightly related to Thee ; to Thy laws ; and to the people with whom I live and work ; with the aid in emergencies of scientific medicine ; may I be doubly fortified against disease : may I be blessed with that abounding health which is the secret of individual happiness and social usefulness.

TRAVEL

WHEN I remain too long at home my own importance swells to unseemly proportions, and the vision of Thy greatness fades. Then may I leave the spot where I have come to fancy myself the centre of a little world, and humbly accept some place on the circumference of Thy great universe. Then may I behold Thy glory on the mountain and the sea; feel Thy quiet by the forest or the lake; trace Thy justice as other men and nations have expressed it in customs and institutions different from my own; gaze on beauty as Thou hast wrought it into the forms of nature and the features of men and women; or as genius has reflected it in art.

Yet forbid that I degenerate into the chronic traveller; living only to be sumptuously fed, softly bedded, periodically transported, and perpetually amused.

Travel

May I strictly subordinate the brief days of travel to long weeks of life and work at home ; ever going for the sake of the healthier, stronger, wiser, happier return. While viewing the works of other men may I ever be planning the improvement of my own ; justifying temporary absence from my specific duties by the increased vigour and enthusiasm with which they are resumed.

Even when the old ties of home and family are broken ; when the scale of living must be reduced to match decreasing income, may I refuse to be a runaway ; but count the humblest usefulness at home more honourable than the most luxurious idleness of exile.

Going and coming, at home and abroad, may I everywhere be Thy grateful and obedient child ; remembering that contemplation of Thy works must prove its worth by the constancy with which I fill the place where Thou hast put me, and the fidelity with which I do the specific work Thou hast given me to do.

FAITH

GIVE me the faith that dares to doubt all that refuses to take its place in a coherent whole of history and science ; all that declines to justify its claims in reason's open court. For reason in me and other men is the reflection of that complete reason which is Thy mind. Distrusting reason, I deny Thee : following reason to the uttermost I affirm my faith that mind in me is akin to infinite intelligence in Thee.

Yet while nothing that contradicts my reason can be true, Thy experience infinitely transcends mine ; and what seems evil from my partial point of view, may serve a good purpose in Thy larger plan.

Seeing the seeming cruelty in natural selection, yet may I believe that with all its penalties of pain and death this law is infinitely kinder than sentimental interven-

Faith

tion to save the unfit, if indeed the survival of the unfit were permanently possible.

Seeing the favouritism, bribery, corruption that beset all forms of human government ; all business where one individual or group controls the fortunes of many ; may I still accept political and industrial organizations as Thy appointed servants, imperfect to be sure, but vastly better than anarchy and individualism.

Seeing the brutality that has blighted the family from the days of the savage even until now, may I still believe in its sacredness, and labour for its perpetuity.

Seeing the abuses, iniquities, hypocrisies and crimes of which the world is full, may I see also, not in them, but in the lives of the reformers who fight them ; in the deaths of the martyrs who are slain by them ; in the cross of the Christ who was willing to be crucified to save the world from them, and lift men out of their power, the immortal witness to the eternal triumph of Thy righteousness and love.

H O P E

THE vision of faith fades : the triumph of the good is long deferred : reform is defeated : progress is slow : disaster falls : degeneration sets in. Criticism shows that even our saints and heroes were men of like passions with ourselves ; idealized by time, distance and human admiration.

Passing from the warm atmosphere of faith into the hard, cold world of fact, a chill strikes to the heart of all my cherished convictions ; and they vanish into empty dreams. Business, politics, society, education, even religion, seem to be in the hands of men who see nothing higher than profit and popularity, or at best tradition and convention. The opportunist defeats the statesman ; the fraudulent contractor and dishonest promoter drive the honest dealer and the upright business man to the wall ; polite pretentiousness takes precedence of genuine worth in marriage and social posi-

Hope

tion ; the charlatan draws the crowd from the skilled professional man ; the self-seeking priest sits in the seat of the prophet.

When such observations weigh me down, give me the hope that sees through present evil the sure triumph of the coming good. Show me that these evils always have been ; are less now than ever before ; and in spite of them better conditions, larger liberties, happier homes, higher characters, nobler institutions, have steadily evolved. Give me the assurance that, in ways I cannot comprehend, Thy love will work good out of evil. Help me to live in constant foretaste of the better order my faith and hope and love shall help to usher in.

Yet save me from the folly that would keep out evil by shutting its own silly eyes. May I hope for a good, not apart from evil ; not won without struggle ; not miraculously projected into this world, or supernaturally set up in the next : but for a good wrought out in struggle against evil by willing hands, and sturdy wills, and loving hearts.

LOVE

I THANK Thee that Thou hast divided our common nature between man and woman ; giving to the one strength, courage, organizing power ; to the other beauty, patience, gentleness ; that these severed qualities may be reunited in that love which gives all one has to the other, and claims all the other's graces as one's own.

I thank Thee for the bond of marriage which seals this mutual affection into life-long devotion, and perpetuates it in offspring. May I think and speak of this relationship wherein we share Thy creative power, ever with reverence and honour ; never with levity or shame.

Thou hast intrusted this holy office of creative love to the coarse hands of men and the frail hearts of women ; and wantonly have they perverted it. Thou only knowest the beastliness and cruelty, the bitterness and agony, the sin and shame,

Love

the despair and degradation the perversion of this function has entailed.

Make me considerate and kind to all on whom the penalties of this perversion fall ; especially to the wretched women who, through ignorance, misplaced affection, or cruel wrong, have been driven to lives of shame. May I blame more the barbarous society that tolerates and patronizes such human degradation than the unhappy women who fall.

May I resist all tendencies to soften man into effeminacy, or harden woman into a competitor with man. May I hold the difference between the sexes as the crowning evidence of Thy creative love ; and cherish the lifelong union in mutual affection of one man and one woman as the supreme blessedness of life.

May this love be so deep and sweet and pure, that it shall overflow into intimate friendship with other men and women ; into fondness for little children ; banishing all jealousy and selfishness, and ushering in the reign of universal love.

FAMILY

FATHER of all: I thank Thee for the common life of the family flowing freely through each member's heart; bringing diversity of age, sex, experience, strength, wisdom, beauty, innocence, vivacity, charm, as an offering to each and the property of all. Help me gladly to give up all merely private interests so far as they conflict with the common life; counting the least I can do for my family more precious than the greatest pleasure to be found apart from them.

May I leave other members free to make their contribution to the family life in their own way; using constraint only with the very young, who have not learned the sweet law of love which binds the conduct of each to the service of all.

May I cheerfully endure the drudgery and privation, the clash of taste and temperament, which the moulding of many into one in this intimate relationship involves.

Family

Teach me at the same time love's larger lesson, that as the individual gains his true life in the family by giving up his selfish life ; so the family gains by every pure intimate friendship, every noble artistic interest, every generous social service in which parent or child, husband or wife, shares and serves the larger life outside.

Even if circumstances do not permit me to enter this holiest bond, may I revere it ; and cherish it for others. Having once entered it, may I never relapse into the old selfish attitude ; never again estimate profit and loss in the old individualistic terms. May I give all ; finding in opportunity for larger giving my chief return.

Only when cruelty, lust, drunkenness or settled hate make love impossible, beyond the power of patience and charity to restore, may I either for myself or for another, turn to divorce for such relief from intolerable degradation as the law, in the interest of the decency and dignity of true marriage, mercifully grants.

DUTY

I THANK Thee for the place where Thou hast put me ; with persons on every side whom I must either serve or injure ; work which I must do either well or ill ; things I must either beautify or mar. It is at once Thy will and my duty to treat these persons so kindly ; to do this work so well ; to order these things so nicely, that happiness, goodness, beauty shall be the harmonious result.

Help me to contribute with joy my little part to Thy vast harmony. When my little plans clash with Thy larger purposes, may I gladly give up my personal preference to serve Thy mighty aims ; and find therein not hardship, but a dear delight.

Yet save me from the fanaticism that would take on duties beyond my strength. Modestly contrasting my limitations with Thy infinity, may I confine myself to the

Duty

tasks Thou shalt clearly lay upon me, and at the same time give me strength to do.

As duty faithfully and lovingly performed is my own highest good, may I count it the best thing I can provide for my family, my children, my friends. May I not in false self-sacrifice do so much for them, and so shield them, as to deprive them of their highest privilege and best education—the doing of their own hard duties in the loving spirit which takes away their hardness and transforms them into joy.

When duties clash ; when I can do but one of the things I feel I ought to do ; then may I be fair both to others and to myself. May I ask which duty, in the same circumstances, I would advise my best friend to do : may I do that decisively ; without regrets for what is left undone : knowing that what I would advise another whom I love is, so far as I can ascertain it, what Thy love would have me choose and do.

SACRIFICE

FATHER, Thy perfection is not the perfection of a finished thing ; but the perfection of a living person ; the perfection of a love that seeks through struggle, opposition, suffering, the best that human freedom working with natural resources can achieve.

In calling me to share this perfect purpose, Thou often requirest me to give up what would be good for me as an individual, that I may do more for the good of others and the welfare of Thy world.

Help me so to see the beauty of Thy life, so to feel the drawing of Thy love, that I may gladly make the sacrifices love requires ; ever remembering that my brothers and sisters are as dear to Thee as I ; and that I am Thy true child only so far as I share Thy love for them.

When they are in poverty or sickness ; when they are downtrodden or maltreated ;

Sacrifice

when my family needs me ; when my country calls ; when great public issues are at stake ; when truth needs an interpreter, or right a defender ; then may I freely give time, strength, money, influence ; if need be health, and life itself, to the larger work ; finding in the greater gain to my brothers, in the benefit of society, and in fellowship with Thee, such ample compensation as shall make the yoke of service easy, and the burden of sacrifice light.

At the same time save me from making sacrifice an end in itself, or seeking it as a means of securing Thy favour. I am as dear to Thee as are those I serve : Thou delightest not in sacrifice as such ; but only in the love it springs from and the good it does.

Since I am responsible for my own health, happiness, efficiency and development as no one else can be, may every sacrifice I make be justified by some greater good done to others in fulfillment of Thy equal love to them and me.

COURAGE

GIVE me the courage never to be content with things as they are, or myself as I am ; but ever to welcome Thy call to progress and reform.

I like to do things I can do easily because I have done them before : Thou art ever calling me to do new things, for which I have no ready-made aptitude. I like to do things which everybody will approve, because they are familiar : Thou art ever calling me to do new things which the good misunderstand and the evil misinterpret. I like to do things that succeed, because the world wants them : Thou art ever calling me to do new things for which the world is not quite ready, and therefore at the outset are doomed to fail. Give me the brave heart to rise above the cowardice men call conservatism, and obey Thy call.

Teach me that only by attempting what seems impossible can power be gained

Courage

or great good accomplished ; that only by disregarding at times the praise and blame of men can Thy voice be heard aright ; that only by risking occasional defeat in minor battles can the great campaign be won.

Still save me from arrogance, foolhardiness and fanaticism. Thou art a General considerate of Thy soldiers. Make me content with the work of one man, for which Thou hast given me strength ; not falsely ambitious to do the work of ten. Give me Thy patience with such wrongs as I am powerless to remove.

Help me to keep in training and condition ; cheerful in the monotony of daily drill ; yielding neither to my own restlessness nor the rash importunity of others ; waiting under arms for Thy command.

When Thy clear orders come ; doubly attested by manifest duty without, and the stirring of latent power within ; then may I have the courage which implicitly obeys ; counts no cost and fears no foe ; and leaves results entirely in Thy hands.

HUMILITY

MAY I ever measure myself by the distance I fall short of that perfect love which is at once what Thou art, and what I ought to be. Though measured by this true standard I am almost wholly wanting ; yet may I not be cast down.

For when I confess my weakness, then through Thy grace am I strong. For Thou art ever patient with me, as a father with the unfulfilled promise of his child. I am dear to Thee, not mainly for the little that I do aright ; but for my penitence after doing wrong ; for my desire to do better ; for what in due time with Thy help I shall become.

Help me to keep this humility I learn from Thee in my attitude towards my fellow men. May I never try to pass with them as better than Thou seest me to

Humility

be. May I esteem them better than myself ; having reverence and tenderness for all ; pride and uncharitableness towards none.

With friends whom I can trust may I be frank about my shortcomings as I am with Thee. Especially in the home, and those intimate friendships where concealment is impossible, may I welcome the light love sheds on my faults ; welcome even the pain love inflicts in healing surgery.

When enemies and censorious critics detect me in some fault, and try to break me down ; then may the humility I have learned from Thee become my armour and defense. Knowing how light are their worst charges in comparison to what Thou knowest against me, and in spite of knowing still forgivest, still lovest ; may I be strong in the confidence that no weakness acknowledged, no fault confessed, no mistake corrected, no sin repented, can ever separate me from Thee, or from the friends Thou givest to all who walk in true humility.

INJUSTICE

HELP me to face the fact of obvious injustice in the tangled external world. Crime for the most part goes unpunished; wrong unredressed. Our lame and tardy justice overtakes only the simpler sort of rascals who happen also to be fools. The dishonest director, the fraudulent promoter, who spread poverty over thousands of homes, live in luxurious wealth, envied and admired. The seducer, the patronizer of prostitution, wrecks a whole life, or degrades a whole class of women, yet passes as respectable. The scandal-monger ruins reputation; yet is tolerated in good society.

So interrelated are the forces of the world; so interwoven are the lives of men; so vast are the evils that flow from small sources; so free are best and worst alike to meddle with the delicate mechanism of society; that on every side the innocent suffer for the greed and lust, the meanness

Injustice

and fraud, of guilty men who escape outward punishment.

On the other hand virtue for the most part goes without its immediate outward reward. Patient toil is doomed to lifelong poverty. Purity suffers the penalty of others' lust. The genius, giving his best to art or science, dies unrecognized. The reformer fights a losing battle against entrenched tradition and corruption.

Save me from the base belief that because things are so bad it is useless to try to make them better. Save me from the unbelief, openly avowed or veiled in pious phrases, which seeks material answers to spiritual questions, physical rewards for moral qualities.

Knowing not how I could make a better world, even with omnipotence to help; believing that freedom with all its injustices is better than the most perfect mechanism; help me to accept injustice as the price of freedom in a complex society; which neither for myself, nor for those I love, can I altogether escape.

J U S T I C E

FINDING in the outer world so much injustice, I turn to the inner justice which consists in the soul's relation to Thee. In conscious fellowship with Thee may I find the sure and sufficient reward of all virtue. In exclusion from Thy life of love, in blindness of eye and hardness of heart, may I see the fearful and unescapable penalty of persistent sin.

Show me that the dishonest man can have no real part or lot in that beneficent economic order which Thou art building up on earth, and he is breaking down.

Show me that the corrupt politician can have no part or lot in the patriot's love of country, which he is helping to destroy.

Show me that the libertine's sodden soul can have no part or lot in the sweet joys of pure affection within the happy home, which his conduct wrecks.

Show me that pride and greed, deceit

Justice

and hate, can have no part or lot in that devotion to others wherein the fellowship of Thy love is found.

On the other hand, in all apparently unrewarded labour for truth, beauty, purity and love ; in all losing battles for the right ; in all defeated efforts for reform ; in all unsuccessful endeavours for the better order that is yet to be ; sustain and comfort me with the sense that Thou art with me ; that even through sacrifice, disaster, defeat and death, I am partaker in Thy triumph, agent of Thy progress, sharer of Thy life, child of Thy love.

In the vision of Thy beauty granted to the pure in heart ; in the sharing of Thy love offered to the doers of Thy will, may I find, as opposite sides of the same relationship, Thy justice and my own blessedness.

I thank Thee, too, that, tardily and indirectly, even material goods and social honours sometimes follow in the train of the inner justice which binds the faithful soldier-soul to Thee.

TEMPERANCE

HELP me to make my rule of life the great law Thou hast wrought into the structure of crystal, plant and animal—the law man must embody in everything he would fit for use and crown with beauty—the law that grants to each detail just so much as best serves the inner purpose that animates the whole.

In diet may I eat and drink, in quality and quantity, so much as will give the finest vigour of body and of mind; not falling short through abstemiousness, nor running to excess in gluttony and drunkenness.

In dress may I seek such texture, colour and form as befits my work and station; conforms to the customs of my fellows; and makes attractive my personal appearance: not falling short in slovenliness and eccentricity; nor overdressing in vanity and ostentation.

In action may I exert my powers up to the

Temperance

limit of health, and the demands of my calling; not shirking through laziness, nor wearing myself out with inordinate ambition.

In business may I seek so much money as will best serve my family, my community, my social circle; not content with less than is essential to efficiency, nor anxious for more than I can organize into wholesome use and rational enjoyment.

In society may I share my life with as many as I can touch with sympathy and stimulus; not drawing into my shell in selfish isolation, nor squandering my independence in the chase for popularity.

In education may I learn for myself and teach to my children all that develops power and pleasure; not neglecting any genuine intellectual interest, nor sacrificing vitality and joy for rank and reputation.

In religion may I bring my conscious conduct and my unconscious motivation under the influence of Thy perfect love; not lapsing into soulless secularity; nor yet losing in mystic ecstasy the crowning grace of practicality.

RESPONSIBILITY

AMID the many clashing forces which together constitute the world; some of which make for life, health, peace, joy; others for discord, disease, misery, death; grant that the little I can do may be sweet, sound, just, generous; allied to the great stream of force making for good which is Thy will.

This once secured, may I drop at Thy feet my burden of responsibility; knowing that in any event the issue is never the result of my single effort; but the resultant of ten thousand forces of which my act is only one.

When the event is outwardly and visibly successful, may I not be puffed up; but rather modestly thankful for the other conditions which make the success of my effort possible; humbly grateful for the privilege of sharing in an achievement which is mainly Thine.

When the event is apparent failure, may

Responsibility

I have the assurance that it is due to factors which I did not contribute, and could not control ; that in spite of this particular defeat the powers of good are so much stronger, the powers of evil so much weaker, for the good effort I put forth.

May I work at the never completed task of bringing the better out of the worse ; assured that he who struggles to make the world materially and morally better thereby dwells in fellowship with Thee, who art the spiritual best.

Though new forms of evil arise as fast as the old are overthrown ; though as long as man is free and society grows more and more complex, evil will spread and the triumph of the good will be deferred ; may I never despair ; never deem the work too great for me to undertake, or my power too small to count. May I assume entire responsibility for making the little I can do as good as possible ; and no responsibility whatever for more than that ; casting all responsibility for the total outcome where it belongs, on Thee.

WEALTH

I THANK Thee for Thy great economic law—the law which thieves in various disguises may tamper with, but never can destroy—the law that in return for the goods or services I render to the world, the world stands ready to give me an equivalent, whenever in the symbolic form of money I present my claim.

I thank Thee too for the saved wealth of ancestors which came to me unearned. Yet this more perilous gift I receive with fear and trembling. For as this inheritance represents the surplus of their service to the world above personal consumption ; so it brings to me the temptation to make my consumption exceed my production ; and thus become a bankrupt and a beggar in my account with the world of services rendered and received. Forbid that I become a spiritual pauper through misuse of wealth by gaining which my ancestors proved themselves the world's benefac-

Wealth

tors. Teach me to count as true wealth surplus of service rendered above services and goods consumed. Save me from taking advantage of the long lease of selfishness which inherited wealth puts in the hands of every heir.

May I by thrift always have more than I immediately need; keep it prudently invested; and give generously to worthy persons and causes.

Grant me either poverty or riches, or if it may be a modest competence; according as one or another of these conditions will best fit me for Thy service. Save me from the base desire to gain money by the chance or certainty of others' loss.

Make me friendly to all such well-considered changes in the holding, distribution, and transmission of property as will relieve the material misery of extreme poverty, prevent the spiritual dangers of extreme wealth, and give to the greatest number a fair opportunity to enjoy the material and spiritual advantages of toil and comfort without grinding want or enervating luxury.

SOCIETY

I THANK Thee for groups of congenial persons with whom to talk, and feast, and laugh, and sing, and play, and cast off care. May I ever be ready to give my best to my friends, and to receive from them the best they have to give in this gay mutual exchange.

While the size and complexion of groups which can meet with mutual profit is limited by manners, cultivation, and community of interest, may I avoid the spirit of exclusiveness as the deadliest poison of the soul. May I make the circle of my friends as large as possible; sincerely regretting the exclusion of any whom lack of fitness or congeniality compels me to keep out; never forgetting that the door of exclusiveness, whether arrogantly slammed, or gently closed under regretful necessity, always shuts me out from infinitely more than it shuts in with me.

Society

While doing my best to contribute to the common joy ; may I heartily rejoice when others, more rich, more brilliant, more resourceful, make greater contributions. Save me alike from jealous pride over my points of fancied superiority, and foolish sensitiveness about my points of inferiority.

Save me from the folly of trying to make society the substantial food of life, instead of its spice and sauce ; and from the hollowness of heart and bitterness of spirit which are the penalties of such perversity.

May I first of all earn my place in society by doing some honest work, and filling some useful place in industry, scholarship, politics, art, or philanthropy ; and then use my influence to make society, in simplicity of life, in reasonableness of hours, in moderation of expense, the rational recreation of the evenings and holidays of those whose mornings and ordinary days are devoted to doing their fair share of the world's hard work.

COUNTRY

I THANK Thee for my country ; its liberties and laws ; its institutions and traditions ; its courts and schools, its executive officers and legislators ; its army and navy ; its civil servants and police.

May I honour every department of it, and every one who serves it faithfully. May I obey its laws. May I pay my taxes cheerfully ; glad of the opportunity to contribute my full proportion of the means whereby it is maintained. May I form intelligent opinions of public policy, and express them in earnest discussion and a disinterested vote. May I commend faithful public servants wherever commendation is deserved ; and condemn those who pervert political office or influence to selfish ends.

May I work with the party which on the whole best represents the policy which I approve ; not expecting perfection either

Country

in men or measures ; yet may I stand ready to leave my party when its opponents offer substantially better men or better measures.

Having first solved my individual problems in the support of myself, and those dependent on me, may I accept whatever public office, service or trust my fellow-citizens may confer. May I seek whatever office or position I feel qualified to fill better than it would otherwise be filled ; counting no sacrifice of time, money, leisure, or personal convenience too great, if thereby I may return to my community and country a little part of the countless benefits they have bestowed on me.

May my love of country include love of state and town, and prompt me to do my fair share of local political work. May it also involve a kindly interest in the welfare of every other country ; and the effort to substitute arbitration for war, and to maintain a just peace with all the other nations.

JUDGMENT

AS often as I seek the hard good above me ; as often as I repent the easy evil into which I fall ; so often Thou art with me to approve and to forgive. Thereby may I be lifted up above too great concern for what men say of me.

Still human praise is dear ; and blame of men is hard to bear. May I strive to deserve my friends' approval ; and when I fail be more sorry for the fault than for the blame it brings.

When through no fault of mine I am condemned ; when I turn from the outgrown truth and outworn right of yesterday to the unproved truth and untried right of to-morrow ; when I stand loyally by the hidden goodness in men who are called bad ; when I sacrifice the near-by good which everybody sees for the far-off good which most people cannot see ; when in a just economy I appear mean, or for

Judgment

higher efficiency indulge in what looks like luxury ; when I obey Thy specific call within, instead of the common clamour without ; when in strenuous intensity of service I seem over-ambitious, or in prudent self-preservation seem indolent—at all such times may I rest secure in Thy understanding of my inmost purpose, and Thy charity for my shortcomings.

Help me to judge others on this same generous scale ; counting him highest who with most love fulfills the duties of his station, be that station high or low ; counting him lowest who succeeds in getting most and giving least.

Give me sympathy for all the poor ; whether their poverty be that of purse, or talent, or culture, or opportunity. May I have eyes to see the worth that shines through coarse circumstance, rude manners, ruined reputation, and repented sin. Yet may I ever hold in highest honour those who in great wealth and high station serve Thee and their fellow men with a generous aim and a humble heart.

B E R E A V E M E N T

THOU bindest me to life by sweet, tender ties—father, mother, brother, sister, husband, wife, son, daughter, lover, friend. All the tendrils of my heart are twined around them; all my purposes revolve about them; all my hopes are centered in them; all my success is measured by their joy.

Thou takest them away. Then I am tempted to withdraw altogether from the world, in hopeless dejection; a burden to myself and a sorrow to my remaining friends; or hide myself in foreign lands; or plunge madly into meaningless activities; vainly striving to run away from the grief I never can escape.

Make me strong to resist this cowardice. Forbid that I should idly accept my dear one's mortality. In the hour of sore

Bereavement

bereavement may I summon the great resources of the soul—memory, imagination, faith, hope, love. May I gratefully recall all that my beloved one was to me; all that he stood for in the world. May I live even more constantly in the companionship of his spirit; may I carry out in the old spheres in which we together moved, so much of his purpose as I can. May I be kind to the friends he loved; devoted to the community in which he lived; loyal to the causes which he served. Thus in my life may he still live on, to my own comfort, and the welfare of the world.

By loyal living in the perpetual presence of my dear departed may I gain the power to see Thee who art invisible, and to realize Thy presence: that those whom Thou hast taken may not only remain with me, but may also draw me nearer to Thyself.

IMMORTALITY

THOUGH fidelity of soul can do much to rob the grave of its victory, still I too must soon follow the dear ones gone before. For them and for myself I crave more than a transient survival in loyal hearts who take up and carry on our work.

For this true immortality I turn in entire confidence to Thee. I know not how, out of a world which gave no evidence of anything but matter and force, Thou hast called forth the life and love which are its crowning ornaments. I know no more, and no less, of how Thou canst lead these broken lives and severed loves of ours to the fulfillment they demand. But all I know of love in myself ; all I see of it in human hearts ; makes me confident that Thou wilt this fulfillment. As without other souls to love I should shrink into nothingness, so Thou, apart from souls to love and be loved by in re-

Immortality

turn, wouldst be no person, no Father, no God—a mere blank emptiness inferior to man whom Thou hast made.

Because I cannot think of Thee as less than myself, or lower than the highest men and women I have known, therefore I trust Thy heart of love to preserve all that is precious in these lives and loves of ours.

I thank Thee for reported visions of departed ones ; yet I would not lean on these material props more weight than they will bear. My confidence is in Thee, as Thou art revealed in my own soul, in humanity at its best, and in Jesus Christ : not in doubtful traditions or alleged manifestations.

As Thou hast made this life of ours on earth a closed circle, free from violent interruptions, may I accept it as the call to concentrate my little strength, during my brief sojourn, on life and love and duty as I find them here : trusting my beloved and myself entirely to Thy power, Thy wisdom, and Thy love for future growth in character and progress in blessedness.

CHARITY

IN all my yearning after immortality, teach me to prize quality above quantity, and to measure the value of duration by the kind of life with which each day is filled. Thou art love to all: rich, poor, high, low, good, bad; and charity—the power to live in and for lives other than one's own—is the open door through which my life enters into and abides in Thine.

Towards those who are stronger, happier, better, may I look up in ardent admiration, enthusiastic devotion; never letting envy or jealousy rob me of the share in their excellence which belongs to every one who heartily rejoices in it.

Towards those more poor, more wretched, more wicked than myself, may I go out in generous aid, tactful compassion, kindly counsel, according to their needs; never letting pride or self-righteousness

Charity

hold me back from doing for the worst man the kindest thing his character and my ability permit.

Save me from the obvious hypocrisy of offering charity without the physical act, the material article, which is its practical expression. Save me from the more subtle hypocrisy of giving money or goods without the sympathetic sharing of life's problems which gifts of goods and money, if they are to bless rather than curse, must judiciously express.

Sharing the joys and honours of the more favoured; bearing the burdens and sorrows of the less fortunate; may I so multiply my life by all the other lives I touch, that it shall be large as its environment, and constantly expanding with it; of the same quality of charity as that which Christ brought to earth, and, wherever lived, makes the blessedness of heaven.

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