

CONQUERING PRAYER  
OR THE  
POWER OF PERSONALITY



L. SWETENHAM

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Conquering prayer





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BY

✓  
L. SWETENHAM

AUTHOR OF "RELIGIOUS GENIUS"

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To

THE FRIENDS AND FOES  
IN CONFLICT WITH WHOM I HAVE COME TO SEE  
THAT VICTORIOUS PERSONALITY  
IS THE  
SECRET OF PREVAILING PRAYER



## PREFACE

IN the perusal of this small volume the reader will do well to start with a clear understanding on two points:—First, that the following pages are not intended to be in any sense a complete or exhaustive treatment of the subject of Prayer. The subject is so vast, and in the consideration of it, so many alluring avenues of thought open up, that it has been no easy matter to exercise self-restraint and keep within the bounds set by an attempt to deal with a great subject in a limited space. Of necessity many aspects of Prayer have been left untouched, while others have been merely indicated.

The subject has naturally divided itself into two parts—the one dealing with Man's appeal to, and demand upon, the Immanent God, "Who worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure": and the other treating of his relations with the Transcendent God, Who while above and beyond all created things, yet concerns Himself intimately with the affairs of human life, and brings to bear upon them the greater powers and resources that lie outside the domain of man's limited nature.

As may be expected, these differing standpoints give rise to widely differing views of Prayer, and those who hold the one set of views often fail to appreciate the other; it is but rarely that the same mind can do full justice to both.

Nevertheless an outlook from both standpoints is necessary if a complete and balanced view of the subject is to be gained. The author would therefore bespeak for each of the two aspects of Prayer presented in the following pages an unprejudiced and patient consideration, believing that a more comprehensive view must lead to larger and more practical issues in the exercise of prayer.

The second point on which an understanding is required, has reference to the meaning and scope of the term Prayer as used in these pages. At the outset the reader will do well to recognise that the word is given its widest significance, and taken to imply those instinctive desires of a man's heart, or the deliberate decisions of his will which actively seek fulfilment, and which go forth in quest of that fulfilment, depending on the help and guidance of a Personal God or of His universe and its laws. This view is taken throughout the book and includes supplication, action, aspiration, ambition, regarding them as different forms of Prayer, which, metaphysically-interpreted, they undoubtedly are.

With these explanations the author offers this little volume to earnest souls seeking to explore the great realm of Prayer, hoping that it may, in some small measure, aid them in their quest for fuller light and power.

L. SWETENHAM.

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PART I

CHARACTER IN RELATION TO PRAYER



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

THE human heart has always realised the value of prayer as a working factor in life. From the earliest dawn of history prayer has been the hope, solace and inspiration of high and low, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, alike. Theologians and philosophers have been engaged in trying to understand and explain it, prophets to teach it. In Christendom at the present day it forms the subject of innumerable conferences of religious people ; fervent discussion and exhortation regarding it fill the columns of religious newspapers, and find their way into the secular press, and the practical exercise of it engages human energies everywhere to a greater extent than is generally realised. Prayer, being of the very essence of human life, retains its hold on the heart despite all that has been said and taught to weaken its influence. Even at times when the reason, brought face to face with new problems and difficulties, has almost wavered, the heart has continued to cling tenaciously to its confidence in prayer, intuitively knowing that some day the mystery that

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shrouds it must be solved, and the faithful heart be justified in its firm adherence ; nay, even now the clouds are lifting, and in many directions may be descried signs of a newly-dawning hope. Among these signs, the conjecture that telepathy may possibly afford some clue to one aspect at least of the mysterious power exercised by prayer, is welcomed by the philosophically-religious mind as a new ground of expectation ; and it finds no difficulty in agreeing with Sir Oliver Lodge that “ If we are open to influence from each other by non-corporeal methods, may we not be open to influence from beings in another region or of another order ? And if so, may we not be aided, inspired, guided, by a cloud of witnesses—not witnesses only but helpers, agents like ourselves of the immanent God ? How do we know that in the mental sphere these cannot answer prayer, as we in the physical ? It is not a speculation only, it is a question for experience to decide.” These words, in which Mr. Harold Begbie has summed up the great scientist’s views on the subject are full of hope and cheer ; and when such men as Sir Oliver Lodge and others of his stamp boldly affirm their faith in prayer, adducing reasons for that faith which are at least as solid as any that can be brought against it, the praying heart may well take courage. The fact is that the tide is turning, slowly but surely, and science, which



began by undermining the foundations of religion, will become its most solid support and ally. Men are looking, and not without reason, for a greater, a more comprehensive and perfect science, which will help to rebuild on a firmer basis that which it once seemed to destroy. The not far distant future will surely witness a marvellous expansion of the *range* of scientific activity. It will see a science arise that takes *all* the facts of life into consideration—the problems and experiences of the psychical and spiritual realms, no less than those of the physical—and giving to each and all the same patient study that has hitherto been monopolised by one branch of its work, it will bring to light new facts for a larger philosophy to deal with, and a nobler theology to interpret. Meanwhile the religious nature of man waits, echoing the conviction expressed by Bacon in those almost prophetic words, “This I dare affirm in knowledge of Nature, that a little natural philosophy, and the first entrance into it, doth dispose the opinion to atheism, but on the other side, much natural philosophy, and wading deep into it, will bring about men’s minds to religion.” Great as are the achievements of science, they are as nothing compared with what has yet to be done. Eminent scientists like Sir William Crookes and others are keenly alive to the fact that entire domains of psychical and spiritual knowledge

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remain untouched, and into these the science of the future must penetrate, disclosing to us facts other than those that merely pertain to the physical nature of man and the universe. The great subject of Prayer is one among many others of a similar nature that claims to be scientifically dealt with and illumined; and to such an investigation it will surely reveal itself to be, like all else in our law-governed universe, an ordered realm, where cause and effect operate unerringly, and under the reign of laws which may be studied and understood. This is what the world waits for. Men realise that after all these centuries of earnest praying, and of inquiry into the subject of prayer, a mystery still enwraps it, and that its deepest, truest significance has not been reached, nor its laws discovered. Many realise that we are hardly on the first rung of the ladder of prayer. With Sir Oliver Lodge they feel that we have not yet even begun to find out what is possible through the medium of prayer. It is a vast and mighty kingdom of power that we must conquer and possess. When a complete science and philosophy of prayer shall have been added to the human heart's intuitive belief in and practice of it, mankind shall be indeed as gods upon earth.

In those religious circles where the *practice* of prayer chiefly engages the attention, the critical interest in the subject is lacking—indeed it is

tacitly discouraged. The question arises in many devout minds as to whether there is any need to understand the mystery of prayer, and whether it were not best to exercise the privilege without seeking to comprehend it. They would ask, "Does any practical benefit accrue from discovering the laws of prayer—need we trace the spring to its source, when we may drink of its refreshing waters without any such fatiguing exercise?" In reply to such questionings we have to admit that some few there certainly are who need not understand, because they *see*: the mystic temperament can, in its hours of vision and elation, afford to dispense with these laborious steps to knowledge. But then all men are not mystics, and even the mystics themselves have only seasons of spiritual insight, which are separated from each other by long intervals when they must turn to the ordinary means of sustenance or starve; they must learn and progress as other men do, or else stand still.

Much may be urged in favour of an intelligent grasp of the laws and principles of prayer, but it is enough to say that an efficient and practical use of any factor in human life depends upon a right understanding of it, and prayer is no exception to this rule. May we not rightly attribute much of the failure and impotence in prayer to ignorance of its laws—laws which, if understood and obeyed, would change the frequent disappointments due

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to what is called "unanswered prayer," into a glad sense of power and effectiveness in this department of religious activity.

It is not the object of this simple book to enter, in any abstruse sense, into an exhaustive study of the science and philosophy of prayer—this is an undertaking for which we depend on the expert ; its aim, rather, is to deal with the question in its relation to ordinary human experience, to reconsider and emphasise some of the already ascertained principles of prayer, and to apply them in a practical way to everyday life. There is in this field of inquiry much gain for earnest souls who will bring to it all the powers of the Spirit, the Reason and the Will.

## CHAPTER II

### DEFINITION OF PRAYER

✓ PRAYER is essentially a creative impulse. It is a going forth of the desire of a personality in quest of realisation, but—and this particular feature distinguishes prayer from other similar forms of activity—it is always a going forth *in dependence and faith*. When a man seeks expression for his ideal, fulfilment for his purpose through the help and co-operation of forces outside of and beyond himself, his attitude is one of prayer. In the man who is not in sympathy with organised religion this resolves itself into a reliance upon the auxiliary powers of the universe. He feels intuitively (perhaps without even formulating the instinct into a distinct thought) that these powers are able and ready to help him—that he has but to put forth his efforts, and they will be supported and reinforced. He expects help, and is therefore confident and hopeful; and in this he differs from the man who looks only to himself and trusts only in his own unaided powers. One is an optimist, the other a pessimist: one does things that are super-human or at least super-normal in their greatness,

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the other never rises above what is possible to his limited human faculties and resources.

In the case of the consciously and definitely religious man this same dependence and faith take a higher form, and become trust in a personal Being—in the Transcendent, Omnipotent God—and naturally lead to reliance on His guidance and support.

The first necessity in dealing with this subject is a clear, simple, comprehensive definition of Prayer, and such a definition is by no means easy. To express concisely, yet fully, just what it is that constitutes true prayer, to analyse and name its essential elements, is a task that has often been essayed in the past, but with a measure of success that still leaves much to be done by those who attempt it in the present.

Each new generation goes forth with renewed hope to the quest, earnestly striving to penetrate a little further into the universal meaning of Prayer, and to apply more widely and practically some of its already ascertained principles. And to the great undertaking all sincere souls are called—none are disqualified by lack of learning or worldly wisdom; nay, more accessible to truth and purity of heart than even to intellectual culture and ability, are the sacred mysteries of prayer; “blessed are the pure in heart for they shall *see God*.”

A definition of prayer to be at all complete must

## Definition of Prayer 19

include the four distinct forms of praying with which we are acquainted—(1) The prayer of the lips ; (2) The prayer of the mind ; (3) The prayer of the heart ; (4) The prayer of action.

The definition that seems the nearest approach to this completeness is one given by the Rev. R. J. Campbell. He describes prayer as a man's "Demand upon Life," or, to put it in another form, it is his claim upon, and expectation from, his larger, higher environment ; his confidence in the help—personal and impersonal—with which the universe around him teems, in the provision it contains.

If we recognise the demand upon *Life* to be synonymous with the demand upon *God* this definition of Mr. Campbell's will serve our purpose, for it includes all that is necessary, and yet leaves us free to consider Prayer in its widest, deepest bearing upon human life. And are we not fully justified in regarding as essentially one these two different ways of expressing the dependence of the limited and personal on the universal and infinite? Whether we call it Prayer or a Demand upon Life, it is one and the same thing ; for Life is God's mysterious gift, so also is the universe that environs it ; both have their source in Him : and the laws of that Life and of that Universe are of His making. Therefore man's demand upon Life is, in its ultimate analysis, his demand upon God.

Prayer in this larger, deeper sense in which we have been viewing it, need never be articulated, it need not even be crystallised into thought, or held in any definite and concrete form in the mind—"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed." That the inward desire *exists* is sufficient to make it a factor in life, and effective according to its strength and tenacity. It may even remain a vague undefined instinct, a yearning, a pressure of ambitions and hopes, and yet be the most real of all prayers. This kind of prayer is going on ceaselessly all over the universe. The Rev. R. J. Campbell, as interpreted by Mr. Harold Begbie, is ever proclaiming to his vast audiences this fact: to the sceptic who exclaims, "I do not pray at all, I do not believe in prayer," to the hard-working business man who forgets it as a formal exercise, he gives the same message, "My friend, you are praying every minute of your busy life—every minute is an effort of your will towards success." "There are good prayers and evil prayers, he tells his congregation, selfish and unselfish prayers, holy and devilish prayers, and every man must be praying the one or the other. Do you desire that cheating and chicanery and meanness and cruelty and injustice should triumph, and do you work in that direction? Then your prayers are evil. Do you long for the victory of honesty and kindness, of right



## Definition of Prayer 21

and justice, of sweetness and light, and do you strive to that high end—then are your prayers holy. Every man must pray on this side or on that.” As Mrs. E. B. Browning also puts it, “Every wish with God is a prayer.”

And what the true self ardently desires and pursues, whether the object be good or bad, it will achieve in the face of super-human difficulties; mountains will be removed and paths smoothed. “Some higher influence,” says Goethe, “favours the steadfast, the active, the constant, the controlled and controlling.” We must all have watched this working itself out in the lives around us. Here is a man, whose whole soul is set on the attainment of high and holy character. His disabilities may be great, he may be heavily handicapped by outward disadvantages and by natural inward defects and weaknesses, still his ultimate success is sure if he only presses on undeterred by defeat and discouragement.

Success may likewise be predicted, though not with quite the same certainty, of the prayer, or demand upon Life, that is mean and selfish, and has for its object wealth, worldly position, selfish enjoyment, ease. Provided it is strong and persistent enough it too prevails. In the parable of the Prodigal Son we find the father helping instead of hindering the fulfilment of the prodigal's desires. By yielding to the demand for a share

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of the inheritance, he made it possible for the poor deluded youth to leave home, and get into serious trouble, and commit grave sins. A principle surely is hinted at in this story, namely, that God has so ordained it that the whole universe responds to the earnest demands made upon it, and co-operates with the man, be he good or bad, who is resolute enough and persists strongly in his desire, despite all that tends to kill or weaken it. And many are the foes to human persistence and insistence. God is the opponent when the desires are evil; and the world wages war against them when they are higher than its rules and standards. The fight is often desperate, but the man who comes triumphantly through, hugging his cherished purpose with undiminished vigour and intensity, has earned the right to see it realised—even, we may dare to say, when it is contrary to the Divine mind. In this dogged persistence lies the secret of prevailing prayer; the mysterious reason for its power, even in cases when it works injuriously, forms the subject of another chapter.

Thus, viewed in its spiritual aspect, prayer is indeed man's demand upon Life. When that demand is formulated into thought and word, and consciously directed towards a personal Being, we have no difficulty in recognising it as prayer; but the benefit to ourselves will be inestimable when we come to see that it is none the less prayer,

## Definition of Prayer 23

though the yearning that stirs the heart remain undefined and voiceless, and the purposes and desires that strive silently, almost unconsciously, towards some goal are not dreamt of as being identical with strong and earnest appeal to higher powers—nay, to the very source of all power—to God Himself. The one form of prayer is conscious, direct, intelligent appeal to a recognised personal God; the other is an indefinite, indirect unconscious dependence on Him through His universe and its laws. Both kinds of prayer are heard and answered; but who will not admit that the first is the more potent and effectual of the two, for it includes the second.

## CHAPTER III

### CHARACTER THE BASIS OF PRAYER

LEST the reader should wonder as he proceeds why, in a book dealing with the subject of prayer, character should occupy so conspicuous a place, it is well, before going further, to make the reason quite clear.

This reason, briefly stated, is that character is the basis of all prayer—the most important factor in it. Not only is the quality and force of prayer affected by character, but the less character a man has the less he prays. The fewer and feebler his positive qualities and desires the less he tends to go forth in active quest of self-realisation and self-expression. The poverty of the Self impoverishes its praying; and so both the quality and, if we may thus express it, the quantity of prayer depend on character. We need to be awakened to a recognition and practical application of this fact, for it has never really arrested the mind and occupied the attention to the extent that its supreme importance entitles it to do. It is not too much to say that those who do attempt to take character into account in dealing with the

## Character the Basis of Prayer 25

question of prayer generally deal with it superficially, and in certain stereotyped ways, following along paths already worn into ruts; while the actual bearing of qualities and habits, mental, physical and spiritual, on the prayer-life is overlooked; and defects of disposition continue, unperceived, to undermine the power of prayer. We need to be *arrested* in a new and startling way by the fact that there is a close connection between character and prayer! If, instead of going, again and again, over old ground, this aspect of the question could be seriously and intelligently faced and dealt with, we might the sooner find the key to those inner mysteries of prayer that we seek.

If prayer is the putting forth by the personality, in some form or another, of its inherent force for the attainment of its desires and aims, it is very certain that the prayer must partake of the nature of the personality, its excellences and its defects. The idea that it is possible for a dualism to exist between the personality that prays and the prayer it offers is an error that has too long survived.

✓ The easy-going notion that certain qualities can be exercised in prayer that do not exist in the character—can be summoned by magic, as it were, and introduced into a man's prayer when they have no existence in his ordinary life—is a fallacy that widely prevails and has many unconscious victims.

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The fact is that character is the basis of all prayer. As a man is, so he prays. He cannot be shallow and frivolous by nature, and yet pray with depth and intensity; he cannot be mediocre, and make superior and exalted demands upon life; he cannot, with a torn and distracted personality, concentrate so as to generate force in prayer. All that is in him reacts on his praying—whether he will or no,—vitaly affecting every exercise of the spirit of prayer, and deciding the issues.

One of the reasons why the error, that we can put forth in prayer what has no real existence in character, has so long survived may be found in the fact that appearances tend to support it. For instance, because we can go on praying with the lips for something that has long since ceased to be an object of desire, it is easy to imagine that we are fulfilling the condition that demands perseverance as a necessary element in successful praying. As a matter of fact, if the quality of perseverance is lacking in the character it will be lacking in the prayer also. Very soon the suppliant will inwardly abandon the desire or purpose he was earnestly set upon for awhile; that is, his *heart* will go out of it, leaving the mere empty form; and though he fondly imagines that because he retains the form he is persevering in the prayer, the fickleness that relinquishes its aims will in reality have betrayed him.

## Character the Basis of Prayer 27

This is the condition of innumerable individuals and communities who are formally presenting day after day, year after year, the same petitions that they once presented with genuine ardour and sincerity—who are ostensibly pursuing the same objects and schemes which were once of vital interest, but now no longer hold the heart. We need to understand that when the prayer has become formal and the work mechanical, when the inward hold of heart and will upon a once living object of desire has slackened, then the petitions we are framing and uttering are no longer prayer; nor does the *outward* adherence to our purpose represent a true adherence. If the *spirit* has gone out of such acts they are dead, though they seem to live and move.

What has been said of perseverance applies equally to the other conditions laid down as necessary to success in prayer—such as intensity, faith, self-discipline, concentration. These qualities cannot be suddenly called into being when required for the exercise of prayer if they have not their *home* already in the nature, and are not growing and developing there. The semblance of them we may conjure up, but not the reality; and God takes only realities into account; His great laws of cause and effect deal with facts, and not appearances; therefore not until we really and inwardly fulfil the required conditions need we

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look for the promised results. It is real, not nominal fulfilment that secures success in prayer.

If we look closely at the conditions themselves we shall find that they are simply *a demand for character*. And in this fact surely lurks a hint which sheds light on the problem as to why a powerful God and loving Father, Who knows our needs, should require to be besieged with a persistence, faith and intensity of no common order or degree ere He will respond. How if we should find that this very dependence of man upon his moral qualities for success in prayer is one of the surest, wisest means of procuring the growth and development of human character! Thus the law by which God limits Himself in his prerogatives as Giver and Benefactor becomes a powerfully regenerating factor in our lives.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE PRAYER OF THE LIPS AND THE PRAYER OF THE MIND

OF all prayer the most conventional and superficial is the prayer of the lips. Yet this form of prayer has its place and value in religious life, both public and private. It defines and formulates—and by expression gives point and emphasis to—the better aspirations of the heart and mind, thereby making them more real and tangible. Its great danger lies in the fact that it, more than any other kind of prayer, may successfully conceal many unconscious insincerities. The lips readily repeat, parrot fashion, that to which they have been trained, the mind mechanically acquiescing. Much of the praying in public worship and in private devotions is of this description. Such prayer becomes a modern species of charm or incantation, and the suppliant has a vague and totally unreasoned sense of being heard for his much-speaking. Even when the prayer of the lips is genuine, as is often the case, being intelligently based on ideas and opinions that have truly been adopted, it does not necessarily reach the rock-bed

of reality ; because these ideas and opinions are generally the result of conventional theories, or of education in the standards and ideals of our time, locality and station, and thus form an artificial rather than an essential part of the suppliant's demand upon life ; they do not come at first-hand from his most-real self, nor do they represent the truest instincts of his personality. Very often the desires of a man's heart may be directly opposed to those he has schooled himself to articulate in prayer, or even persuaded himself to consider as his own. Thus it will be seen that such prayer, though far from being useless, can only exercise a comparatively small measure of power.

The second form of prayer that we must consider is the prayer of the mind.

Distinct from the superficial adoption of current notions and theories is the far deeper process of *assimilating thought*, making it our own by a vital process and building out of it our intellectual conceptions of life and character. We are familiar with the type of man who has elected to live according to the ideals of his reason. These may differ widely on the one hand from the impulses of his heart, or, on the other, from the tastes induced by education and environment ; but he is prepared to sacrifice both feelings and habits in order to realise the *thought-ideal* which he has deliberately enthroned as sovereign over his life and destiny ;

## Prayer of Lips and of Mind 31

and this is equally true whether the thought-ideals be higher or lower than the instinctive tastes and tendencies. The hopes, desires, ambitions thus conceived by the mind press against the bars of opposing circumstances and self-betraying weakness; and, though unspoken, are as truly the prayer of the man as if he uttered them in the form of articulate petition; they constitute his demand upon life, which, as we have already said, is identical with his demand upon God. Frequently this demand is sordid and mean, having wealth or position or worldly success for its aim; but, whether it be good or bad, no close observer can fail to note that it is a potent factor in human experience. Much of the present day optimistic teaching, that attributes almost unbounded power to thought-forces, is based on the recognition of the fact that man's mind is a dynamic. You can be what you will, do what you will, urge the prophets of this great truth, if only you can bring all the powers of your mind and will to bear upon the undertaking. Thought-forces are irresistible; therefore nothing shall be impossible unto you. And this estimate of the potency of thought is true save for two modifying and limiting factors with which we shall presently deal. Nevertheless, in spite of all deductions and qualifications, *the mind's* choice and desire still constitute a very powerful and effective form of prayer, and bring

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into operation the universal law enunciated by Jesus: "Ask and it shall be given unto you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you."

But though the mind's prayer has its rise in a deeper stratum of our personality than the prayer of the lips, it is not necessarily the voice of our deepest, truest self. This brings us to the third form of prayer, namely, the prayer of the heart, which is composed of those instinctive desires and affections which spring spontaneously from the deepest founts of being, and therefore constitute man's truest, sincerest prayer. This forms the subject of the following chapter.

## CHAPTER V

### THE PRAYER OF THE HEART, THE MOST REAL PRAYER

THE *most* real prayer is the prayer of the Heart—the out-going of feeling and desire towards some object of its own choosing. It has been said that feeling is personal, thought is impersonal. This is relatively true, for feeling is the fundamental and final expression of our essential nature, it springs from the inmost recesses of the heart; it is intuitive and spontaneous, while thought bears undeniable traces of effort, of outside stimulus and pressure. That which we desire through love of it, is more truly our personal desire than that which we seek because our mind chooses it; the elective affinities of the Heart are a more integral and intimate part of ourselves than the dictates of Reason, or the tendencies resulting from education and environment. These, however strengthened they may be by habit and determination, are apt to play us false should feeling assert itself powerfully; for, being the greatest force in human nature, it is apt to break down all the oppositions of reason and training when it rises in strength.

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If, therefore, thought is potent, feeling is far more so. And from the heart—that inmost shrine of personality—there issues a stream of prayer, of earnest persistent demand upon Life, that is more effectual than either the prayer of the lips or the prayer of the mind.

Often a severe conflict ensues between the desires of the Heart and the dictates of the Mind. Theories rise up against feelings, feelings militate against doctrines and ideas. The heart cannot be brought to love and embrace the Mind's ideals even when, as is often the case, it knows them to be higher than its own instincts; or else it is that the Reason has chosen some ignoble course or adopted some inhuman theory in which it is continually opposed and betrayed by the protesting feelings. Whatsoever be the ground of the conflict that rends the personality, provided that thought and feeling are equally matched in strength, it is a severe contest, and the result might be uncertain save for the important, though often unrecognised fact, that the most real self is identified with the feelings, and carries the will along with it. Amiel has rightly said, "The mainspring of life is in the heart." His far-seeing analysis recognises that "what precedes will is feeling, which is preceded itself by instinct." It requires but little insight to note that while the will acts readily and joyfully in conjunction with *desire*, or feeling, going

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eagerly on its errands and accomplishing its behests, the mind has often to lash and goad it into action ; and even when set in motion, to keep it going with great effort and determination. Indeed, so closely identified is the will with feeling that Schopenhauer and other philosophers regard will and desire as hardly distinguishable from each other. Dr. Illingworth, referring to this, remarks that "all through the grades of human activity desire is the motive, and satisfaction of desire the object of the will, however much reason may intervene to shape and qualify and exalt our desires." "Where there's a will there's a way" is a saying that is clearly demonstrated in this conflict to which we have been referring : for where the heart cannot storm the strongholds of the reasoning faculty it sets to work to undermine them, gradually, silently stealing in and by a subtle process supplanting what it cannot overthrow in open battle. The Old Testament example of Balaam well illustrates this combined action of the heart and will against the weaker resolutions of the mind. Here was a man endeavouring to force himself to do that which an enlightened reason urged as right and good, his heart the while hankering after the riches of sin, and seeking by one subtle expedient after another to overcome the mind's resolve. In him we note the pitiful vacillation, the feeble artifices which always mark

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this conflict; and the final triumph of desire. The tragic issue of the struggle again illustrates the superior power of feeling over thought. Much of the world's morality and philanthropy and religion is of the same nature as Balaam's resolves—it springs from intellectual convictions and ideals rather than from innate love of, and identification with, goodness. As long as these resolves and ideals are not overpowered by a greater force they work effectively enough, but the trouble is that they are liable to be swept away any moment by a tide of emotion, or slowly and insiduously replaced by objects more congenial to the feelings; and herein lies their weakness. No wonder, therefore, that a certain school of religion attaches almost exclusive importance to converting *the heart*; and regards the conquest of the mind as comparatively immaterial. It has perceived the deep truth that if the heart is won the mind will be more easily gained than if the order were reversed. It is very obvious that Jesus recognised the peculiar potency of desire in the realm of prayer. There is deep significance in those words of His, "Whatsoever things *ye desire* when ye pray believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them." He who so fully understood the human heart knew that it was possible for the mind to frame, and the lips to utter, that which found no echo in the heart. And it was not to such prayer



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that His promise was given, but to that which had its rise in genuine desire. In accordance with the laws of prayer it was only of heart-prayers that He could prophecy complete success.

In thus pointing out the relative importance of opinion, thought and feeling in the realm of Prayer, the object has been to show that a man's native bias, his instinctive desire, is his *most* real prayer. "Prayer is the heart's sincere desire uttered or unexpressed." This cannot be too strongly emphasised, for most souls are ignorant regarding the nature of their deepest demand upon life. So impressed are they with the superficial idea that the Lip's requests, or the Mind's conscious and deliberate choice constitute all their praying, that they are quite unaware how, deeper down than either of these, the truest prayer of their personality is uttering itself day and night to the listening God and His universe, and is being answered! Indeed so unmindful are we of this region of desire underlying that of intelligent and conscious choice, that our real demand upon life is often never recognised until it is interpreted for those who have eyes to see, by their subsequent history. In reviewing past events we often see an answer to our heart's truest yearning, to the prayer we never consciously framed or deliberately offered. A good man finds he has gained a large income and high position for his son, but at the

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cost of that son's spiritual well-being. He wakes to see that, unknown to himself, the worldly advantage was more truly his heart's desire for his son than the spiritual good he firmly believed himself to be setting first and foremost. He was deceived as to the nature of his prayer, but the prayer-answering God and his universe were not; and the answer was according to the prayer. Or the case may be that of a mother who sees mirrored in the social success of her brilliant daughters just what it was that constituted her truest, deepest desire for those daughters, and by its superior strength conquered her feebler longings for their spiritual and moral welfare. She has gained for them that which she desired the *most* ardently and for which she unconsciously sacrificed the weaker aims. The Christian minister who finds himself a popular idol may well have great searchings of heart as to what has been the nature of his deepest prayer or demand upon life. It is quite possible that all unwittingly he has desired and aimed at honour and reputation for himself more than at spirituality for his people, and has unconsciously worked towards that end, evading those duties that brought opprobrium, and welcoming those that won recognition. Or, it may be, that he was destined to become a seer and a prophet, a spiritual leader of great wisdom and power, but the way was hard and long; and so,

prompted by an impatient and covetous heart, he has chosen the easier path of a more superficial influence and a quickly gained position and power, thus sacrificing the higher to the lower. To illustrate this point still further let us take a totally different case—that of a man whose instinctive ideal in life is symmetry of character. Deeply rooted in his nature is a yearning for balanced growth and development, an aversion to one-sidedness or the cultivation of a certain set of faculties at the expense of another. Without going into the question whether such an ideal is practicable, nor how it stands as compared with the specialist's, let us trace that man's history. We may find that at a later period of his life the instinctive desire for symmetry has been overpowered by some conventional and educated one, or else that worldly ideas and necessities have caused him to suppress it:—both of which would mean that it was not strong enough to resist opposition and emerge to victory. But if it has persisted, and triumphed through all temptations, all oppositions, we will notice how every thing begins to co-operate in helping him to realise it. Providence, which is another word for God, will so order his circumstances that they will act as checks and guides—keeping him off bye-paths that lead away from the goal, and forcing him on to the road that is the shortest and most direct

way to it. Should there be, alongside this supreme desire for symmetrical growth, other hopes and ambitions, other possibilities—such for instance as an open path to successful authorship, or to a remunerative business career, if the ideal of symmetry still remains paramount it will be found that these other feebler desires will be made to subserve to the stronger one, and all that interferes with its development will be ruthlessly sacrificed. God relates Himself to that native bias that is strong enough to persist, and He works with it and for it. In a hundred different ways He proceeds to answer that deepest demand upon life,—by loss and pain, success and failure, joy and sorrow, hope and despair. Looking back hereafter from some vantage point, the object of so much solicitude and care will see how everything has tended towards the attainment of his goal;—how the restraints and thwartings, no less than the inspirations and successes were working out his purpose. The law of cause and effect operates as mightily and surely in the realm of prayer as in any other. The omnipotent Law-giver behind the law, seeing through the mists that obscure our human vision, relates Himself to that which is our truest, deepest prayer, and bids His universe respond in helpfulness and power. To the heart that cherishes unworthy affections, poor sordid desires, it is a solemn and awful thought that,

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unless they are changed, they must assuredly work themselves out, producing in character and actions results that correspond ; and this in spite of noble theories and ideas with which the *mind* may be stored. On the other hand to the earnest aspirant after truth, goodness, beauty, there is comfort and inspiration in the knowledge that God never fails to rightly interpret, fully appreciate and abundantly answer his life's prayer for the highest and best.

If then the heart's desires constitute our truest praying, it is of supreme importance that these desires should be right and noble. "Guard thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

## CHAPTER VI

### INEFFECTUAL PRAYER

“ A DOUBLE-MINDED man is unstable in all his ways ; let not that man think he shall receive anything of the Lord.” This is no arbitrary decree—it is based on the universal law of cause and effect.

We have already referred to the internal strife that frequently rends a man’s personality and unfits him for every great undertaking or achievement, in much the same way as civil war dissipates the energies of a country and weakens its power for development and progress.

Unhappily such a condition of division and disintegration is the more or less common experience of all human life, and constitutes one of its chief sources of ineffectiveness in prayer. The heart and mind are not agreed as to their praying ; the desires and hopes of the one are not those of the other : half the personality pulls in one direction and half in another. It is unable as a whole to concentrate upon any common object of desire, and therefore the power needed to overcome obstacles in the path of success is scattered and

wasted. "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." His doom as expressed in the words of Old Testament Scripture, is this, "Unstable as water thou shalt not excel." Where the wholeheartedly good or the wholeheartedly evil purpose succeeds, the efforts of the divided personality will be weak and ineffective. Undermined by *inward* strife, its strength is insufficient to cope with *outward* difficulties and oppositions. True it is that many an evil purpose is postponed and weakened, or even frustrated, by this very lack of power and of deliberate purpose to carry it out, that results from civil strife. This negative good, however, hardly compensates for the splendid possibilities that remain undeveloped or the beautiful characters that achieve but little from the same cause.

In one way or another the greater part of mankind is in this condition of spiritual and moral impotence; really forceful characters are scarce. For the few individuals who with strong well-defined desires pursue and attain their object there are thousands who in varying degrees are victims of indecision and consequent weakness. Either their hearts are as a stagnant pool where desire is too languid and insipid to stir the will, or else they are as a surging sea, a chaos where all kinds of longings, hopes, ambitions, good, bad and indifferent wrestle with each other and none are strong enough to gain the mastery and emerge to

effective action. This unsatisfactory condition of human character is due to several causes. Goethe lays the blame on defective training, and it is certainly responsible, in part at least, for the weakness of will, hesitancy and instability that mar so many lives. That great philosopher says, "It is our ambiguous dissipating education that makes men uncertain; it awakens wishes when it should be animating tendencies, instead of forwarding our real capacities, it turns our efforts towards objects that are frequently discordant with the mind that aims at them."

Of this large portion of the human race *mediocrity* is the chief characteristic. We are familiar with persons of this type in whom desire and purpose are never vigorous enough to bring forth their appropriate fruit to perfection, and in whom action is ever modified and aspiration ever stifled; who evince so little originality, put forth so little force.

These colourless, featureless lives and characters, that do neither much good nor much harm in the world, and are even mildly amiable and virtuous in many cases, stir in some minds, impatience and disgust. There are great thinkers and moralists who would choose the positive qualities, even where they actively work evil, rather than the negative virtues. Our philosopher-poet Browning in his daring poem of "The Statue and the Bust," frankly avows this preference and does not hesitate



to describe as "Sin" the vacillation that lets opportunity for action slip by. His word on this subject is full of all the force of conviction :

" Let a man contend to the uttermost  
 For his life's set prize, be it what it will !  
 The sin I impute to each frustrate ghost  
 Is—the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin."

Whatever may be our views regarding this poem, we are all likely to agree that, if it be possible for the potentialities of good in human character to be turned into actualities, for weak and timid virtues to become strong and active ones—then that such a transformation should be made the chief goal of all religious and ethical teaching, and the chief study of those who themselves need to become the subjects of that change. But is it possible? That is the practical question confronting us. Surely we have much to lead us to answer in the affirmative.

Can we doubt that humanity was meant to overcome its weakness and out-grow its childishness? Need we hesitate to take the strong, vigorous, triumphant characters that stand out in bold relief in communities and nations as *prophecies* of the whole race, samples of what all may acquire, pioneers in the progressive march of moral and spiritual attainment? Doubtless the day is yet far distant when such power will be the common heritage, but belief in the possibility gives us a

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starting point, a basis for hopeful, earnest endeavour to bring about in ourselves and others this needed transformation.

But we have still another and more difficult question to face—how is it possible? what are the steps and stages by which we rise into strength of character, decision of will, intensity and persistence of desire; by which we become, in fact, princes, whose demand upon life must be met, whose prayer must prevail? Surely the progress might be quicker if its avowed leaders were more competent. Much of the failure in dealing with flaws and weaknesses in human character is due to lack of intelligent observation and patient application of means to ends. The weak and struggling portion of humanity puts forth much pathetic effort in the quest for strength, but it often fails; sometimes, because the effort is not of the right kind, and at others because it is not in the right direction. Wise guidance is the great need of blind and feeble souls. Teachers are wanted who will be experts, first, in the art of conserving and directing the moral energy—be it ever so little—that already exists in ordinary human beings; and, secondly, who will know the best means of increasing it by training and judicious exercise. Religious and moral education, as a *science*, has yet to be developed: it has hitherto been far too content with theory and hypothesis. The fact is that the

matter has never been taken seriously enough in the past. The comfortable assumption that any kind of ignorant and clumsy handling of the human spirit will do, has unconsciously deluded many would-be helpers of mankind. The Old Testament lament over Israel's prophets, in which Jehovah says, "They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly," applies also to the modern physicians of the soul. They do not understand this delicate and complex organism, nor see that the hardness and apathy they blame is often only a refusal to respond to the unskilled, unsympathetic touch of quacks, be they never so earnest and zealous. The human spirit demands experts for its service—those who have devoted themselves to a close, reverent, patient study of its constitution and laws. To become such an expert requires more than mere study of theories of human nature, psychology, doctrines of reform: it necessitates practical experimental knowledge. Indeed the man who would uplift and strengthen others must have begun with himself. Only in so far as he has assiduously applied himself to overcoming his own faults and weaknesses, will he have discovered the process, and become familiar enough with it to use it for the benefit of his fellow-men. It is the scientific spirit, the empirical method, that is needed in this sphere of work; and the worker himself must be

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the first subject of his experiment ; it must begin there. Only when the physician of souls has first succeeded in making himself strong and healthy, can he hope to heal and help others to any large extent ; whether he will or no, his power is measured by his personal achievement.

To return after this digression to the question with which we were dealing—namely the hindrances to effectual prayer that are to be found in the human character itself—there is one of a very different kind from those we have been considering, which must not go unnoticed here,—it is that which arises from wealth rather than poverty. The man that is *richly* endowed with general intelligence, wide sympathies and good all-round abilities, experiences a very real difficulty in directing his energies and concentrating them on any definite purpose ;—they tend to scatter and dissipate themselves in the many avenues of enjoyment and activity open to him, and his life does not accomplish much because no ardent, whole-hearted effectual prayer goes up from it. He, no less than the weak, vacillating, characterless man, fails to realise the highest possibilities of his nature, and from the same cause—namely, powerlessness to grip, hold fast and carry through a strong and ardent purpose. Concentration—one of the chief conditions of effectual prayer—is

lacking in both cases, and therefore both suffer the like consequences.

The three following chapters deal more fully with the various causes from which these defects and weaknesses spring; and suggest, as remedies, certain methods of self-discipline and culture which, if persevered in, are calculated to strengthen and educate the character, and lead on to effectiveness and power.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE REMEDY FOR INEFFECTIVENESS

To the reader who fails to bear in mind that is the wider aspect of prayer we are considering, this entire chapter on moral and spiritual discipline will seem to have but little bearing on the subject. But if we keep in view the interpretation of prayer with which we started—namely, that it is man's demand upon life, and includes action as well as petition, there will be no difficulty in tracing the connection between doing and supplicating, both of which will be seen in their true light—the one as the active and the other as the passive side of prayer and each the complement of the other. When this is fully recognised and understood, discipline of character will be regarded as a very necessary element in preparation for effectual praying; and the hindrances to success found in the character itself will be assiduously dealt with. Action and supplication will each be seen as the corollary of the other.

We have, in the foregoing chapter, considered some of the hindrances to effective life and action. The practical question now before us is, how these

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hindrances are to be met and overcome. Without assuming to solve the problem or even to treat it in any comprehensive way, we may reasonably hope that light on some important points will reward the earnest seeker, and issue in the discovery and application of effective remedies to the moral impotence that afflicts so large a portion of our race. Perhaps this end can best be attained by considering a few typical cases that represent the different classes in which this weakness is specially marked.

There is the man who fails because he has no keen desire, no strong emotion or ambitions; whose whole nature is colourless and flat and inert. What remedy is there for his weakness? How shall so great and constitutional a defect be dealt with? It is very evident that the first step must be in the direction of quickening desire. This can best be done by fostering and patiently developing each faint and faltering aspiration that stirs the breast. It must be recognised, encouraged, guarded against every temptation to relinquish it, and made to issue in some degree, at least, of fulfilment. For natures afflicted with this kind of torpor in the realm of desire, the chief hope lies in discipline, in repeated persevering efforts of the kind described above.

To better illustrate our point let us suppose that we have before us a man who has become

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painfully aware of his ineffectiveness in life and action, and of its cause, namely, the lack of desire. He is aroused to try and overcome the defect, and the remedy just prescribed commends itself, so he takes some worthy desire that is stirring in his heart—albeit very faintly and fitfully—and makes that the object of his fostering care and education. Many are the difficulties and alternations involved in the process. One day the desire is active, the next day it has nearly died away. But he who has once recognised its value watches the flickering flame and fans it by thought, meditation and prayer; or summons to his aid any outside stimulus that promises to support and revive it—such for instance as contact with intensely living and yearning souls, either through conversation or literature, or communion with nature. In time he gets to know the best means of reinforcing the flagging desire, and has constant and successful recourse to these aids.

But to hold and strengthen a purpose by keeping it ever in view, by refusing to lose sight of it for a moment, is only half the battle, the other half lies in striving to *put it into effect*. Just here, because of the inherent weakness of the purpose itself, there will be much to baffle and discourage, much to turn back from its course the soul of a naturally indolent and unambitious man. Nevertheless, as he values the end for which the strife



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was undertaken, he will hold on and persevere, meeting with renewed and more strenuous effort every fresh temptation to subside into apathy; striving to capture the fleeting impulses that visit him and put them to some practical use in the wise or good deed to which they urge him. He will acquire the habit of looking for and promptly acting upon every feeling or inspiration connected with his purpose that may come to him, instead of letting it burn out unheeded. A protracted hand to hand fight with inward weakness and outside foes may ensue, but the desire-faculty thus recognised, encouraged and actively exercised, will gradually grow and strengthen, gaining daily in intensity and stability. Step by step the cure will be effected; and the man who, because of his natural torpor and indifference, could be and do nothing great, will find himself awakening—entering a new realm of desire and aspiration, and, in consequence, of power and effectiveness.

There is every ground for hope where weak souls are *sufficiently aroused* to undertake this struggle, but, also, many are still too inert and blind to attempt it for themselves, and therefore it becomes the difficult and arduous duty of the benefactor, the Christian minister, the wise strong friend, to discipline, encourage, exercise these helpless ones in this school of redemption, which we may fitly term the School of Sustained Moral Effort.

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Any treatment of this subject would be totally incomplete without some passing reference at least to another school of human redemption, which may be fitly termed the School of Inspiration.

Most of us are acquainted with the miraculous results of that form of teaching and practice which aims at simply opening the doors of the human heart to Divine light or inspiration. Ignoring those remedies that demand discipline and effort and relying entirely on an influx of Divine grace and power to do the needed work, it looks for sudden transformations to be brought out in the life and character of individuals and communities. Nor is it disappointed. Men and women are "born again" into strength and goodness, torpid natures are aroused; dull, callous souls are suddenly and powerfully quickened into ardent desires, hopes, ambitions and capabilities. So great is the impetus that is thus given to moral and spiritual reform that more success seems to be achieved in a moment in this School than could be looked for after years of earnest effort and training in the other. As a means of reforming and energising human nature it is the most rapid and effective that we know: its direct appeal to, and powerful action upon the springs of emotion and character makes it unique. Even allowing for the reactions and subtle dangers to which it is subject, it is still undoubtedly the greatest spiritual lever that we

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can command. Whatever may be our prejudices against the narrowness and bigotry, the crude doctrines and ideas that often accompany this form of teaching, all who have the well-being of their fellow men at heart cannot but welcome so powerful an agency, and seek to further the revival services, evangelistic missions and other organisations by means of which it works; desirous that as many as can be brought into the region of effectiveness and power by *this* means should be reached and compelled to come in. And those who are elected by nature and temperament to enter by this way will do so. Some are thus called: perhaps herein lies the chief element of truth on which the doctrine of predestination has been built. But there are many souls not constituted so as to respond in any quick and sudden way to the breath of inspiration. For such the school of sustained moral effort is God's appointment. Nor need they complain of injustice, for in this as in every other case, perseverance and strenuous effort may win the race. The man who has to toil slowly and steadily up the path of character may outstrip him who, depending solely on privilege and inspiration, has put forth but little personal effort.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE RAISING OF AVERAGE CHARACTER AND ABILITY IN RELATION TO PRAYER

IN the preceding chapter we considered the hindrance to forceful doing and thinking that arises from lack of desire and aspiration. This lack we saw to be largely responsible for the great number of morally *weak* characters in the world. But besides the morally weak there is yet a larger class which is composed of what may best be described as *average* human beings. These persons are neither very good nor very bad, neither excessively weak nor remarkably strong: they do not rise above a certain level in thought, word or deed, and their emotions, while not deep and intense, are yet not quite shallow.

The mediocre section of humanity is perhaps the largest, and it is one that should by no means be despised, for it is admirable in many ways and does much useful work in the world. It does not make any very great or exalted demand upon life, its prayer is neither very deep, high and insistent, nor is it absolutely mean and ineffective.

But while fully according to the average man

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the recognition due to him, we cannot but question whether he is meant to abide contentedly on the mediocre plane,—to be satisfied with a merely moderate degree of character, virtue and power. Browning said “Man was made to grow, not stop,” and the goal of average humanity should certainly be that excellence which lies beyond the borders of mediocrity. As a matter of fact this is the ambition of a considerable number of average persons, and the ground of much earnest effort on their part. That they experience so much failure is perhaps largely due to the fact that the fundamental cause, the root-principle of mediocrity is not realised, and therefore not intelligently dealt with; and those in quest of the remedy give their attention to symptoms rather than the cause.

And where shall we look for this cause?—Not, as before, in the lack of feeling and desire, for both are present, in a moderate degree, in this case. Surely, what the average man suffers from most is the neutralising effect of a variety of conflicting thoughts, feelings, desires, ambitions, none of which are strong enough to give any great impulse or direction to his life, but rather tend to weaken and modify each other. It is clear that the result must be mediocrity; and the man thus situated often finds himself driven into a dull dead-level existence. He does what he must do,

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what he is pushed and pressed to do—what the exigencies of life demand. He earns his livelihood, supports his family, carries out the other duties insisted on by the world. But what there is no stern necessity for doing he leaves more or less alone: therefore character, the emotions, the intellect are often only developed to a certain very limited extent; the deepest founts of feeling are rarely, if ever, stirred, and the fullest resources of thought and reason seldom exercised: the best part of the man remains buried in unconsciousness. Occasionally bright gleams of power, passing glimpses of the higher ideals and possibilities of his nature disturb the monotony of an average man's existence, and produce deep yearnings and discontent, but they fade away without accomplishing much.

There is a deep pathos in mediocrity. That men should often live, grow old, and die upon the mediocre plane seems unspeakably sad when every provision has been made for them to rise into a higher life, and their whole moral and spiritual nature is so constituted as to enable them thus to rise.

But once more the oft-recurring, practical question faces us,—how shall it be done? Many and varied are the methods that man would recommend, but upon close scrutiny they will be found to resolve themselves into a general

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principle applicable in various ways to all the lives that are endeavouring to reach a higher level. This principle may be best described as the principle of endeavouring, as far as possible, to live up to the light we have. No human being is without some illumination, for "the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world" has left none so darkened that some glimmerings from his moral and spiritual nature, made in the image of God, do not shine upon his path and make it plain enough to walk in. The light may be dim, fitful and very limited in its range, but the honest soul that acts upon what it sees to be right and good and true, will find action to be an unerring path to clearer vision and increasing strength. There need be no enthusiasm, no inward glow or outward impulse accompanying these acts, they may be done calmly, deliberately, from a sense of duty rather than of delight, but they will not end there, they will issue in joyous spontaneous goodness, duty being changed into love. Many a soul has found refuge in duty when the emotion and the vision that give life its zest and impulse are lacking; and this refuge never fails, for however dim the pathway, there is, as someone has remarked, always "light enough for the next step" if only we are willing to act. And if, through the mists and shadows, we discern and take that step, the one beyond it becomes clearer, and then the

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one beyond it again ; and so on, till we emerge into full light and power. When Jesus said " He that willeth to do shall know," He stated very simply a root-principle of spiritual life. There is much practical wisdom in the advice that bids us " do the next thing."

It cannot be too strongly emphasised that the great cure within the reach of man himself for lack of power, for impotence of will, perplexed / indecision, aimlessness and listlessness lies *in action*, in *doing* something—at first it hardly matters what. Even if there is no value in the act to any one else, to the doer himself it is of supreme importance, for it reacts on his character ; and a series of such acts will have the effect of gradually so training and strengthening it that the mental vision will begin to clear, the chaos of the inner world resolve itself into order. Even the feeblest of aims, hopes and aspirations will emerge out of it, and assume definite shape and form, and acquire depth and intensity. There will be a growing sense of individuality, a consciousness of finding the hidden self ; and, as Dr. Watkinson truly says, " It is a grand thing for a man to realise his individuality ; every now and then to detach himself from the mass, disentangle himself from this multitude, and realise his individual life, freedom and responsibility. . . . All better things start with a man's sharper definition of himself before God.'



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The soul that yields itself to pass through this discipline—which may be a long and painful one—will come out of it educated to pray prevailingly, or in other words to live effectively and forcefully and to see his desires realised. He will have passed out of the region of mediocrity into that of superiority; having conquered the disabilities of his own nature he will be on the way to those conquests that lie outside it, and there need be no limit to the power and possibilities of his prayer.

It may be observed that no reference is made here to faith as a requisite in the path of earnest endeavour. The reason for this is that faith is tacitly implied as an integral part of it; for without faith, without hope of success, no course involving strenuous effort and self-sacrifice would be undertaken; and the very plea of works presupposes a foundation of faith.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE DISCIPLINE OF RICH AND VERSATILE NATURES.

THERE remains yet one more of the three types of ineffectual praying with which we proposed to deal, that presented by the man whose nature is so richly endowed that its very wealth constitutes its chief hindrance to success. With such a nature its breadth, depth and intensity, the number of its affinities, interests and sympathies; its versatility, its all-round ability and many-sided-activity,—all combine to interpose a serious barrier to concentration of purpose and focussing of desire. So many paths lie open, so many varied interests divide the attention, so many strong emotions sway the heart; so many thoughts and images crowd the mind, that a man thus constituted will often fail in the race of life when a much poorer nature will achieve success and do good work. The specialist will outstrip the man of wider abilities, because the one is complex and the other is simple; and the richly endowed nature has not learnt how to deal with its opulence, nor how to harness to his chariot

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the very obstacle presented by wealth and complexity, making them minister to his greatness and power.

Alas, how much greatness suffers eclipse; and very plausible are the reasons adduced for this grievous loss. It is true that greatness demands eternity for its unfolding, but this does not excuse its ineffectiveness in the present, and our sense of the fitness of things is violated when we find greatness failing under the limitations of time and space, and dissipating, or at least inadequately using its vast powers, taking refuge the while in thoughts of future opportunities of development and service. To fail under earth-conditions does not augur success under any other conditions, but the contrary; and we may rightly conclude that the cause of failure here will pursue and beset the man there, and only cease to hamper him when it has been overcome and expelled. By way of parenthesis we would explain that it is not success and failure as judged by human standards that is here referred to, but as revealed by Jesus Christ, who though He closed His life under a cloud and met a felon's doom, was conscious of having successfully accomplished the work which His Father gave Him to do. "It is finished" was His dying comment on His earthly mission.

No great soul should acquiesce in present failure on the ground that superior powers demand

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another sphere and a larger scope. This would be to make God's best gifts a means of defeat as far as the earthly life is concerned, and such was never the Divine intent. There is a great mission, in this world as well as in the next, for the highly-favoured nature, and we may safely predict that the many-sided man who has learnt to control and direct his energies would be far in advance of another who had but limited powers or a single bent.

But here again the all-important question arises,—how a gifted soul may make its wealth a means of strength and a positive help to the working out of life's purpose? The answer to this given by philosophy and religion alike is that a great self-synthesis is the first necessity. There must be a unifying of the personality, a harmonising of its desires, aims, pursuits. From out the chaos of many conflicting objects of delight and ambition there must emerge one supreme object around which all the others will gather as its reinforcement and support and into which will flow all the treasures of thought, emotion and practical ability that have hitherto been dissipated in several directions. The luxuriant richness of a man's nature was never meant to militate against a fixed and definite purpose in life. Earthly limitations make it impossible to succeed except in the degree that there is concentration on,

and consecration to some great clearly discerned object. There are specialists of the narrow, meagre type who have but one line and one kind of ability ; and there are specialists of the richer, nobler type who by restraint and discipline have brought all their large and varied powers under control and devoted them as an offering to some supreme task in life.

Then, too, the richly gifted man must resist a subtle temptation to which he is prone,—he must not despise the day of small things, he must be content to begin at the beginning and progress steadily. To one conscious of general ability it is often an irksome task to labour at laying solid foundations for his work or art. On this point, and also on the one already dealt with—namely, the necessity for limited beings, however versatile and great, to choose and adhere to some definite line of work—Goethe gives excellent advice. He says, “In all things to serve from the lowest station upwards is necessary. To restrict yourself to a trade is best. For to the narrow mind, whatever he attempts is a trade ; for the higher an art ; and the highest in doing one thing does all, or to speak less paradoxically in one thing which he does rightly, he sees the likeness of all that is done rightly.” In other words, the truly great and spiritual man, though under present conditions restricted in action to one thing (for action con-

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finer) has in him the essential qualifications for all undertakings ; and in perfecting himself in one line of work, he potentially perfects himself in all, for the character and principles by which he overcomes and succeeds in one sphere would lead to victory and achievement in all.

But what that supreme object of devotion shall be—whether Science, Literature, Art, Business, Philanthropy, or what is known in religious circles as direct spiritual work, shall engage a man's powers,—is a question that still perplexes many who have fully realised the need of definite choice and consecration.

To such Emerson would say, let each man find his natural bias, and by that he means, let each individual discover what it is that Nature has best fitted him to be and do. Religion would give much the same advice in some such familiar phrase as " Seek to know and do the will of God " ; and no better guidance could be given, for each individual life has its distinct goal, and has been fitted to reach that goal. Every type of character has its corresponding pattern in the mind of God—it was created to express some special aspect of the Divine nature, to be a word of God that none other can be in exactly the same way. Man's highest wisdom lies in discovering the God-appointed pathway for his life, and walking in it henceforth with unfaltering steps and a brave

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heart. It may not be discerned easily and quickly, some may be called to undergo the discipline of waiting, but a time will certainly come to each true soul when the immanent God will speak from within its portals and give the needed guidance; when slowly but surely there will arise out of the chaos of doubt a clearer and ever clearer plan for life and work, and the old sense of being without chart or compass will be replaced by a vivid consciousness of unerring guidance. Jesus has shown us the way to a clear knowledge of God's will. Not by yielding to the sway of unregulated impulses, undisciplined desires, wandering fancies, however alluring and beautiful, shall we come into sight of our highest possibilities, but by stilling the heart to listen for that inward voice—Conscience, or God, we may call it—and by acting in accordance with its behests. Such a course will mean self-sacrifice, constant discipline and restraint; but it is not too much to pay for the redemption of greatness from its attendant snares.





## PART II

### PRAYER AND THE CROSS



## CHAPTER I

### THE CROSS OF UNIVERSAL HUMAN EXPERIENCE

WE have for our consideration in this chapter the relation to Prayer of what Christianity has called "the Cross." In no theological or dogmatical sense would we employ the term here. Whatever may be our special and doctrinal ideas regarding the Cross there is a large and general sense in which it stands to all sects and schools for two tremendous and universal facts—the fact of *Pain*, and the fact of *Redemption through Pain*. On the one hand it represents that principle in the universe whence arise those events and circumstances that frustrate our human desires, that crush our hopes, cripple our activities, sap our resources; that militate against our success, or else turn success and achievement into dust and ashes in the hand that grasps them; it typifies that grim and seemingly alien force that often comes between us and our cherished purposes and casts athwart our pathway the gloomy shadow of failure, disappointment, disillusionment and loss.

But this is only half the meaning of the Cross. As we turn to look at the other side of this strange

symbol we find it lighted up with the glory of Redemption. We see in it another principle—that of Regeneration. Writ large upon it is the story of gain through loss, joy through pain, triumph through defeat, holiness through sin, life through death.

It is this two-fold significance of the Cross of Christ that is the unique contribution of Christianity to the illumination of the world. No other religion has thus gathered together and represented in a single striking symbol the universal twin-facts of Suffering and Redemption. It is to the Cross of Christ and the doctrines that gather round it that we owe the clear and dramatic presentation of the deep truth that pain is servitor to joy, that crucifixion is one of the supreme factors in the salvation of the sinner, the perfecting of the saint and the progress of the race. It unveils the mystery of loss and death, and illumines the dark things of human life. No wonder then that such a wealth of enthusiasm and devotion has in every age gathered round the Cross—that men and women have gloried in all that it typified of shame and suffering, and for the joy set before them—the joy of redemption—have joyfully endured its severest inflictions;—nay so eager has been their impatient zeal that they have wrought artificial crosses for themselves, instead of waiting for those that must naturally and inevitably come in the

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course of events, or in the path of duty, to every child of man.

The vast question agitating philosophers and theologians—why such a principle should exist in the universe—does not concern us here. We merely accept the undeniable fact of its presence in our midst, and, seeing that it intersects and influences every department of human life and activity, we would understand its laws and adjust ourselves to its working.

Nor is this the place to deal with the Cross in its wide and general significance. We must confine ourselves to the bearing it has on Prayer, and—taking Prayer as hitherto, in its double aspect of action and supplication, or, man's demand upon God, and His universe—seek to understand how suffering, disappointment, loss and failure affect the prayer-life of humanity.

The scope of this book only admits of a mere indication of the lines along which the redemptive methods of the Cross in relation to prayer may be traced. But these indications, carefully followed out in the history of even the ordinary human lives and actions that surround us, would prove a fruitful study, productive of comfort, hope and practical wisdom to the aspirant after spiritual power and the would-be benefactor of humanity. Only it must be understood from the outset that the process of the Cross is often very slow and

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protracted, and to see it through to the end and gather its harvest of results, demands patience and perseverance in the observer.

In order to trace the regenerative effect of suffering on the prayer-faculty of man we shall do well to recall those few examples of weakness and ineffectiveness given in the preceding chapters and compare them with certain conditions generally recognised and accepted in Christendom and laid down by theology and experimental religion alike, as essential to the success of prayer. Briefly stated these conditions are—first, that our prayer be according to the will of God, or, as philosophy would put it, in harmony with cosmic law; secondly, that it be sustained and intense, in other words persevering and whole-hearted; thirdly, that it be made in faith, and finally that it be offered in the name of Christ. Side by side with these demands let us note man's failure to meet them, and trace in the following chapters the method of the Cross in dealing with such short-coming and in producing the conditions essential to prevailing prayer. For in the Cross lies the only hope that our demand upon life shall be redeemed from its meanness and sordidness, its foolishness and corruption, its weakness and limitation, and be lifted up into that place of sovereign power accorded in God's eternal councils to human prayer. The soul that submits to the

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operations of the Cross can alone expect to realise its glorious destiny, and reign as king and priest on God's earth, vice-regent of the King of Kings.

Alas, it is possible to evade the Cross, to despise the Cross, and thereby to hamper and delay its beneficent purposes; but, thank God, finally escape it we never can! On the other hand it is also within our human will and power to resignedly endure the Cross, or better still, to go forth and meet it, to embrace it, to intelligently co-operate with it, to glory in it!

## CHAPTER II

### APATHY AND THE CROSS

IT will be remembered that *Desire* has been represented as a great factor in the prayer-life of mankind, and to the lack of desire has been attributed much of the feeble, ineffective living and doing so common in the world. The sluggish and dormant condition of the desire-faculty is a wide-spread disease of humanity, and its symptoms—want of ambition, want of aspiration—are everywhere manifest. Dullness, inertia, blindness, indifference to the beautiful and the ideal folds so many lives in a slumber more or less profound, from which they must be awakened ere there can be any hope of regeneration.

We may well ask what is the remedy for such a condition. The self-discipline and effort prescribed in a previous chapter presupposes the presence at least of some desire for improvement, an awakened sense of need ; for only after we are awake can we help ourselves. But how to reach this stage of quickened consciousness is the problem that taxes the utmost resources of the human mind. Have we not often stood baffled and



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dismayed before the cold indifference of souls that did not want the good we held out with glowing hearts and eager hands. How hopeless it seemed when desire itself—the receptive faculty—lay dull and lifeless. Reformers, Moralists, Religious Teachers and Social Leaders in all ages have found their efforts paralysed by what we may call the negative force of apathy, which has met them in the individuals and communities they would uplift and benefit. The first task before them has been the super-human one of arousing—of creating a sense of need; and the means at their command—threatenings of judgment, appeals to heart and reason, promises of reward—have done it but feebly, doubtless because no motives, however strong, are adequate to the task. This inadequacy is further proved by the fact that these means of arousing human hearts and wills themselves have needed to evolve. Their history is one of growth, through loss of the very power and authority they once exercised. The crude conception of a hell of literal fire and everlasting torture has ceased to exist. The fact is that human ingenuity—acting upon the sanction found both in Scripture and Reason for the belief that retributive judgments follow impenitent souls beyond the portals of the grave—abused this sanction; and by means of exaggeration and misrepresentation created out of it a terrible doctrine

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wherewith to arrest and arouse mankind. This doctrine—though it answered its purpose and held in check timid natures, or those capable of sufficient imagination to project themselves into the future, — eventually over-shot the mark, and “perished of its own excess,” giving place to a more humane idea of future punishment as a remedial, and therefore by no means unending process. But with the larger portion of humanity the sense of the present is too intense and absorbing to leave much room for contemplation of the future! A doctrine therefore that postpones retribution until after death has but little power to arouse. Moralists, and Religious Teachers realising this, are coming more and more to deal with another aspect of judgment—that which not only awaits the offender in the future, but overtakes him in the present, following more or less closely on his deeds of omission or commission.

All that has been said above of punishment, applies equally to the doctrine of rewards, which has undergone a similar evolution, passing from crude conceptions of future bliss to not only more exalted ones, but to the inclusion of the present as a period when worth and virtue may begin to be crowned. So also with the ground of moral appeal; it is for ever shifting, and, in the process being spiritualised and made more effective as a motive-power.

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But thankful as we may be for the evolution in the doctrines and ideas by means of which men have ever sought to raise their fellow-men, we have to recognise that, factors though they may be, their influence is limited; and if we depend on them alone to arouse and bless mankind, the result would be a dismal failure. The fact is that men do not sufficiently dwell in the realm of ideas to be powerfully and permanently effected by it;—they merely make excursions into it, and return again to the world of external and material things where they are more at home. This is the reason that neither the doctrine of punishment and reward, nor the presentation of beautiful ideals, both of which make their appeal to the spiritual nature, can do more than a very small portion of the work of arousing humanity to the claims of a higher life. In the hard and impoverished soil of that spiritual nature they cannot bear fruit. And it is just here—where these motives fail in dealing with weakness and sin—that the office of the Cross comes in. Let us in the remainder of this chapter trace this divinely appointed agent at its work of awakening mankind from soul-destroying torpor, and seek to understand some of its methods and operations.

As we carefully follow out the process we cannot fail to note that the apathetic, listless man is subjected to a series of shocks, disappointments,

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losses, trials, which are the direct and obvious result of his own indifference and indolence. These disasters are of course accommodated to his powers of endurance, but they tend to persist and increase, to hedge him in, to surround and press upon him from all quarters, till in some cases they make life almost intolerable. He is constantly brought face to face with his own poverty and weakness in some painful and humiliating form; his own failure obtrudes upon him in striking contrast to the wealth, power and success—temporal, moral or spiritual—of more diligent and earnest men. Nature contrives by a subtle chain of circumstances to keep these sharp contrasts ever before him in order that they may act as goads and spurs. And not only is it by passive and unconscious instruments that this work is done. The agents are often intelligently active and even vicious ones. How often a feeble character is surrounded, both in the home and abroad, by strong, forceful, selfish natures that trample on it, emphasising its infirmities and inflicting the appropriate punishment of scorn, neglect, dislike and tyranny. The process seems relentless and cruel, but it is wise and well adapted to its purpose. Thus is the torpid soul stung into a new energy of desire and effort. Hardships and trials unveil the cause whence they arise; the sight of worth and virtue crowned begets painful

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regret and stirs emulation. To a soul thus wrapped in the slumber of indifference visions come of good things it might have grasped, opportunities it might have used, now passing away before its eyes and leaving it poor and helpless, meagre and straitened both in spirit and circumstance. Often a bitter awakening begins in this way.

There is a large portion of the human race that has never yet been aroused to desire force of character because it has not yet come to see its need of moral *strength*; and only the Cross can open its eyes. What a common spectacle is that lack of wisdom and force in the warfare of life—that inability in men to hold their own in the contests of every day existence! In the contact of character with character, in the fight of principles with the foes that would oppose and destroy them, in the maintenance of rights against those who would deny them, how poor a chance have the listless and indifferent. Such men have often to see their rights and privileges wrested from them and their principles overborne, before they awake. Again the Cross comes to the rescue; and the weak and torpid nature is forced, in order to maintain any foothold at all, into the battle-field. Much as it may dread the conflict and shrink from engaging in it, there is no way of evading it. The necessity for fighting comes all unsought and in

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spite of every effort on a man's part to avoid it; it is absolutely thrust upon him. He is unconsciously drawn into contests, and entangled in them; they even rise up out of conditions that promised peace; they meet him at every step and turn of the way. If, therefore, the human soul does not thwart this principle of the Cross which, in the school of conflict, provides it with the very discipline and training that it most needs, it will find itself roused into a new ambition for moral and spiritual power, a new keen aspiration after strength of character. If, when thrust into the thick of battle, it does not defeat the purpose of the Cross by weak and evil compromises that secure peace at any price, it will come forth cured of its infirmities and capable of holding its own—having learned how to stand firm and guard its sacred rights and privileges from all assault.

Thus it is that the Cross by a process of pain, retribution, humiliation, loss, the tyranny of unconquered foes, the enforced struggles and conflicts of daily life, arouses torpid souls and kindles in them new desires that issue in more earnest prayer and a stronger demand upon life. And here, too, may surely be found a partial solution of the problem of pain.

## CHAPTER III

### EARTHLINESS AND THE CROSS

THE lack and feebleness of Desire is not the only difficulty that the Cross has to contend with in relation to prayer. There is another equally serious one—namely, the *nature* of the desires—their grovelling and earth-bound tendencies, their poor and narrow scope.

We have already dwelt at some length on the fact that human desires, good or bad, tend, in accordance with a universal law, to realise themselves in ways mysterious and wonderful; and frequently even in opposition to the reason's deliberate choice.

It is therefore of immense importance that these potent factors in the destinies of men should be noble, pure and true. But, alas, what are they in innumerable cases? How poor and mean and sordid, how depraved and vitiated,—perverted from right courses and following in wrong or polluted ones. As we watch the surge of human desires and see how they circle round the self and grovel in the dust, clutching at passing vanities, turning from grand realities, we wonder how they

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can ever in any great measure be brought into harmony with God's will and attuned to His love.

But need we despair if Jesus Christ did not? He could face the degradation of human hopes and desires unflinchingly because He had the Cross in view and believed in it as the power of God unto salvation: That Cross we do well to call "the Cross of Christ," for, though it is also the common heritage of mankind, it is supremely His Cross. He interpreted and illumined it as none other ever did or could. In His own person He endured to the utmost the results of a wicked world's hatred of love and spirituality, truth and righteousness. Through that divine and absolute self-identification with all humanity which (apart from any theological or mystical view of it) the human heart is slowly coming to interpret in the light of its own divinest experiences of love and self-sacrifice,—the heart of Jesus was broken by sins other than His own, and crushed by the weakness, the woe, the sordidness and earthliness of His brethren. And not only during the short term of His earthly history was He the vicarious sufferer. That was but an incident in the redemptive work. We are coming to realise Him more and more as "the lamb slain from the foundation of the world," who has never been outside the suffering of His creation, but has endured in and with our race, and will continue to endure as long



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as sin and pain shall last, every regenerating pang and every limitation and humiliation of the earthly probation of mankind.

It is this Cross, of which He bears the heaviest part, that will be our best friend and ally in dealing with the perverted desires of man's heart when the utmost human wisdom fails to correct, discipline and uplift them.

The process varies in each individual case according to circumstances, needs and character, but in a general way it may be described as follows. At unexpected turnings, in unforeseen ways, the Cross will meet and contend against the earthliness and foolishness of man. By methods wonderful and mysterious it will set to work to undermine the foundations of base desires and corrupted tendencies until they slowly and imperceptibly crumble into dust, or are swept away in a mighty flood of pain and loss. Examples to illustrate this are not wanting, but we are slow to interpret them in this way and are often perplexed to find a reason for events that can only thus be accounted for,—namely, as refining and elevating factors in which man's temporal and earthly good is sacrificed to the development of his higher nature. For instance, how often we find a successful career cut short by calamity, a coveted opening for congenial work closed by some misfortune, or some strong man is smitten in his

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prime by disease which leaves him for all the years to come a wreck of his former self. The hidden spectre of shame or dishonour that haunts a proud family, the secret grief gnawing at a heart that else is gay and careless; crushing disappointments, petty annoyances that daily prick and wound, hard necessities of toil and conflict, sad disillusionings, bereavements;—all these and much else beside are the weapons which the Cross uses to fight the earth-bound and grovelling tendencies of human nature. Sometimes, suddenly and tragically, by repeated blows of misfortune, a soul is withdrawn from the dear absorbing delights of this world's petty aims and ideals, and learns to open its eyes upon a new and higher plane of spiritual aspiration.

Then again the process is slow and almost imperceptible. Time after time some hurtful desire is disappointed, some unworthy hope deferred and deferred until its energy is sapped and it drops off, or some ignoble ambition is kept at bay till it sickens and dies. Is not this the meaning of the fading hopes, the loosened grip that comes with the advancing years of a man's life? It saddens us to see hands release their hold of once coveted treasures, eager hopes perish and hearts grow too faint and weary with disappointment, too sad with disillusionings to pursue their old desires and purposes. It is

crucifixion and death; and if the process ended here we might well turn from it in hopeless misery and disgust. But the end is not yet! Perhaps the real harvest will not fully ripen till hereafter. But even in this world, if our eyes are keen and clear enough to see, we may trace new and better longings, nobler tastes and tendencies, purer joys, higher ideals rising out of the dark graves of hopes and desires that were crucified and buried one after another on our pilgrim way. Sometimes resurrection is swift and wonderful, and stricken souls come forth suddenly arrayed in the dazzling beauty of a new life and a new joy! But oftener, far oftener, slow gradual imperceptible change is the divine order. We have to wait long to see the softening effects of sorrow, the mellowing, deepening processes of advancing years. In innumerable cases the blessed fruits of suffering have hardly time to manifest themselves on earth at all: they barely emerge above the threshold of a life before that life is transplanted to another sphere. But need we grieve that they have not reached maturity and fruition here? Is it not joy enough to know that the work of redemption has at least commenced, that it will continue in the new environment; and has eternity in which to blossom and bear fruit. The mere fact that a man's demand upon life—his prayer, his desire—has been lifted to a higher level is a great step in

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his evolution; for in that regenerated desire lies the germ of a new and better life, which will survive death and mature in another sphere.

We have been regarding the Cross as God's method of correcting the base, sinful, foolish desires of mankind; but it has another and a higher office: it is also the instrument in His hand of perfecting the saint, of reforming and elevating right desires and good purposes, and raising them gradually nearer to the absolute perfection of the divine heart and mind.

By frequent disappointment and failure the *good* man is also compelled to move onwards and thus become the *progressive* man. He is pressed on towards higher and ever higher goals by the painful events and experiences of life. Cruel disillusionings wean him also from one range of ideals to introduce him to another; and these in their turn prove inadequate to the many-sided demands of life, and he must pass on and leave them too. By the breaking up of one set of theories, beliefs, doctrines, he is prepared to embrace a larger and a better. The old ideas are either dissolved and dissipated in the light of a growing culture, or else they are swept from their place by some violent shock, some painful discovery, some bitter, disappointing experience, some tremendous sorrow. Frequently, it is the loss of a man's little world of affection or his

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narrow sphere of influence and usefulness that thrusts him out into a larger world of love and devotion, and a wider sphere of service. Benefits unrecognised, love unrequited and crucified, bring him to the God-like love that gives, asking nothing again. Success often allures him only to betray him; but it thereby brings into view a higher order of success. Sometimes a man hitherto contented with his lot, happy in his occupations, is dismayed to find that the once pleasant life is quite unaccountably losing its zest and flavour, and distaste and ennui are settling down upon him. This is the mandate of that inward monitor whose watch-word is progress, for an onward move to some higher plane of life and work.

Thus the Cross works in human hearts and human affairs, and the progressing man is "hurled from change to change unceasingly, the soul's wings never furled."

If he can but understand and interpret the process he will not quail though fixed ideas, strong habits, cherished idols, resolute purposes, hot ambitions break up and vanish beneath the operation of the Cross; for he knows that they only go to come again in new forms of greater strength and beauty.

"When half-gods go,  
The gods arrive."

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The willing and obedient soul thus led by the spirit of God, albeit along a pathway marked with blood and tears, will rejoice to know the Absolute Perfection has chosen him for Its own, and will never cease to fight against his poverty, weakness and limitation until they disappear; that It will deal blow after blow upon the fetters that enchain him until they yield and let him emerge into the sovereign power that makes demands upon life which must be obeyed—an Israel, indeed, who prevails with God and man!

Thus we find that the first of the four conditions referred to as essential to successful prayer, is slowly but surely wrought out by the Cross. Not only are the base, corrupted, perverted prayers of humanity purified and disciplined, but the right demands, the good and legitimate yearnings are lifted higher and higher, and brought increasingly into accordance with the Divine will and purpose. Thus the fulfilment of one great promise made to prayer is earned—"If we ask anything according to His Will He heareth us, and if He hear us we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him."

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCENTRATION AND THE CROSS

THERE is a richness and completeness of character, a universality of which seers have dreamed and prophets prophesied, that awaits man on his onward march. In that direction his evolution may even now be seen to move: thither all events and circumstances appear to be tending.

This is not the place to enter into a full explanation of all that constitutes the only kind of universality possible to man in this dispensation. Suffice it to say that universality is synonymous with spirituality: it is that peculiar power that brings us into harmony with the universe, into sympathetic touch with all around us: that relates us to persons and things in a way which makes it possible for us, even without knowledge of their outward history and circumstances, to perceive their essence, learn their secret, love them, co-operate with them, use them, and be used by them. Of the universal nature it may be truly said, "All things are yours": in it love, blossoming into power, wisdom, truth, overcomes limitations and leads to greatness. There is a universality

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that is possible to us under our present earth conditions and towards this we are being surely led and guided.

But the goal is yet afar off, and those individuals in whom the germ of a universal nature is the most pronounced, are often far more embarrassed than advanced by their potential wealth and greatness. We have already observed how the very excess of power and ability in a life may hamper it; and rich and varied endowments may become a snare and stumbling block, tending to make their possessor shallow and ineffective, and certainly less strong and successful than the man who is "tied to one thought," and has but a limited range of ability.

Undoubtedly at this stage of its development the potential universality of man is impeded and confused by its own profusion. Those who are called to be pioneers along this path have not yet learnt how to deal with complexity, how to command large resources, how to discipline and marshall their powers and lead them on to victory. The various elements of a gifted personality are in conflict with each other, modifying, obstructing, destroying one another. There is needed a supreme and unifying life-principle that shall bind these distracted powers and faculties into a harmonious whole, and thus bring them out of chaos into ordered existence, related service, mutual helpful-



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ness: and it is to this end that the Cross works as a remedial agency, shaping that universality that is man's crowning achievement in his evolution on earth.

If we follow closely the history of those souls who are thus bewildered by their own opulence, we will find that the same process of thwarting, disappointment, obstruction that worked as a regenerating factor in the cases we have already noted, is a marked feature in these also. The object here, however, is not so much the refining and elevating of purpose as the *conservation and concentration of force*. Hence it is that the Cross, often by methods severe and harsh, proceeds to restrain, control, discipline the wild growths of a luxuriant nature. Wasteful redundancy and extravagance is pruned and restrained; dissipation of energy is checked and the tendency to dilettantism sternly repressed. The easy skimming of the surface of things, roaming with light-hearted ease and pleasure over a vast area of life and knowledge without ever seriously mastering any of its difficulties, or deeply penetrating any of its mysteries,—these and many other kindred temptations of a rich and varied nature, the Cross has means of dealing with.

To such natures will come many a disconcerting experience. Interruptions will break the thread of ardent schemes; unforeseen events will delay the

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accomplishment of cherished projects for so long a time that they are wearied of and out-grown. One after another the many and diverse avenues of thought and activity, in which the life was wont to flow easily and naturally, close; the way is hedged in on almost all sides, and the soul that once roamed freely over a wide area is pushed into a corner, its sphere limited, its horizon narrowed, and many of its powers crippled.

Nor is crucifixion always the *gradual* process just described. Sometimes there bursts a sudden storm of trouble which beats relentlessly around the beautiful playthings of a man's life. A tragic event, a vivid and painful awakening from some sweet dream of hope or gladness, a sad disillusionment, an intense sorrow,—any one of these is often enough to sweep away at a single stroke artificial environments and conventional ideas, and bring man down to the bed-rock of reality,—the solid foundations of fact before which the beautiful erections of poetry and romance crumble away.

When all seems loss and failure it is well to remember that the destructive is followed by a constructive process, and as soon as one has accomplished its work the other begins to operate; both are equally necessary halves of a great scheme of redemption.

The soul bereft of its idols and illusions finds itself face to face with its own true life and destiny,

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and begins to see clearly that path which is peculiarly its own. Gradually there is brought to bear upon it the pressure of new necessities and new environments, the allurements of new inclinations and ideals; and thus, partly by the force of circumstances, partly by the power of fresh demands and desires, the man previously prepared by discipline is helped and guided to his destined goal, from which, save for the Cross, he may have been diverted.

Thus it is that the Cross clears away the mists and perplexities of life, reduces to order and harmony those conflicting, obscuring elements of a rich and varied nature that make effectual action difficult; and out of the chaos of man's manifold desires, aims, pursuits, there emerges a prevailing life-purpose—an ideal of that unique and special thing that he was meant to be or do. Henceforth the torn and distracted personality no longer wastes and scatters its powers, but rallies round the new-found centre, reinforcing it by the co-operation of faculties that once contended with each other. They now combine in furthering a common end, and bring their contribution to a common cause. The life has been unified by the Cross and has received direction and impulse, and thus one more of those conditions essential to successful prayer has been fulfilled. A concentrated intensity, which always includes unflinching patience and

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perseverance, has been born. Whole-hearted, clear-sighted desire has evolved out of vague and superficial affinities, fickle tastes and tendencies, wandering fancies, scattered activities and unstable purposes. The personality, once weak and ineffectual because of disintegration and division, has become strong through combination; and from the depth of this harmonised and unified life there can now go forth a demand upon life that is all powerful, and cannot be refused—a prayer that must prevail.

Let the gifted man, then, in whose career there are evident and manifold tokens of crucifixion, cease to bewail his fate. Instead of crying out against the restraints put upon his varied and extended activity, and deploring his gradually narrowing sphere, let him rise up and go forth to meet this friendly and helpful principle of the Cross that comes to him in the guise of a thief and enemy. Let him enter into hearty co-operation with it; voluntarily relinquishing, one after another (as it indicates the need), those alluring hindrances to effectual life, instead of waiting till they are wrested from him by force. It is in the absence of a will strong enough, and a wisdom great enough to deal firmly and intelligently with these distractions, that the Cross must needs be heavy, compelling and driving where else it might have gently led and guided.

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So few are as yet capable of governing and applying this best gift of versatility, and so the Cross has to come in and do the work for them. He who submits to the Cross is saved from waste and failure and guided into paths where he can do his best : the soul that resists or evades the Cross suffers the consequences, and presents a life conspicuous for squandered abilities and lost opportunities—an example of great powers unused or misused, of small broken inadequate scraps of work done instead of some whole and harmonious service displaying design, purpose, strength and skill.



## PART III

### PRAYER AND THE RESURRECTION PRINCIPLE





## CHAPTER I

### FAITH AND BELIEF

WE have sought in the preceding chapters to trace a few of the directions in which the Cross operates in liberating the power of prayer from the thralldom in which it is held by human weakness, ignorance and sin. We have seen how these hindrances are gradually overcome and removed by a process which tends to destroy what is base and foolish in order to replace it by what is good and beneficial. So far it is the negative aspect of Redemption as related to prayer that has chiefly engaged our attention; though in dealing with it frequent reference has of necessity been made to the positive side, to the new life springing up out of the grave of the old, and issuing in purified desires, elevated ideals, strengthened will and purpose, disciplined energy and illumined activity.

In the present and subsequent chapters which deal with the more positive elements of prayer, the prominence hitherto given to the Cross, or destructive principle in the great scheme of human salvation (in which salvation prayer is an essential

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factor) will now naturally be transferred to the constructive aspect of redemption—to that *resurrection principle* in the universe which is just as inextricably entwined with all life and activity as is the principle of crucifixion. Nevertheless, we shall not altogether part company with the Cross, for it continues to accompany and have its part in every forward movement of the soul throughout its earthly sojourn—crucifixion and resurrection alternating and co-operating in the evolution and growth of human character.

The constructive principle in the universe to which we have referred comes into operation through *Faith*. It is based upon a consciousness of, a trust in, the existence of realities and powers imperceptible to the senses. This confidence is of two kinds—which we shall distinguish from each other as *Belief* and *Faith*. The former is the exercise of man's mental faculties; the latter is the result, or fruit, of his spiritual nature.

The present chapter is frankly and avowedly a digression in that it does not deal directly with the subject of prayer. Nevertheless such a digression is necessary in order to clear the way for a better understanding of those positive aspects of the prayer-life to which we propose to devote the remainder of this book. To define the difference between *Belief* and *Faith* and to indicate the province each occupies in man's relations with

the unseen is essential to a right application or use of either in the practical affairs of life. With this brief apology we may proceed to deal with the subject to which we have for a while turned aside.

Belief has always received more recognition at the hands of the learned and cultured than has ever been accorded to Faith. It is, therefore, interesting to note a coming change.

In the thought of the present day there seems to be a newly-awakened and growing interest in the question of Faith. Whereas, in the past, many branches of learning scornfully regarded Faith as a relic of superstition, an illusion of the ignorantly and foolishly credulous,—there is now in all circles of intellectual thought and activity a very real movement towards Faith; not the Faith that is wholly mysterious and unintelligible, but that which rests on principles we can understand or at least explore. An article by the Rev. John Hutton in the "Hibbert Journal" of July, 1905, entitled "Is the Age of Faith Returning," indicated some of the directions that this movement is taking. With keen insight the writer predicted certain results which those who, like him, are watching the new development with eager interest, feel to be a true forecast. The coming change in man's views regarding Faith is doubtless at this stage too subtle and vague and elementary to be

generally perceived. Nevertheless those who have waited for it, confident that it must come, can trace in these small beginnings the germ of what they look for. They hope to see, in the not far-distant future, the despised and decadent faculty of Faith revived and reinstated, established on immovable foundations and scientifically recognised as the most powerful and penetrating, the most illuminating and inspiring force with which human nature is endowed—a light without which the world gropes and stumbles on its way, a power with which it can no longer afford to dispense. When this change, which we see slowly approaching, has taken place, the subject of Prayer must of necessity come to the front and attract the same attention from the cultured and learned that it has hitherto chiefly received from the poor and ignorant—those wisely-foolish people who are “rich in faith.”

In view of this awakening interest in the question of Faith and its important bearing on our subject it will be well to emphasise that which in the strictest sense constitutes Faith,—especially as some of its peculiar characteristics are in danger of being overlooked, and its operations confounded with those of a very different faculty.

The term Faith has been made to do double service in both Theology and Philosophy. Not only does it stand for what is its own distinctive function, namely, the apprehension, by means of

an inner intuitive faculty, of that which is imperceptible to the bodily senses,—but it is also applied to the conclusions arrived at by the Reason regarding things Unseen.

The world in its religious significance (to which we must here restrict ourselves) has been vaguely and broadly used, and covers the entire ground of our access to God ; whereas, in reality, that ground is more or less equally divided between two distinct powers of our nature, which work in totally different ways and to only one of which is the term Faith strictly applicable. The human mind has instinctively recognised this, and despite the frequently inaccurate use of terms, has dimly distinguished between these two separate avenues leading up to the Infinite and Eternal.

In order to bring out and emphasise these two different means of communication with the Unseen, let us, for the sake of convenience, designate one Faith and the other Belief. And, indeed, these kindred terms—the first meaning assent to revealed or perceived truth, and the second, credit given to evidence—seem to warrant the use here made of them to describe respectively the two corresponding religious states. If, however, it be objected that the distinction is arbitrary—there being no precedent for it in Scripture or Theology, where the words are used interchangeably and mean the same thing,—still it might be urged that both

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Scripture and Theology recognise the two distinct faculties by which mankind relates itself to God, and which are here regarded as Faith and Belief. For want, then, of better terms let us adopt these and proceed to explain them.

An eminent theologian has defined Faith as *Vision*, by which he implies spiritual perception, intuitive insight. This faculty forms one of the well recognised links between us and the Invisible.

As contrasted with this spontaneous and intuitive perception, there is another means of reaching up to God which Charles Kingsley describes in the brief sentence "Faith" (he means Belief) "is reason exercised on the Invisible." The reasoning faculty—whether its starting point be hypotheses in the shape of doctrines and dogmas, or theories based on natural phenomena, and ordinary human experience,—exercises itself on these and proceeds by means of them to climb up step by step, first acquiring and then strengthening its ideas and beliefs regarding the Unseen. These two ways of acquiring divine truth differ in every particular; the sharp antithesis between them can best be brought out by noticing some of these particulars.

For instance, as has already been said, Belief reasons out its creed; Faith does not reason at all; it simply sees without effort or strain. In the sphere of religion Faith is analogous with genius; Belief with talent. Faith is

synthetical, it grasps a truth or an idea in its entirety and then translates it into particular theories, experiences and phenomena. Belief begins with parts and particulars in order to reach the whole.

Faith is immediate perception; it assents to a truth prior to its demonstration. Belief is mediated, and must wait for evidences which satisfy the Reason ere it finds assurance. Faith passively receives truth; Belief works to win it. Faith is one with its object, Belief strives to gain that identity. Faith is of the heart and produces feeling, calling into play the mystical elements of human nature, of which enthusiasm, love, ecstasy, inspiration, are a part. Belief is of the intellect, producing thought and drawing upon man's power of patient investigation, faithful research, persevering effort.

Concrete examples and illustrations of both Faith and Belief abound in the life around us, together with innumerable caricatures and simulations of each. There is also much self-deception with regard to the one or the other, which claims to possess and enjoy that which it as yet only admires and desires and endeavours to attain. Professor James in his "Varieties of Religious Experience," devotes an entire chapter to examples coming under the category of that trust which is based on vision, and which we have designated Faith. These experiences range from some of the

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highest and noblest forms of illumination and inspiration down to the smallest and most insignificant. They have been laboriously collected and carefully narrated, and form a valuable psychological study. To the order of Faith-phenomena belong those familiar experiences of sudden illumination which bring a vivid sense of sin, weakness, failure; generally followed by a clear realisation of pardon, peace, power: or that unmistakably indicate some step to be taken, some course to be pursued. Of this nature also is the intuitional sense of relation to God—of having come into harmony with Him—that is the joy of many earnest souls.

In all such cases the seeing is so clear that there is no room for doubt; the subject of the experience gets, as Dr. Schofield expresses it, “a firm, irrevocable, unquestioning grasp of facts.” These “facts,” though entirely removed from the realm of sense-perception, and having as yet no objective existence in that realm, are nevertheless more real to the spiritual vision than anything that the bodily senses could perceive, and are the source of feelings of unparalleled intensity, from the most poignant sorrow to the most exquisite rapture. And not to feelings alone do they give rise, but motives also spring from them—motives of a nature so powerful that they overturn established conventions, revolutionise character, and effect



radical changes and reforms. There are modern representatives of the heroes catalogued in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, "who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, waxed mighty in war, turned to flight armies of aliens."

It is not to be wondered at that Faith often leads to dogmatism. Those who have once had the experience of its wonder-working power, though they may not be able to explain it or reason about it, will hold and assert it in the face of all opposition. In the spirit of the blind man of the gospel narrative, turning from debate and enquiry they, like him, will reiterate, "This I know that whereas I was blind I now see."

It must not be supposed that the spiritual faculty of seeing is of the same strength and clearness in every case: it varies infinitely, and some faith-perceptions are so weak as hardly to be recognisable. Nevertheless, whether strong or weak this kind of seeing belongs to another order altogether from that of Belief.

We have dwelt at some length on Faith, and it now remains to describe Belief and show wherein they differ.

Illustrations of religious Belief, like those of religious Faith, abound in every sphere and calling

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of life. There are theologians, reformers, philanthropists, scholars, ordinary business men and workmen who exemplify the peculiar character and activity which is a product of Belief, in marked contrast to that resulting from Faith.

Faith, as we have already said, *sees* while Belief *reasons* on the invisible. To see *somehow* is essential to life and growth. The man, therefore, who cannot see with the inward eye of the spirit, must depend on the exercise of his reasoning faculty; and this faculty as a means of giving knowledge of things transcendent and invisible is inadequate to its task. Thus the process is long and tedious. Slowly and laboriously does such a man mount up into his beliefs—walking in what is twilight as compared with the sunlit radiance shed by Faith, he moves by difficult stages to the certitude that comes quickly and spontaneously by the gift of vision. And even when some degree of assurance is reached, it does not produce the same vivid emotions and powerful motives that result from Faith. A great deal of earnest religion in the world is of this nature. Its beliefs—based on hypothesis, on rational evidence or experimental proof, are subject to changes and alternations, and do not give the vivid joy, the intense enthusiasm that a more spontaneous and intuitive perception would. All the emotions produced by Belief are more sober than those of Faith; its

conquests and achievements are less striking, its demand upon life less audacious, its personal relations with God less intimate and assured;—in fact its total effect in the universe is natural, whereas that of Faith is super-natural, or at least super-normal.

As we trace the radical difference between these two faculties in the sphere of religion, the question arises whether they are destined to remain apart in their functions, or whether there is any bridge by means of which Faith and Belief can cross over to each other, as it were, and blend and co-operate.

Such a bridge there undoubtedly is, and that which constitutes it is the development and the perfecting of these faculties themselves. Though separated in the earlier stages of their growth and exercise, as they mature they tend to reach across and join hands, mutually reinforcing and strengthening each other. At a still further stage of progress they seem to merge and mingle, Belief reaching a point where it becomes illumination and Faith acquiring such breadth and depth of vision that it understands, and ardently desires to understand, that which it was once content only to intuitively see. Doubtless we have watched this process and have traced how Belief in some point or particular, where it has been strenuously maintained, by every resource at its

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command, and reinforced by faithful care and labour, gradually passes out of the region of shadows and uncertainties into the full clear light of vision. In like manner, Faith, fully matured, becomes a higher kind of reasoning: with the thing it sees, it perceives also the reason for that thing—the rational basis on which it rests; and thus it becomes difficult to distinguish the one faculty from the other.

It is very evident that the Divine purpose has ordained that our relations with the Infinite and Eternal should be maintained and strengthened by the joint services of Faith and Reason; and, therefore, each individual life is so ordered that it should include the training of both faculties, and be forced to draw upon the resources of both. The chief hindrance to this purpose is that we are not plastic enough. The man of Faith and the man of Belief tend to mutually depreciate each other's methods, and to distrust results based on any but their own. Their rigidity and exclusiveness, their tendency to make an idol of either Faith or Reason, and to close every avenue save that leading to its shrine, often demands the severest discipline. Often the man in whom the Faith-faculty has been strong, who having lived and walked by vision is unwilling to walk by any other light, finds the vision withdrawn, the power to see gone, and he is forced to fall back on

Belief. If he would retain his hold upon the truths that were the main-spring of his life, he must proceed to support and strengthen them by means of evidence, proof, experience—a method of which he was once independent; he must begin to *reason* on the Invisible. In like manner does the Cross—that corrective principle in the universe—meet the man of Belief with a beneficent purpose of discipline and enlargement. He who either despised the vision of Faith or merely distrusted it, finds himself left with no other resource—no other alternative between it and darkness. The pathway of reasoning has for him become an arid desert in which is no sustenance: and he must either starve or take the way of Faith. Alas many elect to starve, and thus for a while defeat the wise purpose of the Cross.

We may differ widely as to the relative value of Faith and Belief in a man's relations with the Unseen. Perfection, however, consists in having both faculties in good working order and at our command, and in the alternative use of each as the occasion may demand; or better still in the exercise of both, simultaneously and co-operatively.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PRAYER OF FAITH

THE foregoing chapter will have made it clear that the Prayer of Faith is not prayer in general but prayer of a specific character. To this kind of prayer peculiar power and efficacy are ascribed. As a wonder-working force it is understood, on the authority of the Bible, and on that of teachers of religion generally, to be practically unlimited. Christ said, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." This truth has been reiterated in an infinite variety of ways by men in all ages and not infrequently subjected to misrepresentation and abuse. Nevertheless the principle has retained its hold upon us that a *certain kind* of prayer or demand upon God is powerful and prevailing above every other. The quality which characterises this kind of prayer is Faith as distinguished from Belief, and it is based on certainty rather than on hope or speculation. Many disappointments and perplexities arise from the fact that we mistake for faith much that is not faith at all, but merely

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akin to it; and then we marvel that the religious emotion or energy we have thus mistaken does not produce the results ascribed to faith. In view of these frequent misconceptions it is well for us to constantly remind ourselves that Faith in its strict sense is the certitude arrived at by exercise of *an inner faculty of intuitive vision*. There are, as we have seen, other kinds of perception, and other ways of arriving at conclusions and ideas, even at a degree of certainty; and these are good and effective in their own sphere, but they are not *faith-perceptions*. Then, too, simulations and caricatures of Faith abound—spurious experiences resembling it, but Faith Itself—the genuine quality—can be distinguished by the clear-sighted. Whether as regards general principles, or in connection with particular facts and events, it is always a perception of *Truth* or *Reality* independently of, and prior to, any outward demonstration of that Truth or Reality.

The subtle but very real difference between Faith and Belief that has been pointed out warrants our designating the prayer that issues from these two sources of man's nature as the Prayer of Faith and the Prayer of Belief, respectively—the former based on vision, and the latter on reasoned-out conclusions and theories.

As may be expected these two kinds of prayer differ in character and effect.

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Both kinds of prayer are efficacious, but the Prayer of Faith is specially so: it is the all-conquering force to which the whole universe responds. There is nothing arbitrary in the fact of its superior potency. We realise that it cannot but be so if we sufficiently take into account, and clearly understand, the ground on which that power rests.

Faith being the keenest organ of perception with which human nature is endowed, penetrates further than either Sense or Reason into inscrutable heights and depths of mystery, both human and divine. Therefore when a man's prayer, or demand upon God and Life, is based upon some true perception that he has gained of what in theology we call the will of God, or in philosophy, cosmic law, he having this insight, knows that his prayer is in harmony with the Divine purpose; therefore that prayer simply becomes a joyful anticipation of what he sees is surely coming to pass. In the degree that his spiritual sight is keen he may even know in advance the time and order and manner of its fulfilment, something of prevision—the prophetic faculty—mingling with his perceptions; indeed vision and prevision are closely allied and frequently go together. Thus his confidence runs along side of, and keeps pace with, an already evolving event, and the result is perfect assurance on his part that what he desires



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is potentially his; he rejoices in fruition ere it has actually come, like Abraham who by faith inherited the promised land before he had set foot in it, or like the patriarchs who died joyfully embracing what yet awaited fulfilment. "Faith is the *substance* of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," and therefore it begets a glad serenity and patience, the soul enjoys the spiritual reality or substance of that which has as yet no outward form or existence. Surely this was what Jesus meant when He said, "Whatsoever ye will ask in prayer believe that ye *have received* it and ye shall have it."

It is a fact to be borne in mind that the "assurance of Faith" does not come to a soul except when its perception has been a *true* one. Those who endeavour to gain a like certitude regarding their own self-evolved theories and self-conceived desires and purposes are disappointed. They may labour arduously for the vision of faith, bringing argument, prayer and concentration to bear upon it; basing their plea on probabilities, on promises, on the experiences of others; but if that which they demand is not according to God's will and purpose confidence regarding its fulfilment will not come, and they will still grope on in doubt and uncertainty.

There are, however, some exceptions to this rule. Ardent souls who will not be denied, who

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fail to see in circumstances the clear indication that God would have them relinquish the plea that they are pressing, that He is saying to them, as to Moses, of old, "Ask me no more concerning this matter,"—such souls are liable to become the victims of a subtle delusion. Intensity of desire in them so kindles and inflames the imagination as to cause it to create a kind of assurance that simulates the true assurance of Faith. It also produces subjective effects in the suppliant that are likewise similar—emotions of joy and peace, a sense of vigour, buoyancy, strength. These subjective effects may continue for a considerable time to support and energise the soul, but they are destined to be eventually disappointed. Sometimes a shock, more frequently a long series of disappointments, dissipates the illusion : but alas, in the process the religious life itself is frequently shaken to its foundations, and even wrecked, or at least considerably weakened—a disaster which might have been averted had there but been sufficient knowledge to distinguish the spurious confidence based on imagination from the genuine faith resulting from vision. Every phase and aspect of religious life abounds with examples of this counterfeit assurance of faith ; and they beget distrust of the genuine experience. For one man who has a true gift of vision with regard to some desire or undertaking in his life, there are scores

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who, coveting a similar faith, evolve the semblance of it out of their own imagination, and hold and defend it with great zeal, arguing themselves into confidence and expectation. Because there has come to one man in a community great accession of spiritual peace and power through a sudden illumination, others, for whom such a course was never designed, endeavour to force themselves into a similar experience through the same gateway. A poor invalid, racked with physical pain, comes one day to see reflected in his own heart as in a mirror, the fact that healing and health are the will of God for him, and embracing this fact with glad assurance begins forthwith to enter upon its actual realisation : other invalids for whom the divine purpose is quite different, will bend all their will and energy towards the acquiring of a like confidence and often succeed in persuading themselves that it is theirs. But disappointment and not fulfilment follows, because the hope is self-evolved and not based on vision of unseen spiritual facts.

Nevertheless such experiences are not intended to dissuade those who lack the clear vision of faith from pouring out their hearts before God. We are invited to make our requests known unto Him, to turn to Him with our longings, desires, hopes, fears, to find in Him a sympathy that understands all and despises naught, that gives where it is possible and withholds only what could injure and

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destroy. And heart-breaking disappointments may be averted if, while we grope amid uncertainties, not knowing whether our requests are in harmony with the Divine purposes or not, we take care to maintain in our hearts the attitude of humble submission expressed by the phrase, "Thy will be done." Sometimes it may even be that the waiting-time may prove merely a test of faith and patience; and the soul may issue out of the discipline of timid, tentative supplication into the strong, positively assured expectation of clear vision. And while uncertainty as to the Divine Will exists, it is perfectly legitimate for man to persevere in pressing his desire and in building up his confidence in its ultimate realisation. In such cases, if the fondly cherished hope be one that is irreconcilable with the Will of God, the Cross will gradually tend to dissipate it and the heart will be led to relinquish it. But even here it is not easy to decide, until the end of the process, whereunto it is working; for sometimes the Cross operates with the opposite aim in view; instead of removing, its object is that of strengthening and raising some such belief, by means of the very disappointments and delays regarding its realisation, into the vision of faith. In the case of the Syro-Phœnician woman Jesus illustrated this method of evolving faith, of stretching and straining it to its utmost limit before giving it

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the reward it merited. In many cases, not only is belief thus drawn out and gradually educated into faith, but faith itself is subjected to a similar discipline. That which has been perceived by the faith-faculty as a certain ground of hope, and firmly grasped by the will, is deferred in its fulfilment, put further and further off, frequently obscured by mists, and often, for months or even years, held in suspension. Thus is the faith-faculty allured on and on into higher and rarer realms of vision: it gains strength to perceive what has been impossible to it in its state of weakness and immaturity. Those first crude elementary perceptions of which alone it was capable have been refined and exalted. There has come unto being a highly trained and efficient power that sees into the rare and wonderful things of the spiritual world—sees truths, possibilities, glories that are “impossible to utter” because human language cannot express them; that descends into depths and rises to heights accessible only to perfected vision!

We have dwelt much on the Faith that is evolved out of Belief: but there is yet another way of acquiring faith without reference to which our consideration of the subject would be incomplete. This is the mystic’s way, and a very effective way it is. By suspending the busy activities of heart and mind, by holding thoughts, hopes,

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desires in abeyance, and letting a deep stillness fall upon the inner world, the mystic's soul creates those conditions in which, without distraction, it can listen for the still small voice of God and wait for the coming of the vision that will dawn from heaven when the mists and obscurities of earth have been dispelled. Thus it is that many earnest souls wait before God in prayer, not venturing to make request or express desire until a knowledge of the Divine Will has been imparted. Accepting humbly the Bible statement that "We know not what we should pray for as we ought," they wait for that Spirit which "helpeth our infirmities," to pray in them, to inspire their petitions and desires. And when once assured of the Divine Will, the entire energy of *their* own will flows into the appointed channel, and becomes an overwhelming torrent of desire and purpose that carries all obstacles before it. When the vision for which they have waited comes it kindles emotions such as stir the whole being into intense activity. While the guiding light glows and burns they seem almost to be lifted above tribulation. There is an unflinching patience, an unflinching endurance, a hope that cannot be overthrown: with eyes fixed on the invisible all things seem possible to bear and do; and all the while, from the glowing centre of the heart, there pours forth an incessant stream of fervent prayer and supplication, and

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strenuous effort. Such prayer is a mighty force in the universe, which yet waits to be fully recognised and employed. Such surely was the thought of the poet when he wrote :—

“ More things are wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of.”

## CHAPTER III

### THE PRAYER OF BELIEF

As the Prayer of Faith is based on man's faculty of spiritual vision so the Prayer of Belief springs from his reasoning perceptions. The former is only an occasional experience with which he is favoured when the Divine wisdom ordains: the latter may be a daily, hourly exercise, engaged in wheresoever and whensoever the will dictates. In like manner, while the assurance of faith depends on, and waits for vision, which is not at man's command, the confidence of belief builds itself up out of materials close at hand, by the exercise of intelligence, energy and will. For instance, some deep desire springs up in a man's heart which he would fain realise. Believing in prayer as a means of obtaining what he wants, assured also of God's good will towards the suppliant, and recollecting the command, "in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God," he presents his plea before the throne of grace; at first hesitatingly, uncertain as to whether it is such as will meet with the Divine approval. But gradually, through



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the exercise of the powers of his nature in an earnest endeavour to believe, he finds himself gaining strength and confidence step by step. First, maybe, he deals with the lingering uncertainty as to whether his request is in harmony with God's will, and good and beneficial for himself. Revolving the matter over and over in his mind in the increasing light that comes with thought, he arrives at the conclusion that it is good, and thus one difficulty is removed. Then, arguing from the knowledge he has of God's character, dwelling deeply upon His love and benevolence, his conviction grows that just as an earthly father delights to further the desires and pursuits of his children, so the Heavenly Father rejoices to fulfil the requests and promote the interests and joys of every member of His family on earth. Perhaps there comes to his mind some such promise as this: "How much more shall your Heavenly Father give good things to them that ask Him."

The earnest soul intent on believing lays hold on all that can help it. There are the promises and examples in the inspired Word, the experiences of others, the instances to be found in history and biography, all testifying to the fact that God, when appealed to, responds fully and grants human requests. Some such process as this takes place in every endeavour to build up belief in the unseen,

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whether it be a belief in God's existence, or His love, or His willingness and power to enter into and promote human interests.

The admirable picture Browning has drawn in his Bishop Blougram, of the man who believed because he chose to believe, so truly depicts an experience of the human heart, and emphasises the fact that there is a faculty in his nature by which man, without waiting for vision, can gradually erect an edifice of solid trust in things unseen and intangible. Like the good bishop he must throw the whole force of his will on to the believing side and labour strenuously to gain and hold his confidence. When the vision of faith is denied, there is this possibility of belief still left us. What though that intuitive trust which comes easily and spontaneously to others never comes to us, or if it once did has now ceased to do so, we need not lose heart and hope. God will help us to build up a very real trust in the unseen through the exercise of our own faculties, which guided and reinforced by Him can lead us into that realm we desire to enter. And there is a still further hope on which we have already touched in the foregoing chapter—the hope that Belief may evolve and evolve until it becomes Faith. As we watch the manifestations of Faith in the world it appears to us to be in most cases either a natural endowment or a “free gift,” coming unsought and quite

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independently of man's deserts. But can we not conceive of it also as coming through the avenue of Belief? May it not be possible for Belief to be perfected and transformed into Faith,—head-trust merging into heart-trust; Reason's insight and Faith's vision mingling and blending till they are indistinguishable! Surely we are justified in looking forward to a time when the soul's earnest effort to build up its trust in the unseen with the materials reason and thought and experience afford will have led it step by step into *vision*; when the intellectual and empirical method of dealing with things unseen will have been exchanged for the intuitive, and the feeble flickering embers of Belief have been fanned into the glowing flame of Faith. Browning says:

“ Belief's fire, once in us,  
Makes of all else mere stuff to show itself:  
We penetrate our life with such a glow  
As fire bends wood and iron.”

Once that fire is kindled in the heart there is spontaneous life and warmth and vigour, which before were lacking; there is feeling and enthusiasm: the soul no longer gropes, but sees! Vision thus hardly earned and nobly won becomes an inalienable and abiding possession; less subject to the vicissitudes of chance and environment and mood than the faith that is a natural endowment, and less fleeting than the

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faith that comes as a free, unmerited gift, a visitant from heaven; which, while it uplifts and inspires, still seems to remain a power outside of, and separate from, the character it blesses. The one is a transcendent Faith coming from without and the other an immanent Faith evolved from within. This idea once grasped that Belief may be a stage towards Faith would bring hope and cheer to many earnest souls who have come to regard themselves as constitutionally incapable of the vision of Faith.

The practical question as to how far in the matter of prayer for definite and concrete things we may expect Belief (or that confidence we reason ourselves into) to become Faith (or that spontaneous trust which sees), depends on the extent to which our requests are in harmony with God's will and laws.

What the relation of that will is to human desires and demands must be left for the following chapter to deal with.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE RELATION OF THE DIVINE WILL TO THE HUMAN WILL IN PRAYER

THE real factor in Prayer is the Will. Whether it receives its impulse from the vision of faith or from the dimmer perceptions of reason ; whether it has been stirred to activity by the affections of the heart or by the desires of the mind, it matters not except in so far as that the first class of perceptions and emotions generally move it more powerfully than the second. Many religious persons seem to regard Faith itself as the wonder-working force that produces the desired results in answer to prayer. But it is not Faith that thus operates : Faith merely acts upon the Will setting it in motion ; it is the energised will that moves and brings to pass things great and wonderful. Will is the power that initiates, controls, commands in the realm both of the seen and the unseen. This being the case, the necessity for cultivating a strong will becomes very obvious. And God is deeply concerned with the development of this faculty in us, for His plans and purposes regarding us cannot be carried into effect

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without it. In giving us free will He limited the operation of His own will: it cannot act in matters relating to ourselves without our assent. Nor is our passive consent sufficient. There is a law pertaining to human nature which demands that there should be *active* co-operation on our part before the beneficent purposes of God can be fulfilled. Jesus taught us to pray "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." He knew that it was possible for the Divine will to remain undone, or even to be frustrated by the indifference or rebellion of man. And this, among religious people at least, is caused far oftener by the inertia of their own will than any resistance to God's.

It is a noticeable fact that initiative and will-power and originality are often to be found in more active exercise among the non-religious than among those deeply under the sway of religious thought and feeling. The latter, while often strong in certain definitely religious matters, are weak and vacillating in other directions. This is easily accounted for. The religious mind—having been imbued with the necessity of subjecting its own desires and aims to the wiser, higher will of God—has, in accordance with this view, held its own wishes in subjection, pressed them tentatively, maintaining a readiness to change or relinquish them at any moment should clearer light reveal

them to be contrary to the Divine purposes. This habit of submission produces a certain weakness of will, a slowness to initiate, a want of the daring, of force and originality that may often be found among those who are not thus hampered. But the loss is only a temporary one: and moreover, for what is lost in one direction much is gained in another. While the human will that, untrained and unchecked has had its way, tends to deteriorate both as to the nature and quality of its desires and its power to put them into effect, the will that has submitted to the yoke may rise, when its term of discipline is over, into force and activity if it so choose. Enlightened by constant communion with, and subjection to the will of God; refined by the process of crucifixion and thus set free from base, foolish, hurtful passions, it is fitted for exaltation to a higher plane of desire. Its energy, also, which was held temporarily in abeyance while this other education was in progress, is in due time released and re-inforced. When the crucifixion principle has done its work in a surrendered will the resurrection principle begins to operate, and it operates powerfully. The disciplined will acquires a force and activity impossible to an undisciplined will, and is taught to say "I will" with emphasis and conviction in all the affairs of life, and in presenting its desires before Him who answers prayer. It comes

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into self-realisation and self-possession by union with the will of God. Taught by experience it looks up to Him and says:—

“ My will is not my own  
Till Thou hast made it Thine,  
If it would reach a monarch's throne  
It must its crown resign :  
It only stands unbent  
Amid the clashing strife  
When on Thy bosom it has leant  
And found in Thee its life.”

The rebound from suppression and passivity to energetic action may not be easy at first, but it will come in time. The Divine injunction to man, “concerning the work of my hands command ye me,” must increasingly win a response from the disciplined human will that knows itself, through long training, to have come into accord with the Divine will: giving it confidence before God and power with man in asserting itself and pressing its purposes and designs.

But before the will of man can become the potent factor we have been describing it is necessary to remove a difficulty which paralyses its action. This difficulty arises from an inability to understand clearly the relation in which the human will stands to the Divine. Long after the religious man has come to see that he is not only free to will but is called upon to exercise that faculty constantly and confidently, he is still



hampered by misgivings lest, through lack of wisdom and knowledge, his will may yet not be entirely one with God's. The simple condition that we must pray according to the will of God in order to prevail has often been misinterpreted and made the fruitful source of much feebleness in the exercise of initiative among the very people who have the most right and are the best fitted to exercise it.

Undoubtedly the Divine will is intimately connected with human affairs. Jesus said "Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father." We may be sure then that God has His plans and purposes regarding even the small details of man's life and conduct: and the condition that our desires and prayers should be in harmony with these commends itself to both heart and head. There is, however, a vague but very general impression existing in almost all religious circles that it is difficult to know, and therefore to pray according to the will of God. This idea has unconsciously become the means of suspending, or at least impeding, the vigorous action of will in those who conscientiously desire to be in harmony with the Divine purposes. Whether the difficulty of ascertaining God's will is as great as it is supposed to be is a question that is important for us to decide. We may perhaps best reach a satisfactory conclusion by

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defining the kind of prayer that would be *contrary* to God's will. The Divine nature is Love, Truth, Righteousness: whatsoever, therefore, violates any of these revealed attributes of His Being is opposed to His will. If, for instance, a man should pray for help in successfully defrauding a neighbour, or in doing a hard and cruel deed, he may be sure that his petition will be rejected. On the other hand we may assume that any prayer we offer that is not opposed to Love, Truth and Righteousness is not contrary to the will of God; and if not contrary, then, with certain qualifications to be noted presently, we may regard it as being in harmony with that will. This simplifies the question of praying according to the will of God, and brings the fulfilment of the condition within our reach. To a far greater extent than is usually recognised there is a stumbling block here which needs to be removed. And this stumbling block is the idea that between the human will and the Divine will there is naturally a great gulf fixed. The sensitive soul consequently feels that before its own wishes and plans can be in any sense adjusted to God's they must undergo a long process of revision and alteration—possibly a complete revolution: thus initiative is undermined.

But is the Divine will so absolutely different from the human will even of a weak, immature,

childish being? Surely not. Regarding it in its present practical working, and not in some absolute, abstract, ultimate sense—the will of God for man is not something afar off, mysterious, distinct from his own, but near and intelligible, running parallel with his own conceptions and ideas. The fact is that God's purpose for us at each stage of our life is adapted to our condition and capacity at that stage. He does not will for the child what He does for the man, nor impose on the villain just rescued from evil practices the course of action He prescribes for the saint. And as we grow and mature His will for us changes and evolves. What He led us to do or to seek six years back was the very best that were possible to us under existing circumstances, hence it was His will for us at the time; but now in the clearer light and riper wisdom that have come to us through experience, He would guide us differently. We have to remember that God does not choose to will instead of us, but His object is to teach us how to act for ourselves in the best and highest way that is possible to us at the time with our limited capacity and knowledge. When that which we choose and do is really our best it is according to His will, however poor and weak and imperfect it may be. This is true even when we face the fact and frankly admit that many human desires are born of ignorance and immature judgment, and,

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even though not positively evil, are often foolish and crude and far from exalted. What the will of God is in relation to this class of petitions and desires we can best realise by comparing it with the attitude of a wise and loving mother towards the oft-recurring demands and requests of her little ones. Healthy, happy children are always full of ideas and plans, and it is to the mother, if she is wise and kind, that they generally go with them, pouring into her sympathetic ear all that they think and feel, telling her what they want to do and how they are going to accomplish it. She does not come down upon these crude childish conceptions of life and happiness and crush them with the weight of her matured wisdom and experience. We can picture her listening with interested smile and by encouraging comments and questions to the eager little talkers, drawing out and developing their ideas, suggesting an amendment here, an improvement there, yet taking care to retain, in the main, the thought or plan as *they* conceived it and to help them to carry it out in their own way, not hers. She could, of course, sweep aside all that they had thought and proposed, substituting her own better plans and methods instead, but this would be "putting old heads on young shoulders,"—a course that never hastens the growth of wisdom, but warps and delays it. A wise mother knows that she must

co-operate with her children, therefore she never dominates and over-rides them, but fosters, disciplines, promotes all the budding potentialities of their character: she is content with the natural law of growth that ordains "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." Her will for them is in harmony with this principle, and it is only when their schemes are actually dangerous or injurious to themselves or their neighbours that she uses her authority to suppress them. The infinite tenderness of God's attitude towards His children who are just groping their way into the light, just learning to use their powers of thought and will, is but feebly portrayed by the best picture we could draw of the wisest, gentlest mother. We talk much of our co-operation with God, but it is chiefly God Who co-operates with us. Such condescension well befits His glorious nature:—it is ever the great and wise who come down to the small and weak and ignorant; and, walking beside them on their plane, gradually lift them up to a higher. Truly did the Psalmist say of God, "His *gentleness* hath made me great."

When we come to our heavenly Father with our crude ideas and requests, He does not bid us relinquish them and adopt others that His own wisdom proposes. He acts like the mother in our illustration. He listens, enters into them, teaches and helps us to develop and realise them. For

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the sake of strengthening our personality He is very zealous to guard and promote that which we have ourselves conceived and desired, imperfect though it may be. He is the Friend and Ally of our slowly-evolving power to will and to do. Therefore He will not foist upon us wisdom that we could not bear the weight of, and cannot use—which would tend to crush rather than develop our own thought and initiative. What he desires to train is energy of will and action. He is quite content that wisdom should come naturally and gradually; indeed, He has so conditioned us that we can only learn by living; and as Browning says:—

“Man thus conditioned, must expect  
He could not, what he knows now, know at first.”

It is only possible for us to desire and will and act at each stage according to our light; and God is well content with that: what displeases Him and defeats His purpose is that we should wrap up this talent of energetic will and action and lay it by, fearful lest we have not sufficient wisdom to use it in the best and highest way. Perfected wisdom can only come gradually through experience; and we dare not wait for it, but must obey the call which bids us “act, act in the living present.” The closing verses of Browning’s poem, “A Death in the Desert,” contain much wholesome advice on this subject.

The emphasis laid on the fact of God's co-operation with man in no way detracts from the force of the co-relative truth—man's co-operation with God. As we grow and mature God calls us increasingly to enter into *His* life and share His plans and operations. He takes us into His counsels, imparts to us His thoughts and asks us to become His agents. There are two ways in which He does this. Sometimes there comes to us, all unsought, a revelation of His mind and will regarding something He would have us desire or do. To the eye of faith the vision is clear. The Transcendent God has for a moment lifted the overhanging veil of mystery and made His purpose plain. But only on rare occasions does He thus reveal Himself, else the human faculty of seeing would atrophy without its appropriate exercise. His ordinary means of guiding our thoughts and acts is by His indwelling. He is the Immanent God, and He would have us learn more and more to see Him in ourselves—to take our own thoughts, desires, aims, as the off-spring of His, confident that He will not betray the trusting heart in which both by nature and by grace He dwells. If those first crude efforts after strength and truth and right were of Him—the gradual working out of His Immanent life in the frail human vessel—how much more in the disciplined and sanctified nature is He free to work, leading it both to “will and to

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do of His good pleasure," inspiring its thoughts, imparting to it His mind; so energising the entire being that the saint can confidently say, "I work according to His working, which worketh in me mightily." It is a partnership in which he and God are of one heart and one mind!



PART IV

THE PLACE OF PERSONALITY IN PRAYER



## CHAPTER I

### PERSONALITY AND THE LAWS OF NATURE AND SPIRIT

PERSONALITY is the supreme factor in prayer. This will have been already indicated, not only by the title of the book, but also by the general trend of the foregoing chapters, which have been devoted to dealing with the various hindrances to prayer resulting from defects of personality. Attention has been drawn to the way in which apathy, lack of initiative, instability of purpose, want of perseverance, weaken a man's prayer, or demand upon life, and make the realisation of his desires and aims impossible or, at any rate, sadly incomplete. Then, too, it has been shown how another set of failings—such as baseness or meanness in the very desires themselves necessitates a process of refining and evolving by which crude conceptions of goodness and happiness, sordid aims, unworthy ambitions are transfigured and exalted, wayward passions disciplined and the personality gradually prepared to wield the mighty power of prevailing prayer which is its heritage.

Personality being, as it undoubtedly is, the

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centre and main-spring of the Prayer-life, it is impossible in dealing with the subject of prayer to over-emphasise the importance of character, on the quality and force of which every thing depends.

The relations of Personality to the laws of the universe is the question before us in the present chapter. In view of the many new ideas and theories abroad regarding the nature of personality, it is necessary to have a clear understanding as to what we mean by the term as used here.

It is a generally acknowledged fact that human personality is as yet in the making, that it has reached but a very elementary stage in its evolution. We do not even know all that may be included in the term Personality: its full content has yet to be explored and revealed. Discoveries regarding the subliminal self, or sub-conscious mind, which under certain conditions can be induced to come to the surface and act as the ordinary consciousness does, seem to open new avenues of research. Sir Oliver Lodge's suggestion that possibly our entire personality is not incarnated at one and the same time is a strange and interesting idea. Fresh light from many quarters is being thrown upon this mysterious and absorbingly-interesting question of personality. But we need not wait till these speculations range themselves into an ordered science. For our

purpose a very simple definition of Personality will suffice. Whatever else it does or does not mean, it certainly stands for man's *spiritual* nature, of which the self-conscious will is an integral part: the conscious desires, purposes, thoughts of each individual constitute his personality, however much besides may be included in it.

It is in this intelligent self-conscious will that man's creative power resides. At present this power is but a potentiality even in those who manifest it most. We are "gods but in the germ." He who made man in His image certainly did not leave out this feature of the likeness. As His offspring we have inherited this prerogative also of the Divine nature—the power to initiate and to command: the germ of it lies hidden in every member of the human race awaiting the time when according to His predestined plan it shall be fully unfolded and perfected. Hitherto the Divine purpose has been occupied with other aspects of human evolution, and this last and greatest development has yet to come when we shall become actually what we already potentially are.

Having decided that the term Personality in the following pages shall stand to us simply for man's free spirit, his self-conscious will and desires, we need a similar understanding with regard to the word Law. Mr. Washington Gladden's definition, which we quote, emphasises where the difference

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between law and personality lies. He says, "Law is not a being, it is an abstraction. It is a term for expressing the uniformity of sequences of nature—Law is another name for invariable succession." In God's universe all is law. There is inherent in the very life and constitution of all created things a divinely-ordained set of principles which work unremittingly, and as it were mechanically, in ordered sequence. These immanent, self-operating ordinances of God are everywhere and in everything; they work silently, unobtrusively but unerringly. All that comes to us, good or bad, comes as the working out of some law; it is the inevitable result of something done sometime, somehow, somewhere, by someone. We cannot escape from law, we live under its shadow all the time; we are receiving its awards or punishments every moment. The smallest details of every life are law-governed; it is law that is deciding events that seem fortuitous. In the present day when law is almost deified, a formidable obstacle to prayer or the exercise of personal initiative is presented by a haunting sense of this rigid, inexorable system of laws, which stands over against our praying and paralyses it. Whether we express it or not we cannot help questioning whether, if God has so girt around and intersected His universe with immoveable unchanging ordinances there is any room for personal desire and will to take effect.

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Of the many who have come under the influence of this thought, the greater number do not pray at all; while those who must pray have taken refuge in the idea that the chief value of prayer lies in its subjective effects, in the beneficial reflex action of communion with God on the soul that prays. That prayer produces these subjective results is true, but there is a further truth which justifies the strong human instinct, and coincides with the teaching of inspired writings, that prayer has also *objective* effects; that it operates on the natural and spiritual universe lying outside of and beyond the suppliant's self, bringing to pass what would not otherwise happen.

In what way and to what extent does personality act upon and effect the laws of the universe, spiritual and natural? Which is the most powerful, it or they? When these laws oppose the desires and purposes of personality is it able to coerce, abrogate, change or ignore them,—in a word, can it perform miracles? The issues involved in this question are, in their infinitely smaller degree, the same as those involved in the question “can and does *God* perform miracles,”—that is, does He work contrary to or independently of the laws of His own making? We can well believe that the Being, the Free Spirit, who instituted these laws must surely be master of them and able to set them aside if He

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should choose, or if it were necessary. But we can hardly conceive of His being driven to this resort. His manifold wisdom and power are such that we find it easier to conceive of His having so constituted His laws that, far from interfering with His personal prerogatives, they are each and all constructed so as to fulfil them, to be the instruments and agents of His Will. God is the Administrator of His laws. He manipulates them to suit His purposes—doing by means of a higher law what cannot be accomplished by a lower, setting various agencies to work to compass His many and varied ends. There are grades and classes of laws between which there is no antimony, each operates harmoniously on its own plane. God sits on the throne of His universe, disposing these as He will, they are the machinery and He the Intelligent Being who uses it.

As it is with Divine Personality so it is in an infinitely lesser degree with Human personality, which is but the Divine in miniature. Mankind was never meant to be the slave of Laws, but their master; Human Spirit was destined to rule over the rest of God's creation, with nature as its servant, laws and ordinances as its willing and able instruments. To turn these into the warders of its prison is an anomaly. The religiously-scientific mind, while doing full justice to the all-pervading presence and power of law, is coming,



increasingly, to realise that law was not meant to limit and fetter personality, but was made subject to it; that God made human personality in the likeness of His own, and, therefore, so constituted it that it is able to manipulate and administer laws like Himself, with this infinite difference that He is omnipotent and omniscient, and it is but a babe in these attributes—a learner, at the first stages of acquiring knowledge. Taught by God, man learns how one law can counteract, supersede or modify another without confusion or collision. The laws of God, natural and spiritual, when rightly understood, are the friends and not the foes of personality. So diverse are they in their working, so wondrously adapted to further every beneficial purpose, that in the execution of any scheme that is good and wise, far from desiring to set them aside, we would call them to our aid if we had but eyes to see. Man need never be baffled by the operation of God's laws. When in the pursuit of some purpose or idea, he finds himself face to face with an inexorable law that seems to bar his progress, to oppose and thwart him, he must set himself to discover which of two possible reasons there may be for this opposition. It is quite likely that the opposition may be such in appearance only and not in reality—that it exists because he has been superficial and has failed in penetrating to the heart of

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that law, grasping its workings and adapting himself to them : or else he has done it indifferently and listlessly. Therefore the law refuses to serve him because he does not intelligently and strenuously apply it as means to an end. The resistance of an insulted law should only drive man to redoubled energy in seeking to bring himself within the scope of its operation and power so that he may command and use it to do his behests.

But when the resistance is obdurate, there may be another reason to account for it. It is possible for law to set a limit on its own plane ; to say, " Here, in this realm, so far shalt thou go and no farther." For instance, there is a limit to the perceptions of both Sense and Reason. Each faculty may doubtless go much farther in its respective sphere than we have at present any idea of, but there is a bound beyond which neither can pass except in the wake of spirit, and as the handmaiden of spiritual vision.

When this contingency occurs there is no need for personality either to submit to the limitation or to desire to abrogate the opposing law, which is absolutely good and necessary in its place. Its right and only course is to transfer itself to another higher plane where another set of laws awaits to execute its will. We may yet discover that there is nothing a man may not accomplish

by thus changing the sphere of his operations so as to bring them within the scope of those laws which were made to help him therein. He must explore the realm of law, ever discovering new agencies and instruments, and learning under Divine guidance the right use of them. Here, if anywhere, "knowledge is power."

Thus the process of evolution goes on. By limitation and insufficiency on one plane God is ever seeking to raise man to the plane above. This rise can be effected by an act of will, a change of spirit or attitude, or a development of character. To take an illustration.—The law that punishment follows sin cannot be abrogated. Love that seeks to save the sinner knows this, and with its infinite resourcefulness knows also that by rising to a higher plane where the law of substitution operates, it may by means of that law save the sinning one by vicariously bearing the consequences of his sin. The working of this law of substitution may be observed everywhere. The justice of such vicarious sacrifices will no longer be questioned when we understand all that is involved in that now familiar phrase—"the solidarity of humanity." When we see humanity as a single living organism of which the units are but parts, it will seem not only intelligible but right that the higher laws belonging to the corporate life should be brought in to counteract the lesser

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laws that govern the individual life; and that Love, the supreme factor in personality, should effect the translation from one sphere of law to another.

There is hope and inspiration in the thought that the strength and power involved in human personality shall one day be evolved. The goal is yet afar off, but He who destined human personality to occupy the throne of the universe as vice-regent of the Divine, is slowly but surely working towards that end. Year by year and century by century, He is leading us up to this great crowning evolution of our race. In the present day there is a new and powerful impulse in this direction which surely portends new developments. The possibilities that we see, the conquests already made, call to us "to join the great march onward," and contribute our small share to the general advancement. And the Divine Educator waits to teach us all that we are at present capable of learning (may be it is much more than we think) regarding the sovereignty He would have us exercise, the discoveries He would have us make of new and varied agencies, boundless resources, mighty forces, seen and unseen, that we may command and use. And He will teach us in ways so simple and natural.—Through the practical experiences of daily life, though the loves and longings that surge within

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us, the passions that tear us, the impulses, purposes, desires that press and push and clamour; through all these and through every other form of intense human living, feeling, thinking and doing, will He train us, if we permit Him, in the great art of exercising the powers dormant in our personality. Human teachers often seek out methods occult, unnatural, tortuous, by which to acquire and impart these secrets of power; but God ever leads along the familiar paths of life and experience, and finds in them ample scope and material for His deepest, highest lessons provided that sincerity and intensity be found there. If only we are *living*, not merely existing, all things are possible to us in the way of growth.

## CHAPTER II

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONALITY THROUGH PRAYER

THE thought with which we closed the last chapter brings us to the consideration of Prayer as a *means* of developing personality. Let us still retain the wider view of prayer as being "man's demand upon life," his "heart's sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed," which, allied with the will, causes him—by action, or supplication, or both—to set forth in quest of that on which his affections are fixed.

Torpor, apathy, indifference in the realm of heart and mind constitute the most effectual bar to any kind of progress: whereas there is nothing that can so effectively become a lever to lift a man's nature on to higher planes as the strength of his emotions and desires. In a previous chapter much stress has been laid on the necessity of cherishing these, for if we can but desire something—*anything*—ardently enough, it gives God His opportunity of raising us in the scale of character and spirituality; it affords Him something to lay hold of and work through. By means

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of that longing, and in the quest for its satisfaction, one faculty after another is drawn out, exercised and strengthened. What do we not owe to those infinite yearnings, to that hunger and thirst of our nature for some good that it craved, to the ambitions and hopes that surged and wrestled within us! How they drove us on, alluring and goading alternately: how they awoke into conscious life and activity faculties that else had slept; and called to depths which would otherwise have remained silent and unknown!

The problem that so often perplexes us even while we pray, as to why God Who knows our needs and loves to supply them should make His giving dependent on prayer, meets with its full and sufficient answer in the statement which we would unhesitatingly and emphatically make—namely, that *Prayer was instituted for the sake of Personality*. In order that human character and initiative should be developed and human faculties drawn out, God in His self-sacrificing love set this bound to His Fatherly prerogative of giving, that only in response to prayer (taking that word in its widest sense, which comprises action and supplication) should man obtain the fulfilment of his desires and hopes. Not until human energy has wrestled and fought—exercising resources, perseverance, courage, strength—do the coveted prizes it contends for become its own. As

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personality matures, it is increasingly thrown back on its own resources, made to depend on the exercise of its own faculties for the fulfilment of desires and purposes and even for the satisfaction of needs. God's treasure-house is at our command, and it contains all that we can want of knowledge and good and power, but over its portals is writ the condition, "Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you." Nor is it easy to gain entrance. The lock is so stiff that the key will not turn until it has strained every muscle of the hand that holds it: the massive door will not yield until it has been pushed with might and main. And the larger our hopes and ideals the more strenuousness do they demand: the deeper and stronger our yearnings the greater power will they call into play. Thus, by exercise, those faculties of our nature which are able to command, compel, create, will develop and grow strong, and it will be true of us as of wrestling and victorious Jacob. "As a prince hast thou power with God and with man and hast prevailed" (Gen. xxxii. 28).

To the truly earnest, persevering, strenuous soul success is assured. To such God's promise stands out against the dark back-ground of delays, reverses, thwartings, failures—"Nothing shall be impossible unto you"—the goal shall be reached;



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commensurate with the power put forth shall be the gain. Nor is the wrestling soul of man left to struggle alone and unaided. Within the limits of that law which ordains that achievement shall depend on effort, God helps, supports, re-inforces and co-operates with every earnest nature as it pursues its eager quest. He sets unseen agencies on earth and in heaven to work on his behalf. Obstacles become stepping stones. Nothing is allowed to hinder, everything is made to help. All things work together for good in forwarding his aims. It is not difficult to see *how* prayer operates in developing personality. Since by use our faculties grow, we can see the infinite wisdom of God in making our successes dependent on, and commensurate with, the exercise of our powers. Were it easy to obtain our desires without effort we should remain morally and spiritually immature; whereas this stern yet beneficent law that governs our human nature, bids us become men in the full significance of all that that word implies, as exemplified to us by Jesus Christ.

And if the evolution of personality depends on prayer it is evident that the completest form of praying must be the most effective as a means to that end. Prayer to be complete must include both supplication and action: it is a stretching out of both hands to grasp the prize: when one

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or other of these two aspects is lacking in a man's pursuit of his purpose, prayer is maimed and incomplete, and to that extent ineffective.

For instance, the prayer which is merely action has a far narrower range of operation than the prayer that is an alliance of the personality, through supplication and communion, with unseen spiritual forces. If we can only work through the ordinary medium of thought, speech, physical energy and skill, we are restricted to the sphere where such instruments are effective. Nevertheless, the man of action who, without appealing to a power outside of and beyond himself intelligently thinks out and powerfully executes his schemes and purposes, is entitled to success provided his goal is within the limits ascribed to mere human action. Success may be looked for even when the purposes are evil and not good: for God, who has made the law that human will and energy, intelligently directed, patiently sustained, and powerfully applied, shall gain their end, will not set aside that law because it happens to be a wicked man who fulfils these conditions. It is true that He often, maybe always, brings in another law—the law of the Cross—to counteract; but we are sadly aware that it is possible for strong wills and cold hearts to despise the Cross, and, trampling it under foot, to press on successfully, for a time at least, to their goal.

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But while the man who depends on his own action and ignores the help of higher agencies, imprisons his energy within a world of sense and phenomena, he who goes out beyond himself and his own resources, and, by means of communion and supplication draws upon God and the powers of the spiritual realm, far outstrips these limits, entering upon a large sphere, where stronger subtler forces are available to him for the working out of his will. The realm in which man's intelligence, forethought, skill, can successfully operate is so small as compared with that in which his *spirit* ranges. Spirit reaches where mere sense and reasoning cannot go.

This consideration leads us to realise the importance of developing man's *spiritual* nature. Before personality can be considered as at all approaching completeness it must have begun to develop on all its three distinct planes—the senses, the intellect, the spirit. In each of these spheres it must come to self-conscious volition and power; if in any one of them it is lacking, there is incalculable loss; and the effectiveness of the entire personality is considerably weakened. And to the sad fact that the spiritual faculty in man is as yet practically unawakened, may be traced much of his impotence and the slow progress he makes in the march of evolution.

While God aims at developing man's entire

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personality in its three-fold aspect, He is chiefly concerned with that part of it which is the very essence of personality, namely the spirit. It was this that Jesus Christ so specially sought to draw out and train, and that Christianity, when true to itself, has since laid stress upon. The spirit of man, even when partially quickened, is as yet totally unequal to the great part it has to sustain in the development and exercise of those qualities that pertain to personality. It is enthroned as sovereign over the intellect and the senses, and to it belong the highest and subtlest forms of power that it is possible for human nature to wield. In the majority of mankind *the spirit* slumbers, while its throne is usurped by the senses or the intellect ; and not until it is aroused and re-instated can the march of personality towards its real destination begin.

## CHAPTER III

### THE TRAINING OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT

THE chief, indeed we may say the sole means by which the human spirit evolves its personality—coming into consciousness of itself and recognising its desires, possibilities, powers—is communion with God. By prayer it is forced into the arena where its true contests, and with them its true developments, begin. What these contests exactly are the mere *mind* of man cannot grasp, but they are an open secret to those who are living, fighting, and growing in the spirit. There is for the spiritually-evolving personality a purely spiritual battleground, where a warfare is waged very similar to that which takes place on those lesser planes of personal development to which we have already referred. At the very outset the spirit comes face to face with two sets of obstacles—those within and those without. First it becomes aware of its own weakness—its ignorance regarding the laws and conditions of the high sphere in which it is called to move and work. The immaturity of spiritual faculties, the incapacity to see, will, do, in this new and strange environment

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to which it has awakened, becomes painfully evident.

Then, besides these inward disabilities, the growing and advancing spirit becomes aware of a vast array of spiritual foes and obstacles outside itself; of checks and hindrances, dangers and pitfalls all along the way. There are strong antagonisms and oppositions from the purely spiritual nature of fellow-human beings on earth to be encountered; the awakened spirit stirs these into active enmity whenever it fails to draw them into co-operation. The spirit of religious hate and cruelty in the Pharisees slumbered till evoked by the intense spiritual activity of Jesus. Spiritual energy never fails to draw out spiritual energy, good or bad, in others. Then, besides foes on earth, there are *unseen* opponents. Though some minds may strongly combat the idea, the fact remains that those spiritual warriors in all ages who have universally been accounted the greatest authorities on spiritual warfare were intensely conscious of the opposition of unseen spiritual personalities, capable of using against them spiritual forces and spiritual weapons. We need go no further than the Bible to learn that when we begin to live in the spirit "we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places." There are significant records in the Bible which,

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whether we take them literally or allegorically, are evidently designed to emphasise this idea of the resistance offered by evil personalities in the realm of spirit. Such passages as 1 Thess. ii. 18, where St. Paul refers to Satan having hindered him in carrying out his intention, or Daniel x. 13, in which the heavenly messenger is represented as having been delayed twenty-one days by some personal spiritual adversary.

To these antagonistic forces in the unseen world the spiritual personality must oppose itself; and without full spiritual equipment its hope of victory is small. In order to gain this equipment great sacrifices must be made. It involves a long and arduous training, more severe than the self-discipline which produces strength and effectiveness on the lesser planes of conflict. There are spiritual laws to be gradually discovered and obeyed, spiritual conditions to be met. Discouragements and reverses will have to be bravely faced, and their power to dishearten resisted. Delays must be sustained with faith and patience: the spiritual vision cleared by the detection and removal of deceits, fallacies, illusions: the will must be reinforced and educated. Thus slowly, by faith, effort, and experience, the human spirit will reach that stage of evolution where it can command, control, initiate, not only in the world of spirit but upon earth and among men. Whereas intellectual

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and practical qualities have weight only in the world of sense, spiritual qualities will also have weight in the unseen realm. If man's lesser faculties can, within their own limited sphere, become so powerful and effective, how infinitely greater are the possibilities of the Divinely-taught spirit. As an irresistible force, from its own high domain, it will move things in heaven and upon earth.

Prayer has the effect of liberating forces in the unseen realm and setting them in operation. There are spiritual agencies that exist for the express purpose of assisting man in his progress, but in accordance with God's scheme of developing personality through exercise of its own faculties, these are held in check until emancipated and energised by prayer. Apparently, not until the spirit, through prayer, communion and conflict, reaches a certain stage of development does it have the power to free these auxiliary forces, personal and impersonal, and enlist them in its cause. When this comes to pass the actual work of prayer and supplication begins. The Scripture promises regarding the all-conquering nature of prayer and faith were never meant to be explained away. They await fulfilment. When human personality reaches maturity they will be realised; meanwhile they are as beckoning hands and beacon lights. We shall one day indeed remove mountains, put to flight armies and do



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exploits yet undreamed of. In both the seen and unseen universe the power of human personality will evince itself by bringing to pass its designs and purposes. Heaven and earth will be obedient to it; and God, its source and educator, will be glorified.

There is a possible misconception regarding this subject to which colour is given by the mistaken attitude of some who are earnestly pursuing spiritual development and who take refuge from the necessity of strenuous action in the confidence that unseen powers, in answer to prayer, will work for them. We have to remember that at no time in his earthly pilgrimage is man absolved from the necessity of using all his faculties in the pursuit of his purposes. The more powerful his spirit becomes, the more will it move his mind to think and his physical faculties to exercise themselves in an increasingly effective co-operation. Communion and supplication will illumine the path of action and be followed by action whenever action is possible; and when it is not, the honest spirit will rest in an assurance that higher agencies will be set in operation to effect what its own limited powers could not avail to do. The conditions in life when these higher agencies will be needed are many and diverse. Action necessitates the accessibility of that which we would act upon. If a person, it must be possible at least to communicate

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with him by one or other of the ordinary means of communication. But how many occasions there are when one who would influence another is denied access in any form. Take the case of a mother who has lost sight of her son in the vast world into which he has gone out as the Prodigal went. She cannot reach him by speech or pen, yet her whole heart yearns to exercise a saving influence over the wanderer. She would, by the power of her personality, overcome the evil working in his, and bring his vitiated will and desires under influences that would restore them to health. Deprived of the ordinary means of gaining access to her son she is led to depend entirely on super-normal and super-human agencies to effect her purpose. By means of prayer she projects her spirit into the unseen and lays hold of God and the forces of the spiritual world and constrains them to help her by fulfilling the conditions laid down for those who would win such co-operation. Like Jacob of old she wrestles; her spiritual power growing thereby, till she reaches that point at which she is victor, having pressed through every obstacle in her way. The Divine power now begins to operate on the heart and mind of the absent one more powerfully than the ordinary human methods could do. By means of inward suggestions and external instrumentalities brought to bear upon him, the object of that

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fervent and effectual prayer is saved. This experience in some form or another is too common to be disputed; and there is no other way to account for it than this of Divine intervention in response to prayer.

## CHAPTER IV

### PRAYER IN THE NAME OF CHRIST, OR HUMAN PERSONALITY DIVINELY DIRECTED AND RE- INFORCED

THE mind is always haunted with a sense of unfathomable mystery in the simple phrase that forms the title of this chapter. We feel instinctively that it means far more than the world has yet realised, far more even than the religious consciousness in its deepest, furthest reaches has discovered. However satisfactory the explanations of it appear to be, there remains a secret conviction that innumerable heights and depths of meaning still lie hidden in these simple words, waiting to be unfolded and given to the world for its guidance and comfort by generations yet to come.

Ever since Christ came, the teaching regarding prayer in His name has been prominent in the religious life of Christians. Embodied in our creeds and doctrines, reiterated in our prayers and liturgies, daily on the lips of thousands in their private devotions, it has stood challenging thought, taxing our spiritual perceptions and ever alluring

us on to penetrate further into its profound and mystic significance.

If the truth for which it stands, even when crudely apprehended and superficially applied, has been the staff and stay, the light and inspiration of Christendom, what is it not capable of becoming when we shall have fathomed its deeper meaning and fully grasped the spiritual fact it represents ?

The present chapter does not claim to dispel the clouds of mystery that hang around this sacred subject ; it only endeavours to follow a few transient gleams of deeper truth that shine through rifts in the clouds.

Let us fully recognise the fact that "Prayer in the name of Christ" is a *mystical phrase*. Perhaps it is some crude sense of its mystical import that has led to the almost superstitious use of it that so largely prevails in all religious communities. To many persons the words are merely a kind of talisman or charm, conveying no special idea to the mind, but under a vague sense of their efficacy, or because of a conventional habit, they are affixed to every prayer and supplication that is offered.

But though essentially a mystical phrase it also contains a surface meaning which is very valuable to those who grasp and apply it. And there are many who in their use of the words attach this

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very definite meaning to them. They are aware that name in olden days stood for character. Hence prayer in the name of Christ signifies to them prayer in the name or *character* of Christ involving the elimination from their supplications of all that is foreign to His nature, and the inclusion of all those virtues and ideals He taught and exemplified,—in a word it is prayer in the holy and obedient spirit of Jesus.

Any demand upon life thus based upon the name, or character of Jesus cannot fail to be according to the will of God—thereby fulfilling one of the conditions laid down for effectual prayer. The more Jesus becomes our standard and inspiration in prayer the more confident we may be of a favourable hearing. This is surely what He meant by the words, “If ye abide in Me and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.”

It is very easy to see how the phrase thus used becomes a very real help and direction in prayer; and as the earnest soul rises higher and ever higher in its conceptions of the character of Jesus, its prayer, or demand on life, will become correspondingly great and grand.

Nor is this all. Besides directing and elevating our prayers, Christ reinforces them. He inspires hope and confidence because He represents to us Deity as the *Ally* and *Champion* of our human

desires and interests. "In all things made like unto His brethren." He is like unto us still; and what we find it difficult to realise of God the Infinite and Absolute, we can easily realise of Him the Son of Man;—namely, that our hopes, thoughts, desires, aims, find an echo in His Heart; that He makes them His own and presents them, in some mystical sense, with the added force of His own personality, before the throne of grace: and thus as our High Priest He intercedes for us, and we through Him have boldness and confidence.

But this interpretation of the phrase, invaluable as it is, and capable of still further expansion and application, does not exhaust its content: there yet remains the deeper mystical meaning.

In its symbolical sense the name or nature of Christ,—than which "there is none other name under heaven, given among men whereby we must be saved,"—stands for the Divinely-ordained means whereby Personality, Individuality, Humanity in its passage from the finite to the infinite may be saved from the shipwrecks that attend so perilous a voyage. Those who embark in this ship and sail under the direction of this Pilot, God guarantees to bring safely over. Because Christ is the personified *human* principle in Deity—that principle which realises and fulfils itself through the limitations of time and space and form,—He is absolutely

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necessary to us in our progress towards conceptions of the Absolute and the Eternal. He bridges for us the chasm. Human nature is so constituted that it cannot soar into the region of abstract ideas except through gleams and glimpses gained by concrete experiences. It would be impossible for us to pray, except nominally, in the "Name" (or Nature) of the God who is the All, the Illimitable, the Eternal, for we do not know Him and cannot conceive of Him. If we would actually come into touch with Him it must be through prayer in the Name, or character of Jesus who represents to us Deity under limitations like our own, and therefore intelligible to us. He stands to us for the heart and mind and will of God under the conditions of human life upon earth. In the pride of intellect men sometimes dream that by their own unaided powers they have soared above earth and touched heaven. But they err. To have spurned earth is not to have reached heaven: Tennyson seems to have recognised the danger to which those are liable who dispense with the mediations God has provided, and who count themselves among the number of those "Whose faith hath centre everywhere, nor cares to fix itself to form," and who even regard as unnecessary that divinest of all concrete revelation of Deity—that embodiment in finite form of the Transcendent God. This living



and eternal "type" of the Father in heaven—the express image of His person—they would scornfully pass by, endeavouring by the light of reason to reach heights and depths of which they cannot even conceive. To them the poet utters this warning:

" See thou that countest reason ripe,  
In holding by the law within,  
Thou fail not in a world of sin  
And err for want of such a type."

To attempt to realise God apart from Christ is a kind of spiritual suicide. Even a passing sense of the Infinite, a brief moment's vision of the illimitable and absolute is insupportable to mere flesh and blood: it crushes and well nigh annihilates our frail human faculties. The symbolic utterance to Moses, "Ye cannot see God and live," is again and again verified in man's experience. We realise how even in the necessary, and comparatively safe experience of emerging from our narrow sphere of ideas into a larger world of thought and vision, we suffer for a while a kind of mental and spiritual paralysis, which creeps over our moral nature numbing our power to think, or will, or do. Our old conceptions and theories seem to recede and become mere specks on the horizon, and then vanish altogether. We feel lost and bewildered in a vast universe where there seem to be no land marks or boundaries.

Some such experience as this—only intensified—attends those who voyage in the deep waters

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of science and philosophy without Christ, who endeavour to reach and know the source of life and light without the mediation of the Son of Man. As regards their spiritual life they find themselves adrift in mid-ocean without chart or compass. Though they may refuse to see or acknowledge it, in a very real sense they are *lost*. That highest, innermost power of their nature—the spiritual faculty—is submerged. In the vastness of the world they enter all that is spiritually-definite, tangible, personal fades away. In their relations with God, all point and reality cease: He becomes to them at best the great impersonal “over-soul” of the universe. Or if in some vague way they retain a belief in His attribute of Personality, they cannot approach Him. They do not pray; crushed by a sense of infinity, overwhelmed by the magnitude of all around them, they hardly dare to conceive a thought or frame a prayer in that innermost shrine of their nature, for it seems not only futile but presumptuous and superstitious for a mere atom in this great universe to dream that it can have the slightest effect in so vast and ordered a scheme. It is only Christ who reveals the place and power of personality, and enables it to stand unshaken amid such splendours. Apart from Him we cannot gaze on the unveiled vision of the infinity of God’s nature or works, and survive. Of those who endeavour to do so, the majority see

nothing but vanity and emptiness, losing themselves in abstractions, which doubtless in their self-conceit they deem to be higher knowledge. The few who do get passing glimpses of the absolute and illimitable are dazzled and blinded by the sight; their spirit is prostrated "by the vision of God, and in the figurative language of Scripture they "fall at His feet as dead." Their experience is what the insight of Browning described :—

"Pure faith indeed—you know not what you ask,  
Naked belief in God the Omnipotent,  
Omniscient, Omnipresent, sears too much  
The sense of conscious creatures to be borne,  
It were a seeing Him, no flesh shall dare."

With the Rev. H. R. Haweis we may conclude that "Christ is the acknowledgment on the part of the Ruler of the World that direct adoration of an unconditioned intelligence is not possible to men whilst still in the flesh."

Not only in Science and Philosophy, but in the sphere of religion itself we find the same strange tendency for human souls to dispense with mediation in their excursions into that world of thought and experience lying beyond the limit of personal and individual existence. There are mystical religious experiences common to all religions, including Christianity, in which the soul is felt to have come into touch with the Universal Life. In this communion all sense of bounds and limitations is lost, and only a sense of eternity and infinity remains.

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We even discover a subtle form of this tendency to independence where we should least expect to find it, namely, in the very heart of orthodox Christianity itself. Professor Herrmann points out that the early Christian and medieval saints, and the saints of modern Roman Catholicism, set before themselves as the goal of religion some such experience as has been described above; and that while availing themselves of the mediation of Christ in the *process* of reaching up to a realisation of God, when they actually reach the goal they lose sight of all distinctions in the Godhead; Christ drops out of their consciousness, and with Him all sense of personal, individual existence, and only a vague sense of a limitless, universal infinite intangible something remains—a sense of God they call it. The visions and ecstasies of saints as described by Professor James, Dr. Inge, and others, all seem to be more or less characterised by this sense of being merged and *lost* in a fathomless abyss of Being, in which all distinctions are obliterated, all consciousness of individuality and self-hood ceases, and God, the universe and the entranced soul are all one. This, as Herrmann points out, closely approximates to pantheism. Moreover, it is a one-sided and partial experience, failing to take into account that personality and limitation also have their place in the nature of God and that if we see Him all perfectly

and completely (that is if we see Him through Christ) we will see this personal element alongside of the universal; as Professor Herrmann puts it, we shall not only find God through Christ but *always* "find Christ in God." He has been there from all eternity and will be to all eternity. Therefore, the experience of communion with God that is mediated by Jesus Christ is free from the enervating, unwholesome influences accompanying trances and ecstasies in which He has little or no place; for He ever witnesses to the value of self-hood and individuality. Only Christ—God incarnate—can teach us how to mount up into a sense of Infinity and Eternity without loss of the *sense of Personality*. He is the ladder set up from earth to heaven. In His nature with its earthly limitations we may safely press on to that which is unlimited. In Him we abide within those limitations which teach self-realisation and effectiveness, until, through growing knowledge, we can transcend them, and safely and naturally press on to larger, deeper, higher conceptions of God's nature and His universe of truth. Mrs. Browning's desire to "rush exultant on the Infinite" is more natural than wise. We cannot "rush," but only mount up slowly and gradually through Christ. If we "rush," independently of Him we but injure ourselves and delay our arrival at the goal. With Christ as Teacher and Guide, we, while reaching out to the

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vast and universal, are saved from the error of despising the limited and individual, because He reveals to us in His own person that not only the infinitely great, but the infinitely small, forms part of the Divine nature; that it is limited as well as unlimited, personal as well as impersonal; that the transient as well as the abiding has its source in Him. Hence we can realise His sympathy with us and provision for our passing interests, needs and woes. We can lift up our hearts to Him as Father, and make our requests known to Him. Thus Jesus leads us naturally and simply, without shock or strain, or disaster, to "the bosom of the Father," where the Infinity we long to explore gradually unfolds before us, without blighting our personal, individual life and power. This is the only way in which human nature can come face to face with the illimitable and yet retain its sense of effective self-hood. Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. The two-fold aspect of His work is to keep us within the bounds by which it is ordained that man shall learn to realise and develop his personality, and on the other hand to open up to us a safe, sure way into the Infinity of God. Outside of Christ we not only fail to reach this goal, but in the process we destroy our personality in its highest form: we paralyse the spirit and petrify the intellect. God has truly said "No man can see My face and live": the

glory of God reflected in the face of Jesus Christ is the only form in which human nature may gaze upon it. Can we ever be grateful enough for a revelation of Deity in terms of humanity as with Browning we realise that :—

“ The acknowledgment of God in Christ  
Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee  
All questions in the earth and out of it  
And has so far advanced thee to be wise ? ”

“ No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father. He hath revealed Him ”—so profoundly has the mediation of Jesus acted upon the world that His revelations of God’s nature and truth have penetrated into, and permeated all our conceptions of these great facts. Unconscious of their great indebtedness to Him, men sometimes imagine that they are independently reaching up to a realisation of the Absolute and the Eternal even while all their ideas are founded on the teaching of Jesus. Without knowing it they are resting on His At-one-ment between the finite and the infinite, the individual and the universal, the transitory and the eternal, and are making their prayer, their demand upon life, in His name.

There is one more aspect of this subject to be considered—namely, the mystical sense in which Christ *reinforces* human praying. But as this comes just as suitably under the chapter on Intercessory Prayer it will be dealt with there.

## CHAPTER V

### INTERCESSORY OR VICARIOUS PRAYER

INTERCESSION is based on the great universal principle of vicariousness; and that principle has its roots in the still more fundamental truth that humanity is one in itself and one with God. This fact, unreal as it may seem at present to our sense-blinded sight, which only sees our separate-ness from each other and from God, is, nevertheless, the great reality on which the whole structure of Christian morality rests. No wonder that to those who lose sight of this principle the idea of a vicarious element in religion is repugnant. Save for the fact that humanity as a whole is one single organism with many parts (like its infinitely smaller prototype, the human body) the idea of vicariousness must perforce appear unjust and, therefore, immoral. While on the other hand if it be true that in some essential sense yet to be unfolded, the race is really one and that all the members of it are tied up together in the bundle of life, rising and falling together, and so depending on each other that individuals are powerless to reach their best and highest development apart



from the evolution of the whole—there is a very deep sense in which the law of vicariousness appeals to self-interest in its loftiest form. If the backward members of the race can hold back the advancing ones—creating environments, associations, influences that retard and obstruct—then surely for those who are ahead to make sacrifices that shall benefit these, is but another way of promoting self-advancement. However, it is not to motives such as these that Christianity appeals, but to the law of love which is written in every human heart, and must be brought into operation. This is the Divine purpose, and therefore, He has ordained that if humanity is to be helped *it must be by humanity*: it is one of the great principles underlying human life. He Himself is in the world working in it incessantly as a mighty immanent life; He is also above it working upon it as a transcendent force: but whatever He does for man He does through man. This is the law by which His beneficence is conditioned. He made this law because only so could He draw forth the unselfish love and service of human beings for their kind. If independently of our co-operation He did for our fellows all that they needed, our love would never evolve, nor our sense of oneness with the race ever awaken. The development of love in human hearts is the goal; intercessory prayer in its two-fold aspect of

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supplication and action is one of the paths leading to this goal. And the need of vicarious energy is infinite. In this material realm this need is more apparent than in the spiritual; but just as in this realm there are those who cannot work for themselves or stand by themselves, but require the support of richer and stronger members of the race, so in the unseen sphere of character there are the babes, the weak and infirm, the disabled,—souls that cannot pray for themselves, that are devoid of strong desires, high ideals, lofty purposes, incapable of energy and will. These are the feeble members of the race whose burdens must be borne by the strong. On their account strenuous souls must put forth aspiration and purpose, embodying them in prayer and effort. They must carry these weak ones on the wings of their own faith and love; they must see for them what they cannot see for themselves; seek for them what they cannot seek for themselves; impart to them what they have not in themselves. And if humanity is, as we believe, one, then it is quite conceivable that any intense desire arising in a single member of the great body for the happiness and good of some other member, would operate in the unseen realm of prayer as effectively as if the object of the supplication were himself the author of it. Prayer for others acts in the same ways as the prayer we offer for ourselves. What

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these ways are is a question that has been already referred to in previous chapters, and we have had to confess that we know as yet but little of the science of prayer. Nevertheless we know enough to be aware that the great personal force of prayer allies itself to, and uses the subtle forces, material and spiritual, personal and impersonal, with which the universe abounds; and we have good reason to believe that these forces are so constituted as to act in response to human prayer;—that they are capable of being liberated and set in motion by the energy of human will and purpose. What some of these laws are we are beginning to discern. Telepathy—that impact of mind upon mind, apart from ordinary means of communication,—gives us a glimpse into what might be possible if it were intelligently made an instrument of intercessory prayer. Strong thoughts regarding others, strong desires and purposes for them, when consciously directed God-ward in the form of earnest supplication, and passing through Him, as it were, ere they reach those for whom we pray, must surely become a far greater force than they could have been had such contact with the Divine mind been lacking. Strengthened, reinforced, illumined by this high communing,—winged on their way by the Divine Energy itself, they must surely be more effective than could have been possible had they not been transmuted into prayer. Then

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there is that subtle power which one personality has of imparting its *spiritual* nature to another, which we call influence. In intercessory prayer this influence transcends its earthly bounds and reaches out to those with whom we cannot communicate by ordinary means. In communion with God this power is intensified and developed; our weak and half-hearted interest in our fellow-men is greatly augmented by the streams of love and compassion that flow into us from the Divine life; our ignorant hopes and wishes and purposes for others are illumined by light from on high, and become wise: we learn to command new and greater resources wherewith to bless mankind. In sending forth our mind and spirit-forces to operate in the world of men we do well to send them by the way of heaven, that gathering there its treasures, they may go forth enriched and empowered.

Then there is that aspect of intercessory prayer in which our own activity is suspended and we cast ourselves, wholly on a power beyond and outside of ourselves, looking to the Almighty One to do for our brethren that which we cannot do. And He Who, in accordance with His law of human-interdependence, waits for our intercession, responds to the awakened love and interest that seeks another's good.

The union of the human race, deeper and more mystical than even those who realise it most can

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comprehend, makes possible, in the relations of the members with each other, much of what we must with our limited knowledge deem miraculous. We dare not, in the light of revelation and experience, set bounds to the operation of that principle of vicariousness which rests on this union. We have yet to learn that in a deeper and ever deepening sense, the interchange of good and ill, the transference of penalties and rewards, the impartation of light and life are natural and inevitable. Intercessory prayer is but a single aspect of the manifold energy of that law of human life which constrains one individual to act on behalf of another. And the scope and power of this service of love is infinite.

## CHAPTER VI

### INDIVIDUALITY A FACTOR IN PRAYER

IF we try to discover what it is that constitutes the power of influential and effective men and women, whether of past history or of our own day and generation, we cannot fail to be struck by the fact that in them all the same characteristics are present. In varying forms and degrees, a certain set of qualities—such as determination, intelligence, perseverance, courage and self-sacrifice—are always to be found in those who have made their mark in the world.

These qualities that we notice on the surface, as it were, of great characters are not, however, the actual source of greatness; they are themselves caused by something more fundamental still, of which they are but the manifestations. We must come to a deeper substratum of character to find the parent virtues of which these are the offspring. There, emotion, thought and will meet us and reveal themselves as the source of those qualities that we have noticed. We see how it is strong feeling that gives rise to ardent desires and purposes, clear thinking that

results in definite conceptions, powerful convictions, sharply outlined schemes; and how these are embraced and effectually carried out by a resolute will that presses through danger and difficulty to its goal.

Nevertheless even this has not brought us to the end of our quest. Experience proves to us again and again that it is possible for a man to have these faculties of emotion, thought and will developed to a remarkable degree and yet to come short of being an effective personality. We realise that something further is needed to produce greatness, and this something reveals itself to our deeper investigation to be the need of *unification* in the sphere of a man's inner life, resulting in the harmonious action of his powers and abilities. It is this unification that produces the *concentration* to which we have already referred in previous chapters, and without which natures endowed with rare powers tend to disappoint us: they fail to rise above a certain level of excellence; their energy is expended in internal strife or dissipated in various channels, and accomplishes nothing really great. The fact is,—and it can never be too strongly emphasised,—that every life that seeks to be effective must have at work within it the great unifying principle which we shall presently try to analyse and understand. This principle, when yielded to, will make it possible for an over-

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mastering passion to possess us—some supreme aim to govern us—which draws all the lesser desires and purposes around itself, and organises them into a bond of auxiliaries that co-operate with and reinforce the sovereign idea.

When the whole being is thus focused—concentration having conserved and generated power—it reaches that point where it becomes a driving, compelling, constraining force, carrying all before it in the particular channel in which it flows. It is thus that the effective personalities that appear upon the stage of life are made. And whether their sphere of action be large or small, whether it be on the material, the intellectual or the spiritual plane, these are the kings and rulers of men; they make the laws, establish the customs, control and order the activities of their fellow-men. Each social circle, each religious community is impelled and commanded by some subtle *personal* force; even the little world of Home or School demonstrates this fact; the strong personality, whether religious or irreligious, matter of fact or spiritual, becomes the centre.

We have become accustomed to regard this kind of personal force as so entirely a *natural endowment* that it has not occurred to us to view it at all hopefully in the light also of an *achievement*. Yet the very instinct for strength and greatness in even weak and mediocre characters



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should have given us a hint that it may be acquired as well as inherited.

But how to acquire it? That is the practical question for us all.—And this brings us to the consideration of that *Unifying Principle* to which we have referred.

Some men have sought to become powerful by dealing with the symptoms of weakness, correcting a fault here and a defect there as it becomes visible in conduct. This is well, and has been recommended in previous chapters of this book on the ground that “acts re-act upon souls.” But another and more effective method is surely to go to the root of the evil. This root we find to be a certain want of Truth—“truth in the inward parts.” There is in every man, enshrined by God in the very constitution of his nature, a directing principle, a law which differs from the law of every other life. It is this characteristic element that constitutes him an individual, and that distinguishes one individual from another.

This treasure is a man’s unique possession, something all his own. While his other faculties and gifts are held in common with others; this is peculiar to him alone, it constitutes his deepest, truest self; it is his own secret and individual share of the nature of God. By means of this there is something he can be and do which none other can; and if he fails to perceive and use the

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peculiar inheritance, the universe will miss his service. What value and dignity does this thought give to even the weakest, humblest, human life? Emerson speaks of this inward truth of an individual character as its natural "bias." He insists that all action that is in harmony with this bias is strong, original, independent, effective and beautiful; whereas the most remarkable powers that ignore or violate it in their exercise, display weakness, hesitancy, fear.

There is a widely prevalent error that following one's bias consists in doing the work and living the life that is most congenial to oneself. If this were so, harmony with the innermost self would be impossible to the greater part of humanity, which, owing either to circumstances or to its own mistakes, finds itself in paths that would not naturally have been chosen.

The individual bias when consulted, as it should be, undoubtedly does direct us in the selection of work and environment; but it is manifested not so much in what we do as the way in which we do it. We may do the very same thing in a way that is natural to us or in a way that is unnatural. Even in tasks and duties that are distasteful to the temperament, this essentially individual spirit can find scope and opportunity. It enters into and shines through all the manifold activities of a life that does not suppress or violate it. It is in

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fact that predisposition, or original bent given from its beginning to each man's moral and physical nature; and in no two human beings is exactly the same bent to be found.

This original spark of the Divine nature in a man is always beautiful and wise and strong and true; and must not be confounded with those weak, foolish or sinful impulses and tendencies that have entered into and become naturalised in the earthly temple of God. How and why this wrong bent—so dramatically represented in the story and doctrine of the fall of man—was permitted to find its way into human life, we need not now stop to inquire. The important fact for us to recognise is that it is there, obscuring the true nature, counteracting its desires and instincts, substituting false and alien ones; and generally obstructing and retarding the march of goodness, truth and love in the universe. But, thank God, it is an intruder, an usurper, destined to be overthrown. It is not of the essence of human nature, and therefore must eventually be cast out. Moreover, it is good to remember that, even while it still continues to abide, this secondary bias is always weaker than the primary and original one. That deepest and most real self of ours far exceeds in strength and power the later self that has overlaid it.

If we could but realise that this true self is the

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nature of the *immanent* God in us, a peculiar aspect of the Divine life entrusted to us alone, we would more definitely and resolutely resist the temptation to be other than ourselves:—we would refuse to become feeble copies of other personalities, adopting the spirit, the views, the methods of those who impress us and thus losing all originality and spontaneity.

It is the accessibility to a man of the immanent truth of his nature, this deeper self of his—that constitutes the difference between an effective personality and a weak one. Some men have the advantage of being born with a larger degree of intuitive perception with regard to it, and, consequently, a greater measure of power to act in harmony with it. They are certainly on vantage ground. Those less privileged have often to dig deep before they come upon the inner self. Then they have to break down the imprisoning walls that conventionality and tradition have built around it; to remove the accretions of heredity and habit (that second nature to which we have referred) which are encrusting and disguising it; till one by one the true features begin to appear.

This work of excavation and restoration has to be accomplished partly by our own efforts and partly by the aid of Divine inspirations and illuminations that meet us on the way from time to time. That which we are mainly responsible for

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on our part is *truth*, not absolute truth, for that is impossible, but relative truth. We can aim at being loyal to this innermost-self as far as we can discern it, rejecting every thought and word and deed that is not a genuine expression of that self. Adopting Shakespeare's maxim, "To thine own self be true," we may and should challenge all unreality in ourselves, and strive after sincerity and originality.

This course, if faithfully pursued, will lead us to an ever-growing power of perception, enabling us to detect more and more easily that which is foreign to our personality. The extraneous thoughts, emotions and ideals that have gradually become a kind of second nature will come to be distinguishable from those which are essentially our own.

During this process of elimination and adjustment the habit of *meditation* will prove invaluable to us ; not so much the protracted concentration of thought, the solitary musings at set times, with which that practice is associated, but the habit of watching all through the busy day for this inward individual truth to reveal itself. Fortunately for us it still tends to make itself known if we only give it a chance. As we cultivate a habit of recollection and accustom ourselves to listen for it, we will hear the still small voice of our own personality, saying at every step, "This is the way ; walk in it." It will admonish us each time we are guilty

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of a word or deed that is contrary to our nature ; it will warn us when we are adopting views, ideas, methods that are not our own, or when we are indulging in sentimentality—that is in feelings which are not spontaneous. This will be done in various ways. Sometimes we will become aware of a vague feeling of unrest and discomfort, and if we stop to seek the cause we will doubtless find that in some step that has been taken the true self has been ignored or defied. A sense of inward discord and dislocation, of perplexity and confusion, is often its silent protest against its wrongs. Then again, inward peace and gladness, a feeling of harmony and strength will flood the soul, bringing new insight and unwonted energy : this will be an indication that what has been done or said or undertaken is in accord with the true personality. And thus, by marks of approval and disapproval—by reward and punishment, will the true self we wait on lead us to that originality and spontaneity which alone is strong and effective. But we must be ever watchful, constantly turning the searchlight inwards, noting every movement of this inward monitor and promptly obeying.

We must be patient too, for the long-enfeebled self has not only to be discovered and extricated, but revived, nourished, established ; and this is a matter of time. Self-sacrifice and heroism likewise

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are demanded. We must strike at the root of what is artificial, pretentious and insincere. Therefore a constant fight against untruthfulness in every shape and form must ensue. Petty hypocracies and self-deceptions, timid compliances, weak concessions, feeble imitations must be resisted. To dare to be oneself at all times is no easy matter; even to set this before us as an aim is a great step towards gaining that inward self-possession which is the secret of power.

Nor are we left to struggle alone. There come to us from time to time wonderful uplifts and new impulses.

Sometimes one of these divine inspirations will carry us over a mountain of difficulty in a moment: a vivid illumination will suddenly put us in possession of some illusive secret of the inner life that we seemed to seek in vain. In that most pathetic poem of his, "The Buried Life," Matthew Arnold describes this experience thus:—

"When our world deafen'd ear  
Is by the tones of a loved voice caressed,  
A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast  
And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again:  
The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,  
And what we mean we say, and what we would we know,  
A man becomes aware of his life's flow  
And hears its winding murmurs, and he sees  
The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze.

\* \* \* \* \*

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And an unwonted calm pervades his breast,  
And he thinks he knows  
The hills where his life rose,  
And the sea where it goes."

When some such help as this to fuller self-realisation and self-possession is vouchsafed it should be used to the uttermost and

"Tasks in hours of insight willed  
May be through hours of gloom fulfilled."

We must never lose sight of what we have once seen, but follow it up, availing ourselves of every ray of light from without. The greatest impulse in the direction of self-realisation that can ever come to a soul comes to it in that supreme experience when Jesus Christ (Who is the great champion of personality, the redeemer and lover of the individual life) reveals Himself to that soul—not to the intellect merely but to the heart. In that moment of illumination the hidden life starts into new health and vigour. And as contact with the personality of Jesus increases, a man begins to realise or "find" his own soul and to save it.

Jesus came to show us how this was to be done. He is the Captain of our salvation, and as we yield to Him He marvellously guides and reinforces us in our fight against the hosts that oppose our soul's life—against the evil bias, the untrueness, the selfishness and darkness. It is



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through Him alone that we shall eventually be brought into the fullest knowledge and possession of ourselves—into that purified and quickened consciousness of our essential being in which we know even as we are known. Beyond the river of death and on the further shore there await the overcomer in earth's battle that perfected self-knowledge and self-realisation regarding which the mystic language of scripture says, "To him that overcometh I will give a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it." The full secret of his hidden inner life will then reveal itself purified from all that corrupted and obscured it.

There is another powerful motive urging us to the recovery of the true self which needs to be put forth. It is found in the fact that the fundamental and essential part of our nature is that which is in *direct* touch with the Divine life and power.

Through this channel, if it be open, inspiration and illumination flow in from the Fount of truth beyond ourselves, and transfigure the life. Genius (which is a higher and completer form of self-possession) has its rise in the *intuitions*. It is within that inner sanctuary of our being that God speaks to us face to face. It is a holy place in which we see the visions and ideals and gain the

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strength and power needed for a great and glorious life. Doubtless this entire chapter will be regarded by some as a digression from the subject, but it has a very real bearing on it. If power in prayer depends on personality, and if access to this inner and most real self constitutes the difference between an effective personality and a weak one, then any attempt to show where the weakness lies and how it may be dealt with, is valuable as an aid to the development of a successful prayer-life.

## CHAPTER VII

### LOVE, THE SOVEREIGN MOTIVE IN PRAYER

IN the last chapter we dwelt at some length on Individuality as an important factor in the development of personal power, showing how a clear and definite consciousness of oneself, of one's distinctive tendencies, aims, idiosyncrasies, abilities, goes far towards producing strength and originality. But another still more potent factor in the evolution of full-orbed and effective personality is a recognition of *relatedness*. Those who have either inherited or acquired a strong sense of individuality may be divided into two classes, the one possessing mainly a *self*-consciousness, the other having superadded to the self-consciousness, a consciousness almost equally great of *other* selves, a possession, by sympathy and insight, of other souls. The terms Individuality and Personality are so generally regarded as synonymous, and so often used interchangeably that it may seem unwarrantable to draw a distinction between them ; nevertheless the two kinds of self-possession just described are not at all unsuitably expressed by these words respectively ;—individuality standing simply

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for consciousness of self, and personality for self-realisation plus a keen perception and appreciation of other individualities. In this larger consciousness, self-realisation is neither weakened nor lost, but balanced, being adjusted to a greater environment; thus personality is indeed as it has been described, "the sum of one's relations." Another name for this sense of conscious and sympathetic relation to other beings is Love. When all these qualities which have been described as constituting personality are crowned by love, the highest type of powerful manhood is achieved. If for some difficult undertaking a mighty, irresistible, driving force is needed, it will be found in love. For supplication as for action, it is the only sufficient motive. St. Anthony says, "We pray as much as we desire, and we desire as much as we love."

But the love here referred to as a powerfully-constraining principle in life is not ordinary commonplace affection, but a *passion* of love. The harder the task, the greater the love that it demands. A comparatively cold, intellectual regard cannot do the work of an ardent, glowing heart-devotion. Only when love burns within as a perpetual fire does it generate the degree of force needed to propel desires and purposes over a difficult road to their goal. Nothing is absolutely irresistible save love; and nothing else can stand the strain of a desperate and protracted contest. Lesser

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motives tend to give way if too severely tried, but love is equal to all contingencies. Therefore the cause that we espouse, the person we would save and bless, or the purpose we would realise, must be loved with a passionate love, must be to us as our own soul, nay more. And when the cause totters under the heavy blows of the enemy, so that to bear it up becomes an almost intolerable strain, Love will be found equal to the task. When the weakness, the defects and unworthiness of the persons or communities we pray and work for, reveal themselves as far beyond our worst fears, Love will not falter, but hopefully, patiently, perseveringly continue its ministry. When delays and disappointments obstruct and discouragement threatens, love will pierce beyond the veil and see the yet invisible success; it will wax stronger and stronger in faith till, by the very pressure of its yearning intensity, vision passes on to prevision, —becoming, as in Browning's "Saul," prophetic, and wresting from the future gleams of light and hope wherewith to cheer the difficult present.

Then also the resources of love are wonderful. When perplexities arise it will find a solution: when old theories and methods fail it will devise new ways and means: should some crisis arise in which only a great sacrifice will save or bless the object of devotion, a great and passionate love will not flinch, but gladly lay down life itself.

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“Love suffereth long . . . beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things; love never faileth.” The love that is an untiring superhuman energy is comparatively rare; and yet it is the kind of love that Jesus came to teach and give to His followers. With Him love was an ardour, an enthusiasm, an all-absorbing devotion, deep and strong and permanent. It is difficult to conceive of a passion so fervent and intense; and any unusual warmth of feeling is mistaken for this best treasure of the human heart. Even to *see* this love as Jesus sought to reveal it needs divine illumination.

But it is small comfort to know that there is a dynamic in life, a mighty power that personality may wield, if for any reason that force is inaccessible to us—in other words, if we are among those whose love does not generally rise to the high level of passion, but is comparatively cold, or if not that, yet superficial, fickle, or selfish.

That God means this living flame of love to burn in every heart was the message of Christ. Such love can be ours in three ways. First by *nature*: that is, we may be born with this rich inheritance. But so often, what has cost no trouble to acquire is lightly valued; and thus a warm heart, a great capacity for loving, is neglected and misused till it deteriorates into mere sentimentality or impulsiveness, instead of being a motive force in deed and

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in prayer. Secondly we may by *cultivation* deepen and increase the powers of the heart. In foregoing chapters the need of strengthening *desire* (which is only a feebler word for love) has been emphasised. This process is a long and difficult one and, at the best, never absolutely satisfactory until it opens the door to inspiration and illumination from without. This it almost invariably tends to do if it has been faithfully employed to accomplish that which comes within its sphere; then it ushers the soul into a phase of experience where spontaneity replaces effort.

Thirdly, love may become ours by *bestowal*. As a gift from God it can pour into our waiting souls, lifting them suddenly and effectively on to a new plane of affection. Many have known this unique experience in which "deep calleth unto deep,"—the deeps in God awakening a response from the deeps in us. It is a miracle of grace. The Bible describes it as "The love of God shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Ghost."

If we have by nature a rich endowment of love it behoves us to mature and use it to the utmost. If denied the inheritance of a strong and intense affection, we are called to develop it by earnest effort, and discipline; and to seek it from God, keeping ourselves in an attitude of waiting expectation, so that the beams of divine love may find a ready entrance to our hearts.

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By prayerful endeavour we cannot fail to arrive at a love which removes every hindrance to the pursuance of high and holy purposes ; love that, burning with steady flame, consumes all selfishness and fear, and fires the heart with such energy, enthusiasm, courage and resource, as carry all before it in the realm of Prayer.



## CHAPTER VIII

### SUPPLICATION AND COMMUNION

It will have been observed that throughout this volume there is hardly any attempt made to keep distinct and separate the two forms of prayer, which are *supplication* and *action*. Of this no explanation is needed, for the simple reason that in their highest development they are scarcely distinguishable and tend to merge into each other. The man who sets forth to work out his designs trusting in the aid of the higher powers usually finds, as the stress and strain of life increase, that he turns with growing hope and comfort to intercourse with the unseen personal God: while he who makes this intercourse the starting point of his career, regarding it as the supreme means of obtaining his desires, comes in due course to realise that it must be reinforced by action: thus his praying culminates in doing; and the more earnestly he supplicates the more is his supplication accompanied by strenuous efforts to bring about that for which he petitions heaven. And thus, that only complete form of prayer, which is a combination of supplication and action, is reached.

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This chapter is specially devoted to a consideration of the supplicatory aspect of prayer, because it presents grave difficulties to many minds, unconsciously, undermining their trust in it. What perplexes us is the rationale of prayer of this kind. We are confronted by the how and wherefore of it,—why *asking* should be a condition of receiving when He Whom we ask is omniscient and good. There are doubtless many of the reasons for this divinely-instituted practice which we are not yet capable of appreciating, but there are some at any rate which are within the grasp of our comprehension. It will help us to recall them, considering them under five different heads.

1. As already stated in a previous chapter, an observation of human life and experience affords sufficient ground for the belief that Prayer in both its forms was instituted for the purpose of developing personality—of evolving in mankind the power to create and command. How personality operates in the world of action it is comparatively easy to see, but what it effects in the sphere of supplication is not so evident. Men find it easier to believe in the exercise of personal power by means of deeds than to believe that the same conquering force can be exerted also through the medium of desires and petitions directed to the unseen Ruler of the universe; and therefore they cannot understand how such praying should be a factor in the

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evolution of human personality. And yet it surely is! In the silent out-pourings of fervent desire to God, the soul's self-consciousness and resource are just as surely evolved as by deeds: the very same qualities are demanded in the one case as in the other, the only difference being that intercourse with God develops them in higher and subtler form because it brings the soul in touch with spiritual realities, whereas action is mainly concerned with the more material and tangible things of life. Just as in the sphere of action a man cannot gain what he desires until he has become "victory-organised"—an overcoming, commanding personality,—so also in the spiritual realm he must acquire the princely qualities before he is entitled to success. And like Jacob of old he must wrestle to win them, wrestle with God, not because God is unwilling to give, but because His love and wisdom have chosen to withhold until the reward is earned.

2. There is another equally important reason why God has made the obtaining of our desires to depend on supplication, as much, or even more, than on action.—The ultimate goal of human life is communion with God. But at this elementary stage of their spiritual development men are not inclined to respond to this high calling; their earthliness makes it irksome and difficult. If they could acquire what they wanted by the easier

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means of action they would not readily incur the strain which sustained intercourse with God involves. Therefore they must be allured and attracted to that wherein consists their highest good. Just as we, in educating children, urge them on to difficult tasks by holding out some alluring hope, a prize or a reward, so God has chosen to secure our constant recourse to Himself, and our conscious dependence upon Him, by making the fulfilment of our desires contingent on our asking. It is thus He brings us into, and keeps us in touch with Himself. And He does so not only because His Fatherly love demands such intercourse, but also because it secures our highest development. This brings us to the third reason for the supplicatory form of prayer.

3. In a previous chapter we dwelt on the importance of realising and bringing into play the true self—that original bent God gave each individual nature. There is nothing that so helps us in finding our own soul as communion with God. And this is the process:—as we obey the command to ask for what we want and go on asking till we are answered, we find ourselves getting into closer and closer touch with God over the question of our petition. Though He delays we still press our plea. The quiet induced by this sustained waiting upon Him makes it possible for us to begin to hear, first faintly, then more plainly, His

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voice speaking in the depths of the heart. This experience is a great and thrilling reality, only conceivable to those who have in some measure enjoyed it. Our petition becomes the ground of His communion with us. He reasons with us about it, sheds new light upon it,—revealing motives and issues of which we were unaware, and which make us glad to relinquish or modify our request, or willing to wait for its fulfilment. Perhaps, on the other hand, we may find ourselves confirmed and strengthened in holding on to that for which we plead; and wavering hope grows into assured expectation and becomes that prayer of faith which is demanded as a condition of success. It is also as we wait on God that visions come to us, visions of work to be done, of power to do it, of ways and means. Inspiration streams into the soul by the avenue of prayer, bringing illumination, courage, resource and strength. Many of the great schemes that are regenerating the world have had their rise in secret communing with God. Moreover in this exercise of going over our desires and purposes with God a process of purification goes on. Our hearts are gradually weaned from those artificial and corrupted desires which belong to that secondary nature that has overlaid and obscured the true and original self and given to human life its evil bias. The more we turn to God, making

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our requests known to Him, the more are those elements in them that are vitiated and perverted, or discordant with our real God-given nature, eliminated. Alongside of the negative work of refining, a positive work of educating and elevating is carried on. In contact with the heart and mind of God we are brought to realise what are actually the desires and aims and instincts of our highest Self, and to find that these are invariably in accordance with the Divine will. Thus we arrive at fulfilling another condition laid down for prevailing prayer, namely that it should be in harmony with that holy will. Like Rabbi Gamaliel we can then with boldness pray, "Lord grant that I may do Thy will as if it were my will, and that Thou mayest do my will as if it were Thy will."

4. We have already referred to love as the sovereign motive in prayer—love of truth and righteousness, resulting in enthusiasm for some cause or principle; love of persons, leading to self-sacrificing devotion on behalf of individuals or communities. But experience shows us that love, strong enough to be a mighty impulse, is not primarily acquired in a life of action. Intercourse with our fellow men as often tends to repel and crush it as to draw it forth. Only in frequent communings with the Fount of Love can there be born in us a love that many waters cannot

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quench nor death destroy. As our contact with the heart and mind of God grows more constant and intimate, there streams into us a heavenly love to which all patience and forbearance and gentleness are possible because it sees as God does, the infinite pathos and weakness of human life. Tenderness, sympathy, wisdom, devotion, enthusiastic service flow from it to meet the needs and wants of men.

5. And last and greatest of all ;—by the practice of turning to God in supplication we are brought to that plane of fellowship with Him which is the goal of human life, in which we desire *Him* more than His gifts, His help, or His guidance. Our asking tends to resolve itself more and more into an asking for the favour of being drawn closer to His heart and mind. Nay, we may get beyond asking altogether and reach that point where even our highest desires are dissolved in satisfaction ; and we are only conscious of loving Him and being loved by Him—of a blessed interchange of love and joy. This ecstatic gladness has a faint earthly semblance in those rare moments when two human souls that love stand revealed to one another in a light “ that never was on land and sea ”—a light not of earth but heaven—and minister to one another that joy and beauty and sweetness which belong to and foreshadow the Ideal. This thrilling joy of union with God awaits every soul,

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sometime, somewhere. When we rise to this high plane of fellowship with the Divine, there is evolved that sovereign type of personality which is destined to govern and control. *Spiritual* personality, towering majestically above every other type, will usher in the kingdom of God upon earth, and "The Saints shall rule the world."



## CHAPTER IX

### FASTING AND PRAYER

THE idea of Fasting is too closely allied with that of prayer to be passed over in silence.

As ordinarily employed, the term fasting stands for abstinence from food and from certain forms of pleasure that appeal to the senses. By this abstinence it is believed that the spirit grows stronger and is furthered in its efforts to reach out into the Unseen and the Invisible.

This view is true as far as it goes, but we look instinctively for a deeper significance, and we find that fasting is a symbol of tremendous import. In its highest aspect it represents that inward act of supreme self-abnegation by which, in view of some stupendous undertaking which demands the concentrated force of his entire nature, a man withdraws, for a while, all his energies and interests from the various spheres in which they are operating, and brings them to bear upon the single task before him.

This is the fasting to which Jesus referred when He said of certain forms of power, "This kind goeth not forth save by prayer and fasting." It

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is to be regretted that the Church has mainly contented itself with emphasising the more superficial aspects of fasting when the deeper and wider significance has a far greater bearing on human life. Nevertheless, earnest souls, led by a Divine impulse, have adopted and exercised the principles underlying this discipline far more than is generally recognised. They would not call it fasting, but the renunciation of the beautiful in matters of dress and surroundings, the repression of artistic instincts, the refusal to indulge in intellectual tastes or follow congenial pursuits, the shutting off from life of what is bright and alluring, are all forms of fasting; and though not recognised as such they do their work in saving the soul from distraction and in concentrating it upon some given point. It is to such self-discipline, even when it takes crude and eccentric forms, that we owe the excellent results manifest in many earnest and useful lives. Those who follow this course of renunciation under the illusion that what they renounce is in itself evil and worldly would be surprised to find that the real object is to secure that concentration which develops strength.

We are much in need of a more serious and intelligent treatment of the deeper side of this question; and before we can look for the power of human personality to manifest itself in any remarkable degree our minds must be arrested by

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the profound truth underlying the symbol of fasting; and very clear and definite-teaching regarding its wider application must come to us from our pulpits and platforms.

As a means of generating force and of conserving and applying that force to a definite end, the peculiar kind of self-discipline which fasting typifies ranks very high, and man should be taught to recognise its value in the great crises of life and action. Many are the enterprises that fail because prayer is not accompanied by "fasting," because strenuous effort is not secured against the leakage whereby energy escapes and is dissipated that should go towards pushing through difficulties. It is a solemn fact, too little recognised, that again and again we come to a point in our work, a moment in our lives, when great issues tremble in the balance, when the powers arrayed against us are so mighty that nothing short of a stupendous, almost superhuman effort on our part can carry us through. To meet such an emergency there must be a summoning of all life's forces, a gathering together from all quarters of the hosts of battle. The soul must, for awhile, resolutely withdraw itself from all that tends to divert it from the main object of pursuit: it must fast from things legitimate and beautiful and even necessary, so that the entire energy may go into the undertaking that demands this concentrated power.

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At such times the whole nature—emotional, intellectual, practical—must be held in check, the mind, will, affections being guarded from distraction and focussed upon the point at issue. Those who know anything at all about this deeper aspect of fasting realise that there are occasions on which they must deny themselves even the simplest form of diversion ; that to give rein to an alien thought or feeling, even in the painting of a picture, the reading of a poem, the admission of a new interest, some of the energy which should be accumulating for the great task may find an opening through which to ooze away and be lost. The more arduous the enterprise or critical the situation, the greater need is there that the glow and warmth of emotion, the energy of thought, the stimulus of action should be denied other outlets and channels, and be driven into that wherein its whole force is needed.

To those who have no conception of this form of self-discipline as an accompaniment to prayer, all that has been said about it will appear unreasonable and untrue.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that only in this way can we account for much of the pathetic failure in human life. We see enterprises of prayer or action brought to a certain point and actually within sight of their goal, and then they break down and fail. Many a purpose is carried forward bravely until it reaches a difficult

stage and then it falters. Undertakings go well until they come to that place where they demand a supreme self-sacrifice—a “fast” such as we have been endeavouring to describe,—and then they fall to pieces. In each case fasting and prayer would have saved the situation and ensured ultimate victory.

While some lives consecrated to a special endeavour are a perpetual “fast,” it must not be supposed that all strenuous and purposeful living is entirely made up of these severe strains on the soul’s resources. The occasions on which there is a call to fast are comparatively few and far between. Nor does every undertaking demand the same measure of self-discipline: the sacrifice required is in proportion to the greatness of the task and the difficulties that confront it. Often it is but a small degree of self-denial that is required to generate sufficient force to carry through the work or purpose we have in hand. What we need to recognise is that sooner or later, in every life and in every enterprise, be it small or great, there must come a crisis which necessitates special self-disciplined effort, and on the way in which we meet this crisis will depend the issue.

If any situation arises which calls for a “fast”—for strenuous energy accompanied by self-restraint—and we refuse to respond, the cause is lost. Energy without self-discipline will not do. Herein

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lies the secret of many a failure, the hidden reason why innumerable promising lives and brilliant purposes and designs have not come to fruition.

The need, then, is an urgent one that those who engage in life's contests should be made aware that in the deeper self-discipline typified by fasting they have an ally of great power.

## CHAPTER X

### VICTORIOUS PERSONALITY

IN history we see the fact to which we have already referred clearly demonstrated,—namely that personality is the dominating factor, the driving force behind every enterprise, moral or spiritual, and the constructive agency in every institution that has come into being. In nations, communities, families, all that ever happens is initiated and accomplished by some superior personality. As Emerson puts it, “Every institution is the lengthened shadow of one man, as Monarchism of the Hermit Anthony; the Reformation of Luther, Quakerism of Fox; Methodism of Wesley, Abolition of Clarkson. Scipio, Milton called the might of Rome, and all history resolves itself easily into the biography of a few stout and earnest persons.”

Whether the personality be great or small, having an extended range of action or a limited one, the same principle holds good, that wherever there is vivid self-realisation and a large amount of self-possession there, also, is to be found insight, ability, power;—the degree of the self-conscious-

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ness being the measure of the power. Howsoever a man prays, whether he supplicates or acts, it is the quality and force of the personality he puts into his undertaking that determines the issue.

We may, therefore, lay it down as a general principle that *behind prevailing prayer there must ever be victorious personality*. So much disappointment and perplexity might be avoided if all who pray and work could but grasp this principle and know for certain that they can only expect to have their desires and purposes gloriously realised, their requests granted, their schemes successfully executed if they acquire a certain kind of character. This kind of character we purpose to designate by the word *Victorious*.

To the word *Victorious*, as we shall use it in the following pages in relation to personality, we would attach a very special significance which should be borne in mind throughout by the reader. We further take the liberty of coining a new word—*Victoriousness*—to express a quality, a certain advanced and definite stage of development in force of character for which there is no exact term.

This quality of *Victoriousness* is not easy to define, it can be better felt than understood. Still as some kind of analysis seems necessary, we must attempt it. To begin with, then, we may describe



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*Victoriousness* as a composite quality, its primary element, or rather, the foundation on which it is built, being that realisation and possession of the true and innermost self with which we dealt in an earlier chapter. On this basis there must be a superstructure of faith, obedience, determination; of concentrated energy, perseverance, and patience:—all those qualities in fact which have already been emphasised as requisite conditions to successful praying. Victoriousness is produced by the combination in a personality of these qualities raised on a foundation of truth and sincerity. It is in fact a new quality—the outcome of all these put together. One may have several of these virtues and yet not be a victorious personality; they must all be present in some degree in order to produce Victoriousness: even if one of them is lacking or defective, there is a weak link in the chain of power.

And as a topstone, crowning this edifice of character, there must be a *consciousness* of power. Without this *consciousness* personal strength is not fully equipped for effective operation in the world. From this it will be evident how high an attainment is demanded before prevailing prayer becomes possible.

May it not be due to the fact that personalities of this order are so rare that human desires and hopes and schemes generally fall very far short of

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an ideal realisation,—that prevailing prayer in its fullest sense is still a dream rather than an actual experience?

But it is not meant to be a dream, a hopeless ideal. If religious teachers, instead of trying to apologise and account for the disappointing failure of prayer, would adopt a new attitude, and fearlessly demand victorious personality as the condition of success—turning all their energies towards the development of such personality—prayer would become a living force. The promises of the Bible and the intuitive expectations of men with regard to the power of prayer are not vain and illusory;—they are meant to be fully realised when those who have a right to claim fulfilment appear upon the scene. The time has come when from pulpit and platform the need of victorious personality should be enforced with new emphasis and burning zeal. It is this quality of Victoriousness in Christian character generally for which the world is waiting before it can move forward with any appreciable success. On it the millennium depends: that reign of triumphant, world-wide righteousness can only come when religious men have become “Overcomers;” when Christian weakness no longer masquerades in the garb of Christian meekness; when piety has matured into strength,—strength of vision, which is faith; strength of purpose, which includes patience and perseverance;

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strength of devotion which means self-sacrifice and consecrated energy.

Exalted personality of this type must take by force the kingdoms that it covets. The world is an arena for the clanging strife of personalities, many and diverse, all contending for the mastery;—personalities on the spiritual plane, the intellectual plane, the material plane. In the struggle to enforce opinions, exert influences, establish customs, carry out schemes, it is not so much the excellence of the opinion or influence or custom or scheme that tells, but the power of the personality behind it. Often the best ideals and projects fail to grip and hold men because their champion has not sufficient personal force to overcome resistance and win co-operation. In this conflict (so tragic and pathetic yet inspiring) the religious, or *spiritual* personality which is eventually destined to supreme command is at present often over-borne by the world-rulers of this darkness. But we look for the time when spiritually-good men shall be strong through and through, having all the equipment of character necessary for carrying their enterprises of work and prayer through to fulfilment: men who do not break down by the way, or modify and retrench, but holding fast their purpose, retaining their ideal in its completeness, fight through opposing hosts of difficulty, disaster,

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trial, and arrive at the destined goal. Hardihood, heroism, absolute self-devotion, faith—when these are yoked to a cause, when these are behind a purpose or a prayer, it cannot but prevail.

The next question for us to face is whether Victoriousness always manifests itself in immediate, visible, tangible, success—a quick and unmistakable realisation of desires and purposes? Human experience leads us to answer emphatically in the negative.

As we have already noticed, Victoriousness is first a quality or achievement of the inner life—a goal of character that has to be reached, in order to initiate or create; and though this quality must eventually be externally demonstrated, yet it is independent of all external evidence, and can still exist when there is as yet no outward sign of its presence. It is an inward condition of power and confidence resulting from conscious victory over all that obscures vision or mars a man's harmony with the Divine Will, or saps his energy for strenuous endeavour. When this point has been reached and the inward triumph gained, the outward is sure to follow. A man thus "Victory-organised" can wait in happy faith and patience though he knows that years, decades, perhaps centuries must elapse before his desire is objectively realised.

The quickness and completeness of external success in the prayer of a victorious personality depends on its nature and scope. The more limited a personality is, the more its designs tend to come within a compass that makes their present and visible realisation possible.

Browning expresses this in the "Grammarians' Funeral"

"That low man seeks a little thing to do—  
Sees it and does it :  
This high man with a great thing to pursue—  
Dies ere he knows it."

The grander and richer a personality, the larger and more comprehensive will be its ideals. Its far-reaching schemes and exalted spiritual visions will need time for their fulfilment, and vast spheres for their operations.

Jesus affords us a supreme example of a majestic personality laying its plans far on into the centuries, proposing a marvellous and universal transformation of character and society. None realised as He did how His entire scheme rested on His personality. If He faltered or lost heart, if He let His spiritual vision be obscured, His exalted ideal be lowered, then His scheme for complete and universal redemption must fall through. In His own person the Victory had first to be won ere He could successfully initiate the new movement. He could not hand down to His followers unwavering

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confidence in the coming kingdom, or the unique principles that were to govern it, unless within the sphere of His own personality they had previously come through the fiery furnace of test and trial. All that He desired to establish upon the earth must first have been established in His own person. The sacred record of the earthly life of Christ often lifts the veil of His inner experience and lets us see the process of development by which His spirit was prepared to bear the weight of this stupendous scheme. We see Him beset by disappointments and discouragements, yet His faith in His great project continues to evolve: the religious leaders of the day reject and scorn and oppose His efforts to lay the foundations of His kingdom: but resource rises with the occasion, and, undaunted, He conceives and carries out the plan of preparing a small band of humble disciples in whom He will sow the immortal seeds of the saving truth that shall in due time fertilise the world. This chosen band likewise fails and disappoints Him, but looking beyond the present, He can confidently predict that on these very men He will build His Church "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Face to face with death, yea within its very grips, faith grows keener and completes the victory; the indomitable will wins its last and greatest triumph, and Jesus, dying on the cross, knows His earthly work is "finished,"

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His great scheme of universal regeneration launched. Though storm and stress, darkness and danger lie between this moment of initiation and the glorious consummation, He knows Himself capable of carrying through what He has begun; and so in calm strong confidence and peace, He breathes, "Father into Thy hands I commend my spirit," and, leaving the world, enters upon a new phase of His redemptive work. The mission of Jesus on earth was a triumph of personality from beginning to end! Even more than the truths He taught and the light He shed He was Himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

The Bible from cover to cover is full of this same grand truth of human might;—indeed it is a text book on the power of personality, and if studied in this light comes home to the heart with a new significance. Its heroes are examples of personal force and energy, their education in character is graphically portrayed. Indeed it is remarkable how large a part strength of character plays in both Old and New Testaments.

In Revelation, that book of mystic type and symbol, the figures employed are parables of personal force—"the Strong Angel," "the Lion," "the pillar," "the rod of iron," and many more; while words such as "prevail," "authority" and "overcome" abound. The Bible more than any

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other book teaches us that it is not enough to see visions, to conceive great ideals; there must be the character capable of carrying them through or they will not be realised.

Not until personality is distinctly recognised as the chief factor in success, and more seriously, intelligently and widely cultivated, will the world witness to any remarkable extent those miracles of answered prayer—of realised ideals and fulfilled petitions—that it so instinctively looks for. Personality must first evolve; and this evolution is gloriously possible to the humblest human being. Though steep and rough the pathway success is assured, for God and His universe are in league with those who seek Victorious Personality.



## CHAPTER XI

### PREVAILING PRAYER

THOSE who observe human character cannot fail to notice that a great deal of its strength and ability is never applied, or if applied, it proves less effective than it promised to be. After making due deductions for the weaknesses and defects already noted as being partly responsible for this failure we are driven to the conclusion that there is yet another reason, and that some further link in the chain of power needs to be supplied, or at least strengthened, before prayer—be it that of action or supplication—can become to any remarkable extent victorious.

This brings us face to face with an important fact in the study of effective personality—namely, that the edifice of character described in the previous chapter needs something further to complete and crown it, without which it comes short of the fullest force and efficiency that it otherwise deserves.

This last link in the chain is *Consciousness of power*. Acquisition of power must grow into consciousness of power. We must not only *be* strong

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but *know* ourselves to be so. In many cases the growth of consciousness does not keep pace with the growth of power, and has to be cultivated. The actual possession of might, intelligence, resource and wisdom must blossom into the realisation that we possess these qualities or else we shall not greatly dare or do. Nor does this lead to egotism and conceit; it simply means that a strong man thus awakened to a sense of his capabilities and powers has become aware of actual facts; he knows the truth about himself, and the knowledge of truth cannot but be an advantage. In this case it is an undoubted gain for it gives courage to put forth faculties that had else lain dormant and unused. Self-reliance and Self-confidence are invaluable qualities born of a consciousness of power. Many who might do great things fail even to make the attempt for lack of them.

Emerson says of the commanding personality that the world does not wait for evidences of his power, but recognises him at once and hastens to pay the homage due to greatness. Such a being conveys his consciousness of his own power to others; he "conquers where he stands"; before ever his deeds have evinced his worth he overcomes opposition and wins allegiance and co-operation. And as it is in the external world, so also, we may conclude, it is in that inner world of spirit where prayer operates. In that realm too,

when the soul has reached that point at which it becomes victorious, it commands rather than pleads, becoming like Jacob to whom it was said, "As a Prince thou hast power with God and with men and hast prevailed"; or like Elijah who "commanded" the fire to come down from heaven; or like Joshua to whose personal power is attributed a day of which it is written "there was no day like unto it when the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man." Deem these allegory or fact as we will, they tell the same tale of the conquering might of human personality having effect in heaven and on earth.

*Consciousness* of power is an absolutely necessary element in the constitution of victorious personality, and in the exercise of prevailing prayer. So many having all else and lacking this, fail to reach the summits of earthly achievement. They stop mid-way, or just short of fullest success, unable to carry their ideas and schemes through to a triumphant issue.

This awakening to a realisation of power in oneself comes tardily to some, even when it is due. And it is remarkable that the most idealistic natures often arrive at it the last and with the greatest difficulty. The reason for this may be found in the fact that the idealist, measuring himself only by his ideal without reference to the moral stature of others, under-estimates

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himself and his self-confidence suffers; he enters the contests of life lacking the sense of power that those who are less worthy possess, and by means of which they out-strip him in the race. Therefore to see oneself truly as compared with others, perceiving one's superiority, is as great an advantage as to compare oneself with an ideal and realise one's shortcomings. Some men of splendid abilities (of whom Amiel is perhaps a type) do not fulfil the promise and potency of their nature because they see the ideal more clearly than the actual. The paralysing diffidence of less gifted beings than Amiel is also due to the same cause, and must be met by trying to see things as they are in the realm of actual achievement.

We have dwelt much on the acquisition of power itself, but if an adequate consciousness of it also is so important a factor in prayer, it behoves us to look into the matter and discover how that too may be rightly evolved.

First we need to inquire what it is that constitutes this sense of power. And here we must confine ourselves to dealing with it as it meets us in its purest and highest form in a spiritual personality. At first glance we see that one important element in it is faith, — faith in oneself as possessing the ability, the resource, the wisdom, the means wherewith to carry through the enterprise in view; faith in God who

co-operates with and leads the trusting soul to victory; faith in His laws and ordinances which are constituted so as to support and re-enforce worthy human endeavour; faith in the essential goodness and helpfulness of persons and things, and in the ultimate triumph of right over wrong.

Then there is also present another marked feature—the conviction of a divine right to success, based not only on the knowledge of ability for the undertaking, but also on the certainty that it is a good and just cause, and that God wills its success.

A third necessity in this consciousness of power seems to be an assurance that what is undertaken, however difficult it be, lies well within the scope of present human possibilities. These possibilities at their highest have been revealed to us in Jesus Christ, the crown and representative of our race, and therefore, whether we acknowledge it or not, in recognising those limits as shown in His life, we make our prayer in His “name.” In passing we may note that these three elements just noted as constituting a sense of power, take into account the three chief conditions laid down in scripture as necessary to successful prayer—namely, faith, harmony with God’s will, prayer in the name of Christ.

The consciousness of power operating as an effective principle in the world takes so many different forms. There are its counterfeits, its

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spurious growths, its partial and imperfect developments, its prophetic and inspirational aspects, and, lastly, its birth as the fruit of an abiding reality of strength in the human soul.

The counterfeits arise from an innate sense in mankind that consciousness of power is an effective weapon. Hence weak men simulate it, endeavouring to convey by pretentiousness and brag, a sense of power and resource that has no real existence. They often succeed in overcoming opposition by means of intimidation until the disguise is detected. A spurious sense of power—that which exists on a basis not of truth but of falsehood—is very common, and to a certain degree effective. One of the forms in which we know it best is self-confidence or conceit. Yet this undue estimate of one's powers makes it possible to attempt tasks that greater ability often shrinks from, and to win recognition when it is denied to superior worth.

A narrow outlook, an inability to perceive any claims except one's own, also lends a degree of intensity and force that accomplishes more than the rest of the character deserves or warrants. Then, too, there is the courage, born of ignorance, that dashes forwards, blind to the forces arrayed in opposition ; and, lastly, there is obstinacy, which is an attempt to express strength when there is only weakness.

All these spurious forms of the great achievement of *conscious* power are effective up to a certain point, but they cannot sustain any severe or protracted struggle for victory.

Besides false forms of the sense of power there is another which, though true, is only partially and imperfectly evolved. This operates in a large sphere of human life, and finds its fitting demonstration in the imperfectly initiated and executed schemes with which the world abounds—those half victories made up of inadequate achievements, humiliating concessions to superior force, pathetic modifications, lowered ideals and weakened hopes and aspirations. Its insufficiency is evidenced in the tragic failure of promising lives to realise their possibilities. This failure is as often due to the want of a *sense* of power as to lack of the power itself.

The *inspirational* form in which a consciousness of power often visits us is a revelation and a prophecy of that later and more abiding sense of power which is based on the actual presence of strength in oneself. This *inspired* feeling of strength is generally the outcome of deep and constant meditation on the power of the Transcendent God as capable of entering into and energising the human soul, and this expectation is constantly fulfilled. A marvellous sense of power often floods the heart whereby a personality, otherwise weak and ineffective, mounts on the wings

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of inspiration and elation and speeds to some great achievement. Then the inspired sense of power gradually dies away, and the sense of weakness re-asserts itself.

It is an experience too familiar to be controverted that for special tasks and duties this inspiration of conscious strength is often vouchsafed to those who earnestly seek it, waiting upon God and fulfilling the necessary conditions. An entire school of religious thought, in its aspirations after conscious power, has mainly this kind of consciousness in view; and many an earnest soul giving itself to prayer in the face of some difficulty, is actually seeking just this sense of a strength outside itself, in which to go forth and meet the ordeal: it is a putting on of the strength of the Transcendent God for the emergencies of life.

But there is another and more permanent form in which consciousness of power may come to us of which the experience just referred to is an earnest and a prophecy. In this later experience the soul rises to its full stature as an expression of the Immanent God. Its steadily-evolving greatness at last issues in a glorious realisation of that greatness; and the fact that wisdom and might have made their home within, culminates in an abiding sense of their presence and of their availability for every undertaking; it is a gradual unfolding to the soul of its own worth and dignity.



This consciousness of power arises from within and is an inalienable part of the personality itself, becoming the last and most important element in prevailing prayer. But it must be built upon a sure foundation. First that victorious character on which it rests must be acquired—the defects and weaknesses, referred to in earlier chapters being remedied by submission to the discipline of the cross and by earnest effort directed and re-inforced by Christ. Then the sense of individuality, and the equally important sense of relatedness or love, must be developed and that communion with God cultivated whereby human personality is spiritualised.

Then, on the foundation of actual strength will come that consciousness of power which has formed the subject of this chapter. Rising from within, gradually, steadily, surely; gathering intensity as the character on which it is based grows stronger; deepened and illumined by communion with God; strengthened by contests in the material and the spiritual world; confirmed by conquests, great and small, all along the line of the daily march:—this sense of power will become more vivid and more true as life goes on. Whatsoever in it was false will pass away because the unstable foundation of conceit, narrowness, ignorance on which the false sense of strength rested, will be undermined and destroyed by

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progress in truth. A *sense* of power commensurate with the power itself will enter life as a force that constrains to action—to prayer—that pushes and presses against the confining bars of doubt and diffidence until they break, and the liberated soul goes forth to dare and to achieve. Some there are who do not need so much to strive for power as for the love that uses power. Possessing conscious force of character yet lacking the supreme motive that stirs to action, they are letting their strength lie idle. To such comes a stirring call to *prayer*—to aggressive, purposeful action in which the full force of their personality goes forth in prevailing energy. For to have and not to use, to be and not to do, is moral suicide: and upon all who do not pray, who, either from indolence, fear or selfishness, do not act as a moving force upon their environment, must fall, sooner or later, the blight that ever attends neglect of privilege. The very springs of hope and energy dry up, ideals fade, ardent desires and noble aspirations surrender more and more easily to opposing forces: prayer is silenced and the very power to pray is sapped. This is the solemn inner tragedy of many lives that started out with high hopes and purposes. Alas that it should be so! Those bright visions and achievement were never meant to end thus: they were no idle dreams, but glimpses of infinite possibilities.

The message this book would bear to all its readers is one of hope—hope based on the conviction that the power to pray is man's inalienable heritage; and that, if lost, it can be regained; if hitherto weak and ineffective, it may be trained and strengthened. It is never too late to redeem the lost years of discouraged inaction, nor to begin to pray with life and lip. Defeat and disappointment are not final. Very often they but prove to us that "we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better." Made wise by past experience we learn to adjust ourselves anew to adverse circumstances; to develop new resources wherewith to meet our difficulties; to acquire patience, perseverance, courage, which will surmount obstacles that once proved too great. Thus the soul awakened to value its privilege of prayer may press on and rise to heights of power and command that more than realise its earlier aspirations.

Because the experience of a fully energised and effective personality is so rare, we tend to regard it as the privilege of the few. This is not the Divine intention. Like those best gifts of the material world—air, fire, water—it is free to all. Every man has been ordained a King and Priest, and, in his own sphere—be it small or great—he is fitted to fulfil this destiny. He may become a force to be reckoned with if he will — a conquering force — challenging adverse

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circumstances and changing the face of the world in which he moves; bringing to pass therein the good he designs, destroying the evil he hates. By the mighty force of that prayer which is both action and supplication, he is called to overthrow strongholds, to stem the current of sin and suffering, to engage in conflict with personalities and powers—to fight and to prevail.

“A man must contend to the utmost for his life’s set prize.” Next to love the highest prize in every life is power—power to initiate, command, control, execute; power to do the appointed task which it alone can. This is prevailing prayer, and the goal towards which humanity is moving! The World waits for the manifestation of the Sons of God. Personality has yet to vindicate its sovereignty over the forces that resist and oppose it. The time will come when in ever-increasing numbers men will learn how to press through to victory; when embracing the highest and holiest ideals, they will have power to stretch forth unfaltering hands and grasp the good they covet and draw it to themselves. God and His Universe are working to this end and will not rest until prevailing prayer becomes the increasing energy of human life.

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