

I EXHORT therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus; Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

ASK, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

1 Tim. ii. 1-6.
Matt. vii. 7-8.

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The dynamic of all-prayer

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST
prayed these words: "Holy
Father, keep through Thine
Own Name those whom Thou hast
given Me, that they may be one, as
We are. While I was with them in
the world, I kept them in Thy name:
those that Thou gavest Me I have
kept, and none of them is lost, but the
son of perdition; that the Scripture
might be fulfilled."

* * *

"NEITHER pray I for these alone,
but for them also which shall believe
on Me through their word; that they
all may be one; as Thou, Father, art
in Me, and I in Thee, that they also
may be one in Us: that the world may
believe that Thou hast sent Me. And
the glory which Thou gavest Me I
have given them; that they may be
One, even as We are One: I in them,
and Thou in Me, that they may be
made perfect in one; and that the
world may know that Thou hast sent
Me, and hast loved them, as Thou
hast loved Me. Father, I will that
they also, whom Thou hast given Me,
be with Me where I am; that they
may behold My glory, which Thou
hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me
before the foundation of the world."

John xvii. 11-12, 20-24.

THE DYNAMIC OF ALL-PRAYER

THE DYNAMIC OF ALL-PRAYER

AN ESSAY IN ANALYSIS BY
G. GRANGER FLEMING

LICENTIATE OF THE ROYAL INSTITUTE
OF BRITISH ARCHITECTS

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
THE REV. ANDREW MURRAY, D.D.

AUTHOR OF

"THE PRAYER-LIFE," "THE SECRET OF INTERCESSION"
"WITH CHRIST IN THE SCHOOL OF PRAYER," ETC.



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TO THE MEMORY OF MY GRANDFATHER
JOHN FLEMING

FOR MANY YEARS SECRETARY OF THE
GLASGOW YOUNG MEN'S SOCIETY
FOR RELIGIOUS IMPROVEMENT
IN THE DIRECT INHERITANCE OF WHOSE
PRAYERS I AND MINE HAVE THE BLESSED-
NESS TO BE.

INTRODUCTION

I HAVE been requested by the author of this book to write and express my opinion of its value. I have very great pleasure indeed in doing so. I believe that it has been given him of God so to state the case for Prayer as will open the eyes of many to a new vision of its place and power in God's great scheme of redemption. The honour to which God calls us as intercessors is simply inconceivable. All heaven is waiting for the prayers of His Church to bring down the blessings that are stored up there for us, and that God is longing to bestow.

If ministers and Christians could but be brought to realize that God has actually made the coming of His Kingdom and the pouring down of blessing, so that there shall not be room to receive it, dependent on our faithfulness in prayer, they surely would begin to feel that Prayer is, in very deed, the highest expression of our allegiance to God and the chief power that we can exercise in bringing Christ's salvation to men. If people can only be got to read and

think out carefully the message this book contains, I feel confident it will lead many a one, not only to acknowledge that he has a new insight into what Prayer is, but deliberately to yield himself to Christ as one of His holy priesthood through whom the blessings of God's grace are to be dispensed to the world.

I fervently pray that God may abundantly bless the perusal to His Children, and bring many of them to feel that for the first time in their lives, they have entered upon their high calling as links between the throne of God and the souls of men.

ANDREW MURRAY

Wellington

15th July, 1914

FOREWORD

THE conception of Prayer has generally been that it is an extraordinary power or agent. The growing conception of to-day is that it is one of the ordinary forces.

This is not to belittle it. Rather is it to give it place beside those mighty forces and agents which are fundamental and elemental. Prayer is an integral part of the cosmos. It is the spiritual "token of exchange," whereby the commodities of the unseen are brought into the possession of Man, who lives both in the unseen and the seen.

To-day the world is short of Prayer. Heaven cannot empty itself because there does not exist sufficient of this "medium of exchange." We wish Heaven's blessings, and so we must learn more about Prayer and about its practice.

The compelling motive of the writing of this book has been that I might get to know more fully the inner working life, and philosophy of this force of

Prayer, and that others also might share with me in any new light received.

May the Holy Spirit whose aid in the preparation has been sought and obtained, use it to the glory of God, and to the service of Church and People! Amen.

G. GRANGER FLEMING

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INTRODUCTION

BACK TO THE TRENCHES

WHEN the Duke of Wellington was confronted by the mighty army of France, under Massena, he cautiously withdrew his forces. Back and back, and yet farther back, until at last he had retired to the lines of Torres Vedras, where he made his stand. No farther back now, for the position was practically impregnable. So thought the French General also, for he soon began to withdraw, and then was Wellington's time to advance, which he did to such good purpose that France soon had to evacuate the territories.

A similar thing has occurred in recent times. In the Balkan War the Turkish army, broken at Lule Burgas and kept on the move, took refuge at last in the lines of Chatalja. To those trenches they probably owed the fact that Constantinople was not then captured and that they were in some measure able to retrieve their position.

There is an analogous position in the religious world. In 1910 we had a world-wide Missionary Conference. This was held with the purpose of an advance on all the enemies' outposts. There was great enthusiasm and an evidence of splendid organization. One great note of weakness was, however, struck. The Churches were prepared to invade the world, but it was found that they were incapable of holding their own in their present centres in proportion to the increase of population. Everywhere is the sense of need felt. How shall it be met?

We must get back to the trenches! Back to where we are sure. Back to the Word of God, back to Prayer, back to cultivation of the inner life. The Christian in his trench need fear no foe. Given to Prayer and meditation, he is more than equal to all that can come upon him.

What is wanted to-day is more intensity, more reality, more of the hidden work of grace. If we get right with God we shall soon be right with men. If we become men of the Word and of Prayer, we shall soon prove our worth in the field of action and practical service.

THE DESIRE FOR PRAYER

I

THE DESIRE FOR PRAYER

THERE is that in me which draws me towards Prayer. Moreover, the hopes excited are such as to press its claims. There is such a rich promise of a harvest. The uttering of a prayer, the attainment of some important result—if this be the connection then surely I desire to pray.

On the surface it seems such a simple matter. Instead of having to toil and wrestle, it is supposed that we need simply ask and as certainly receive.

Now it is because of this seeming simplicity that the average mind does not feel reconciled to the idea of Prayer. There appears to be something foreign about it, something which does not fit in with our ideas of common laws, such as those of cause and effect. Because it offers, or seems to offer, a way out of difficulties which appear to be too easy we are apt to discount its operations, and to regard it as mainly a theoretical proposition.

Aye, pray and pray, say the public, but after all

you will have to get down to hard work. You may maintain that you can remove mountains by Prayer, but we find, say they, that we get best results from the use of dynamite.

All agree that there are difficulties to be met and conquered. The mountains are no doubt there. The evidence of their existence is too palpable. But can Prayer remove them, or is dynamite required? And if dynamite, is there any place for Prayer at all? Is the explosive and operative agent to be a blend of dynamite and Prayer, or is the latter sufficient in itself to do the work?

The mountains are certainly there. Mankind is always confronted by difficulties. The spiritual man, like the natural, is matched against foes. They are of no mean order. They tower above and threaten to crush him. The armies of Israel have many a Goliath to make them afraid. The simple, strong soul of the shepherd-lad David is not the possession of either Saul or his soldiers.

If, however, these mountains of difficulty can be demolished by Prayer, I desire to pray. If these foes, who are too mighty for me, can be overcome for the asking, then will I ask.

Yes, I desire to pray, and the more I realize the need the more do I desire. For the need is great. There is an awakening in knowledge and general interest among the people, but there is no corresponding awakening to God and His claims. The cry amongst the spiritual of all lands is for rain. They recognize the drought. They sigh because the heavens appear to be as brass. A sadness comes over them as they perceive men neglecting God and thousands deliberately turning from Him.

There is divergence of views as to the cause, but there is general agreement as to the fact of this increasing godlessness of men. The churches are crying out about it. Some of the most able men are giving up the work in despair. Many churches are held together by custom, or a sense of duty or respectability. The stream of Divine Life, energy, and joy is not coursing through our congregations.

Truly the need is so great that if prayer of mine will alter it, I must pray. More, I will pray, if I know how.

I desire to pray, and I am not alone. Thousands are like myself. They also recognize the need and desire the blessing.

It is because of its great potentiality that Prayer is worthy of study. It is because it offers the great solution to all difficulties that it is worth our while to inquire diligently into its nature, in confidence that the Spirit Himself will direct us.

THE FINAL INCENTIVE

II

THE FINAL INCENTIVE

THERE is a stronger incentive to Prayer than our personal desires. My apprehension of the need of men is not the deciding factor. It is not that the fact I or my fellow-Christians realize the state of the Churches which makes Prayer so imperative. It is something more than this.

Our general idea in this connection is that, to become earnest in Prayer, we must more and more realize the need. Then, when the need has grown on our minds and hearts till it seems greater than anything else in the world, we shall have to take refuge in Prayer. The measure of our apprehension will become the measure of our efficiency in Prayer.

This, however, is not the strongest incentive to Prayer. There is a stronger force than our apprehension of the need.

Let us be very still as we think upon it. Not our apprehension of the need. Not our realization of

the unspirituality of our churches. Not our sorrow because of the little headway made. No, though it is good for us to realize all this, yet it is comparatively little.

Our apprehension, our realization, our sorrow are nothing compared to those of the Lord Christ.

Ah! He apprehends the need, He realizes the falling away, He grieves over the backsliding, in a way that we can never do.

This is what constitutes the call to Prayer. He knows, and He asks me to pray. He realizes, and He importunes me to pray. He apprehends, and He commands me to intercede. It is not my poor apprehension, not my awakening sense of the great need; but His, the experienced, all-seeing, all-loving apprehension, with His Comprehending knowledge, which is a call to Prayer.

Why He should call me to pray, I may not know. How it can do any good, I may not realize, but there is one thing I do know. He wants me to pray.

Thus it is not now so much that I want to pray. Not so much, dear reader, that you and I desire to pray. There is this stronger incentive—Jesus who knows all, Jesus the Lover, Jesus the great Field-

Marshal viewing the great World battle-field, He wants us to pray. Do you not feel the drawing power of that thought? The desire to pray becomes a mighty one when we discover that it is the Lord Jesus Christ who wishes us and who depends on us to do it.

In the great economy of salvation the Master has appointed a place for Prayer. He knows that it is required. He says that it is effective. He calls for it, because in His eyes it is an essential part of the great plan. Surely, if He wishes it and wishes it so much that He commands it, we shall earnestly desire to carry out His command. The sceptic may sneer, and the materialist may deny the power of Prayer, but our trust is in the wisdom and power of Him who taught: "Ask, and ye shall receive."

In Prayer, as in every other department of life's operations, our refuge is in the Lord—not in our own views, not in our own apprehension, but in His as expressed in His teaching, and given to us with the Divine authority, as in the following passages of Scripture.

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For he

that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matt. vii. 7, 8).

"What man is there among you, if his son ask a fish, will he give him a serpent, or if he ask bread, will he give him a stone? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him" (Matt. vii. 9-11).

"This parable (the Unjust Judge) He spake unto them, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke xviii. 1-8).

"Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Matt. vi. 6).

"Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it" (John xiv. 13, 14).

Does the Saviour thus counsel and command me to pray? Ah, surely then the yearning for prayer becomes more powerful. Truly the desire increases.

Without fail we must learn the art of praying. And if He not only commands it, but earnestly desires it, certain are we that there must be some solution of the problem, and that if we too desire it we shall be enabled to obey His command and to satisfy such desires.

THE FUNCTIONAL CHARACTER OF PRAYER

III

THE FUNCTIONAL CHARACTER OF PRAYER

A CHILD is lying in bed asleep. His mother arranges his pillow. He wakes up. Slowly he blinks his eyes, takes in the situation, sees that it is his mother, and immediately exclaims: "Mother, I want something to eat." That expression of want, so natural to a growing lad, is founded upon the very constitution of the boy. Were there not that imperative desire for food, he would not be a healthy growing boy.

Similarly, when the children come saying: "I want a drink"; or "I am sleepy, I want to go to bed," we know that the need is an inherent one. The expression of the want has behind it the want itself, and the want or desire for food, or drink, or sleep, depends on the needs of the body. First the body's needs, then the expression of those functionally in the craving for food or drink or rest; and then the

expression of the functional craving in words. That is the physical process, and the spiritual is analogous to it.

Prayer is the expression of a deep craving created by a certain state of soul.

To endeavour to create Prayer without having the craving, and without the spirit being in unison, is like endeavouring to get a sick child to ask for food. Get the child healthy, and there will soon be the inward demand, followed very quickly by the outward expression. Getting the child healthy is the best way to obtaining the vocal request.

The asking for food is Prayer. "Unless ye become as little children," Christ said, "ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xviii. 3). The child's request is because the want of certain definite things is felt. There is something urgently needed, or at least the child thinks so, and the request is based on this. Prayer must be founded on the realization of need.

Thus Prayer is functional. Just as a child, when hungry, calls for food, so the Christian feels spiritually hungry and voices his request. The child does not need to create his hunger. It is natural. It tells

him in no uncertain way that there is a want, and urges this upon him till he finds expression in words. It does not end in words, as mothers well know. The hunger continues and the requests become more urgent, until food is given, and the need is satisfied.

It is well to take the child as our illustration. The case of the adult in some ways complies with the truths set forth. In many cases his body is, however, so vitiated, and in such an unnatural condition that hunger is not felt when the body really requires sustenance, and at other times a false craving is experienced. The expression of the need in this case follows on a sensation of want which is, as a matter of fact, not in true relation to the needs of the body.

Spiritual Prayer is often in a similar plight. There is a desire and there is expression, but the state of the spirit is unhealthy. Prayer is not in the true succession. It is uttered, but the whole being is not in it, and there is evident lack of power.

Again, there is always the need of soul, but oft-times there is not the corresponding realization or craving; and therefore Prayer is either not uttered at all, or else it is expressed in lifeless tones. We have to realize that our outward prayers are only

secondary matters. Closer, more at the heart of things, is the craving, the desire. Closer, nearer still, is the state of our spirit.

Prayer is thus a deeper thing than we had thought. We find difficulty in praying. It is not merely the outward act which is defective. We lack the desire, the craving. This we lack, because we ourselves are not right. Our lack of ability to pray, and our lack of power in Prayer, come from something deeper and more personal than the mere outward difficulty. We cannot pray for others, because we ourselves are imperfect. There is something lacking or something wrong.

Reader, are you willing to admit this?

Do you realize that this seeming outward deficiency is deeper than you had thought; that it is functional, has something to do with your innermost state of soul? Do you and I admit this? Then shall we together quietly face the issue, and be willing to be led by the Spirit of God?

One realizes that Prayer must be linked with this deep innermost state of being when one reads the Apostle's injunction: "Pray without ceasing" (I Thess. v. 17); or when the Master's exhortation

to "pray always and never faint" (Luke xviii. 1) is remembered. If ever we are going to be like Brother Lawrence, who "practised the presence of God," there must be a deep consciousness of God in our hearts. "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you," said Christ, "ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John xv. 7). And if we do not abide, then it shall not be done.

Prayer is never going to be right outwardly until we are right inwardly. If the tree be good, the fruit will be good also (Matt. xii. 33).

It is better to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of men (2 Sam. xxiv. 14); but the Lord's work is a very thorough one, and we never know how far His operations will extend. If He is going to make us good "Petitioners," it is evident that in the process He will have to do a great deal to us in addition.

God grant that we may not turn back or fail during the process!

STAYING AND WAITING

IV

STAYING AND WAITING

THE spirit of the present age is one of publicity. If a man is eminent in knowledge, he is not regarded as having "come into his own" unless he is recognized by the world at large as a savant. If a man is an earnest Christian, it does not count unless his earnestness is a well-known fact.

To many, life is nothing unless it is lived in view of their fellow-men. There is a fever in the human blood in this age which manifests itself in all manner of ways. The Church of Christ is affected by it.

When the lapsing from the Churches is considered, and the little headway that spiritual forces are apparently making against the world is duly taken into account, some have a ready way out of it. We must work more earnestly. Our efforts must be doubled. With an increased output of energy, it is fully expected that all the difficulties will be overcome.

An illustration of this is furnished in the advice which a well-known minister gave a young man. This young fellow had been attending certain meetings and conferences of Christian workers at which the minister in question, who was on tour, had taken a prominent part. The youth desired to obtain a motto for his album, and asked the minister for it. Looking him up and down, the minister asked: "Is it for yourself that you want it?" He replied that it was, and expected to be given some Scriptural text as a life motto. What was his surprise when the reverend gentleman said: "Get out and push."

Whether the minister read this young man's character correctly or not, it is true that this is the advice which is largely given to our youth of to-day. Books with titles such as "Tact, Push, and Principle" indicate the trend of things. "Yes, he will make things hum, he is a fellow with a tremendous amount of 'go' in him." Such is the remark passed on a Christian worker or on a young minister. The vision arises of a church or a mission going at full speed, and success seems ready to hand.

Now, there is something in prayer which seems to be contrary to this. When a man begins to retire

within himself, and to hold converse with God, push and vim seem to lose their dazzling qualities. They often then appear as so much energy of the flesh, with a corresponding diminution of spiritual power.

Yet it would be erroneous to accept the idea that much prayer will lead to little work. It would be contrary to the experience of Christian history. Possibly the man who holds the ideal position in the public mind as a great supplicant with God is George Müller of Bristol. His praying was to purpose, and the orphans whom he was the means of assisting were evidences of the practical potency of his petitions. There are many others, well-known workers, who are recognized as men of Prayer. Therefore, to get into the spirit of Prayer is not to run the danger of dropping out of work. He who is in company with a worker like Edison cannot lounge away his time. If the chief works for twenty-four hours at a stretch, those associated with him naturally follow suit in so far as it is possible. Work becomes the natural order of things.

“My Father worketh hitherto, and I work,” said the Lord Jesus (John v. 17). He who enters into fellowship with the Lord comes into the sphere of

influence of the Great Worker. "I must work the works of Him that sent Me . . . the night cometh when no man can work" (John ix. 4). He was straitened till His work was accomplished (Luke xii. 50).

"The labourers are few," He said, "pray that the Lord of the harvest will thrust forth labourers" (Matt. ix. 37, 38; Luke x. 2). These are the words of One to whom work was a great passion, an imperative call. But His work was entirely dependent on His Father's will. "I must work the works of Him that sent Me" (John ix. 4). "I came not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (John vi. 38).

Understanding of the will of God preceded the work—not only understanding and love, but complete surrender to it. Thus it is seen that understanding, love, and surrender were all matters which originated in quiet. Meditation on, apprehension of, rejoicing in, and joyful acceptance of God's will, prepared the man Christ Jesus for its fulfilment, when such was called for.

Then there also came in the question of immediate obedience. What was heard in the quiet was acted

upon in the expressed life. To him who hears, ready, immediate, and obedient action is doubly necessary. Therefore it is not work that is to be deprecated, but rather work which springs from a wrong or defective source.

The modern system of Christian work is largely marked by this defect. The putting forth of energy, attendance at meetings, the multiplication of agencies, the performance of duties—often at great personal sacrifice—this is the trend of much of our Christian life just now. It is inspiring to witness much of it. Yet it is pathetic. For much of it is waste. A large proportion of it is of human origin, and has results of a correspondingly low degree.

What we have to learn is to get started on God's way, and to be willing not to start at all rather than to go on our own way and not His. Not: "Get out and Push;" but: "Stay and Wait."

Come to rest. Realize God. Realize Him as operative in our own soul. Realize Him as Master there. Realize and yield to Him in the sphere of our hearts and in the operations of our lives. This must be the starting point. A realization of ourselves, and a realization of Him first in regard to ourselves and

then in a fuller and more final sense in regard to our fellow-beings.

This means becoming quiet, coming to rest. This means the open heart, the impressionable soul, the teachableness of the child. It includes the absolute surrender of mind, heart, and spirit, aye, and of body too.

Prayer then comes to us in a fuller way. It is no longer the spasmodic casual creature of the public imagination. It is to be a man as one nearest and dearest, one who ever abides with him. There is the need of the constant state of Prayer, of the continual waiting, of the habit of subordination of will, and of constant readiness to perceive and to perform the Will of God.

Is Prayer this, O Lord? Then how far am I—how far are we—from this blessed state? Lord, we humbly ask of Thee: Teach us to pray.

PRAYER: A WORLD FACTOR

V

PRAYER: A WORLD FACTOR

THE constitutions of different minds vary. Hence the difficulty of one is different from that of another. A difficulty which does not trouble me may be the chief source of perplexity to many. Such a difficulty is that put forward by some critics, to the effect that Prayer is an intrusion.

Here we have a world, they say, which runs on under certain laws; a great wheel which goes on turning, and which does not stop or go faster because any such volatile things as ideas or questions, or requests are put forth. Because, they ask, some ragged urchin in a back room asks God to send a fine day for the picnic, as mother and the other children are going out for their annual holiday, is it likely that the clouds will disappear? Or can there be any potency in Prayer for rain, even though that cry comes from the hearts and voices of thousands

of farmers whose stock is dying? What influence has Prayer on the matter at all?

This difficulty largely has to do with the idea of dislocation. The popular mind dislikes the thought of something else coming in to upset the ordinary course of affairs. The fact is Science has recently so shaken our belief in the things termed material and visible, and so stirred our imagination in regard to the presence and potency of unseen forces, that it is now easy to believe that Prayer is at least as effective a force as Steam or Wind or Water. It can now be scientifically held as one of the world's great dynamics, and can rightly claim the recognition usually granted to be a cosmic force.

Prayer to-day is coming to be regarded as an integral part of the world, without which probably neither would the sun continue to give us its light and heat, nor the rain descend in fructifying blessing. If this becomes the accepted position, the critic will feel that he cannot so readily speak of dislocation, for at the most it will be only a giving of larger play to a force already in operation. If energy be found in some hidden way to depend upon Prayer, then the entrance of Prayer also into the

visible manifestation is not so strange a thing after all.

The difficulty is, therefore, not in Prayer itself. It is in our ignorance of its character and possible scope. There is nothing so outstanding in this age as the way in which we are gradually uncovering secrets of Nature which were unknown to our forefathers. We are beginning to understand not the forces themselves, but their applicability to our needs.

A force such as Electricity has been within the ken of human knowledge for many years. It is only within recent times that we have been gaining mastery over it, and turning its energy to all kinds of service. Similarly, we are bringing department after department of Nature under our control. We used to speak of it being as difficult to do a certain thing as to fly. Now this expression is losing its force, for men are rivalling the birds in their mastery over the air. Many of the forces and elements that our fathers knew of and handled in primitive ways are becoming more practically known, and are disclosing their hidden potentialities.

Surely this development in knowledge must not

be confined to things material. Spiritual dynamics are surely also worthy of being better understood. And prayer is a dynamic containing possibilities which neither our fathers nor we have grasped.

We can be sure of this. If God has commanded us to pray, there is a mighty reason for it. He knows the composition of the universe and the balance of things. He knows our precise place in the great economy. Therefore, with quiet hearts we can go on our way. Our assurance is that it will all appear most reasonable and proper when we know more fully. The man who prays will be found to be the man who is generative and operative when others are nonresultant.

PRAYER: A PROCESS

VI

PRAYER: A PROCESS

IF it be quietly considered, it is reasonable to assume that between thought and action there should be expression. An idea comes to a man, a thought, a strange intangible entity, called an idea. How different from it is the resultant. The idea has clothed itself. It has taken the form of a great building, or a mighty ship, or whirring machinery. That idea may result in the employment of thousands of men over many years. It may change the face of the world. Between the idea and its concrete embodiment came the expression of it, the disclosure to others, the discussions, the elaborations, the plans. All the intermediaries had to come in before the idea could reach visibility and potential operation.

This relation runs through life. First the idea, then the expression, after which the embodiment or materialization. Now, Prayer is the expression midway between the thought and the realization.

Prayer is Man finding his voice. We read that when God instituted the present order of the world, He spokε. First of all the Spirit of God (Gen. i.) moved upon the face of the waters. Then came the voice of God: "Let there be light; Let there 'be a firmament"; and so on. First the brooding on the waters, first the vision of the world; then the expression, and then—"it was so"—the embodiment of the vision.

"Whom shall I send?" said God in the eternities. "Here am I, send Me," said the Son. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John i. 14, R.V.). The salvation of Man, the great Idea in the Eternal Mind; Jesus Christ the Word, the Expression of that Idea—God finding voice; and then the great Salvation embodied in the redemption of mankind.

The Idea, the Voice, the Realization.

The voice of God has to be heard to-day. It is not only that man must have the great idea, and must find expression for it through prayer ere the great realization can be effected. There is more in it than that. God too must have a voice. He too must be able to express Himself—not only in the

Heavenlies, but also on the earth. Let us grasp this.

The thought is tremendous. My friend, when you and I feel drawn to Prayer, it is God desirous of pouring forth His heart: the great depths of the thoughts of God—of His desires—seeking to find expression through such imperfect channels as you and me.

“We know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered; and He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Rom. viii. 26, 27, R.V.).

It is all to be according to the Will of God. Prayer in the Spirit is according to God’s will. Therefore it means that man at his highest is always expressly subordinate to God. This may seem a truism, but there is something vital in it. It contains a very deep philosophy, and on this account alone Prayer stands justified as an operative factor in practical affairs.

It must surely be admitted that man is placed in a position of immense power if this promise is

true. "Ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Is this really what Christ means? Does He actually put such a power into our hands? Why, this is to raise us to be the monarchs of all things! It places illimitable power in our hands.

We come to our highest point of power here. If we consider this, the beauty of the "arrangement" will come home to us. For just there, where we are crowned, and the power illimitable is put into our hands, just there, we find that it is all to be "according to the Will of God." We are made Kings, but we find the Great Emperor over us. And just where we are at our highest, there He comes, and He and we have to hold communion and be at one.

Prayer is often considered to be the expression of weakness. It is really the wielding of power and authority. And it is when we are at the height of our glory that we have to be most humble and bring everything into subjection to His will. This is true even in regard to the Son Himself. "He hath put all things under His feet. But when He saith all things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted which did put all things under

Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. xv. 27, 28).

Surely, there is a glory in this. We are made Kings and Priests unto God. We reign at the mercy-seat, but it is at the foot of the steps. Our exaltation and our dependence are emphasized in the one act.

KINGS AND PRIESTS

VII

KINGS AND PRIESTS

“**Y**E shall ask what ye will,” said Christ, “and it shall be done unto you.” “What you will.” Thus the will of man comes in as well as the will of God. Prayer has not only to be according to the will of God. Being the expression of man’s wishes, it is of necessity according to the will of man also. “In everything, by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known unto God”—your requests, that is the outward expression of the inner motions of the will.

The first impression of the effect of Prayer on those who engage in it is that of weakness. We are to pray, to request, to get low, to become humble in order to obtain. “Prayer and supplication.” We are to supplicate and entreat, to lay our hopes and fears, our aspirations, and our ambitions before Him. We are in the position of pleaders—not coming demanding as a right, but pleading as a favour.

Thus Prayer seems to have an unmanning effect. It creates a dependent spirit. It casts us upon the grace of Another. Even though this other is the Highest, yet it still holds true that we are declared dependent.

The softer characteristics are developed. There is a danger that what are called the more robust characteristics will wither. But this is not God's purpose. He says: "What ye will." Not only what you wish, what you desire, but what you will. This sounds strong, healthy, manly. Instead of God wishing to decrease our responsibility, He wishes to increase it. Instead of taking initiative and action out of our hands, He wishes to confide them to us altogether. He desires that we draw up the programme and settle the details. He wishes us to have a free hand. The programme has, however, to be drawn up within certain limits, and those limits are according to the will of God."

Now the usual acceptance of this is that each little detail of request has to have the special sanction of God. If He purposes and wishes that detail in that particular way, well and good, the request shall be granted. This is true evermore and altogether.

The Lord must have the final say in particular, as well as in general. But there is a sense in which He leaves the particular to us, as long as the general scope is within the lines of His will.

If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us; and "if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him." There is such a thing as coming into such sweet relation to the will of God that we are fused into oneness with it. His will becomes ours, and He gladly sets us free to carry out our own wishes—they really being His first and then ours.

The Lord's great purpose is to make us perfect men, Kings to reign, to judge, and to conquer. He has no purpose of reducing us to automata. Rather does He wish to raise us up as His children and His representatives, to act for Him and to be the embodiment of His purpose.

He wishes us to be responsible. We are to deliberate. We are to come to decision. We are to arrive at conclusions, to decide on a programme, to take the initiative, to press steadily forward. We are not to be straws on the current, tossed to and

fro. We are to be men of purpose and high resolution. We are to be men of will. We are to be verily Kings and Priests—to rule, to direct, to sit on the thrones of Israel.

An attitude is frequently assumed which is distasteful. It is said that because God has promised, therefore we have a right to expect, and consequently we shall demand. The idea may be right, but the way of putting it is crude. There must ever be the meek and humble spirit in our approach to God. The adoption of this humble spirit will enable the Spirit of God to draw near to us, and to work in us a quiet, entire confidence.

His aims and purposes will find a ready lodgment in our hearts. They will be like seed falling into good ground. We shall find springing up in our hearts wishes after His model, we shall think His thoughts after Him, and we shall have longings such as surge through the heart of Christ Himself. These wishes and longings will have the hall-mark of His heart on them. We shall know them to be from Him, and thus we shall be quietly confident when we pray.

We shall have the hearings of Kings. Not as sup-

pliants only, but as those who know they have obtained mercy, and as Priests to whom God has committed the gracious work of dispensing mercy to others. Kings and Priests. Dispensers of the grace of God. Clasp to our hearts the mighty beams of beneficence which proceed from the throne, that we may radiate them to others. Truly Prayer is a right royal thing, not a matter of dust and ashes. Truly we are never higher than when we bow lowest at the Throne of Grace, and obtain grace, not only for ourselves, but for others also, to help in time of need.

The Christian needs to realize his lofty position. There is too little power in Prayer, because what God has entrusted to us is not understood. If we listen and weigh the words of Jesus, we shall understand that He has committed to us a great trust and a mighty opportunity.

“Greater works,” He said in His last great talk to the Apostles, “than these shall ye do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in My name I will do it” (John xiv. 12-14). “If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye

will, and it shall be done unto you. . . . I have ordained you . . . that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye ask of the Father in My name He may give it you" (Chap. xv. 7, 16). "In that day ye shall ask Me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you" (Chap. xvi. 23).

As we read these, and similar passages, we become aware that a mighty power has been put into our hands. With that power comes responsibility. To us Christ has entrusted the power of regulating the affairs of His Church and of the world in general. We are as Kings upon thrones. According to the programme that we lay down, and the decisions we come to, so God regulates the affairs of men. Getting into the line of His great will, we come to the centre of all power, and He places the levers in our hands. This is a burden too great for us. It needs superhuman strength. And He is our strength and our wisdom and our all-sufficiency. May we be able to ascend humbly to our throne, and be verily Kings and Priests in the obtaining and dispensing of blessing.

FINDING EXPRESSION

VIII

FINDING EXPRESSION

MANY men go through life, and do not "tell." They live their little life, they pass away. What they really are seems to be hidden. Not that a man's essential being can remain silent. There is that within us which struggles for utterance. In some inarticulate manner, we find expression. In some way, what we are influences the world in which we move. Yet in a comparative sense some men "tell" and others do not.

Many a man feels that what he is essentially has never had a chance of appearing. As to what he is potentially, what he might have become had circumstances been favourable, he turns from this in despair. He compares his attainment in life with the dreams of youth. He realizes that a stunted growth, a checked development, and a muffled expression are all that are his.

Now expression is necessary to growth. The

healthy tree must express itself in leaves and fruit, if it is to find its full life. The man of ideas must be able to put his thoughts into shape, and achieve some practical end, if he is to go on thinking thoughts and dreaming dreams. The man with unique individuality must express such if he is to retain the factor which differentiates him from other men.

This is just to say that everyone must find expression if what each counts for is to survive. The definite expression of individuality is a necessity, if the influence which one has to exert is to be felt. Therefore he who will devise a method whereby mankind at large can secure expression of thought and mind will be one of the world's greatest benefactors. He who can help the common man in the street to utter what is in him is offering to humanity a wonderful opportunity.

As usual the very thing which humanity needs has been provided by God. He knows our frame, He understands our deepest needs, He has arranged that each one can find expression. For what is Prayer? It is the opportunity to express oneself. To utter all that is in one. The very essential and most characteristic individuality that each possesses can be

brought into evidence—can find utterance. The hidden life, that which our own eyes can hardly see or decipher, can be uttered and laid bare.

That which I am, wherein I differ from those around me, from the world in general, that has an opportunity of being told out in a sphere whose reactive influence on me must be of the highest and best. Expression to our fellow-men, which has a unique place of its own, has not the possibilities which expression has when our Auditor is God.

When the tree expresses itself in leaves, it comes in touch with the life-giving atmosphere which nourishes and revives it. The great essential is that the environment should be adapted and should contain within it those factors which will nourish life and encourage growth. It is of the utmost importance that the environment in either a physical, mental, or spiritual sense should be one which ensures health and development.

In Prayer the environment which responds to the outgoing soul is God. Now God is the Highest Good. Therefore in Prayer the soul comes in contact with the Highest Good. The soul is exposed to Him, and He touches it at every point of life

and activity. Hence His moulding, modifying, creating power is felt. The greater the exposure, the more subtle the influence, and the more thorough the searching and impressive work.

Expression on man's part means impression by God. Impression by God means new energies, new currents of activities, new desires. These again demand expression. This leads to more prayer, more exposure, more opportunity to be impressed by God. Not only so, but when the soul is impressed by God it must find expression in an outward sense. Impressed by God, expressed to man. This is the natural spiritual order, although the common effort is to express to men first of all. Having expressed ourselves to God, having been impressed by Him, then we can express ourselves to our fellow-men.

First, expression to God.

Then, impression by God.

Next, expression to our fellow-men.

The sequence does not stop there. The next step is impression on our fellow-men.

This is what our preachers and teachers crave—the power to impress. This power is only truly given after having been impressed oneself. This im-

pression depends on our expression in the ears of God.

Prayer is our expression of our thoughts to God. Preaching is our expression of our thoughts to men. But not only expression of thought. It is more far-reaching than that. It is the expression of ourselves. In Prayer we express ourselves, in a full detailed fashion. In preaching we utter to our fellow-men what our innermost self is.

True preaching is ever the giving away of oneself. True preaching then is dependent on true praying. For the self that is given out in the act of preaching the Word is a self that must have previously been given out in the act of Prayer to God. Expression and impression are thus seen to be the two great factors. And the impressions are reflex. For not only does God impress Himself on us. He calls us to Prayer that we may impress ourselves on Him.

In the abstract this seems a strange doctrine to accept. Yet this is really the essence of Prayer. "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you," said Christ. That is clearly saying that the Father will regulate His action by our Prayer. That is to say that our expression of

our desires and of our innermost self has made such impression on Divine Benevolence and Will that His actions are regulated thereby.

The old adage that "Prayer moves the Hand that moves the world" is true. We impress ourselves upon God. He is the All-Good, the All-Perfect. Yet we can impress ourselves upon Him. Surely we are brought here into the range of a thought of mighty import. Not only are we Kings and Priests in regard to men. We are taken into the counsels of the Eternal, and the omniscient and All-Powerful Mind, which controls all, bends to hear our supplications.

The subject is fascinating, but it is one where the shoes have to be removed and the head bowed. The gracious condescension whereby He invites our prayers and the expression of our will must never be held lightly in esteem. Neither, however, is it honouring to Him to ignore it. Prayer gives us access to the eternal counsels, and makes us participators in the eternal decrees.

There is also a reflex impression made upon ourselves by our fellow-men. The outgoing of a man's thought, of his innermost self, has a reaction on him-

self. What his thought, his self, meets outside, has influence on himself. If this is within the sphere of Prayer, it is good; if it is not encircled by the defence of Prayer, it is dangerous. The relation of the outer world to the inner spirit must be decided in the great Court of Prayer.

TRANSMUTATION OF THE VISIBLE

IX

THE TRANSMUTATION OF THE VISIBLE

THERE is a double action in Prayer. Through it the invisible becomes seen. "As seeing Him who is invisible" (Heb. xi. 27). Through it also the visible is taken into the inner region, the sphere of the invisible. "That which is seen is temporal, that which is unseen is eternal" (2 Cor. iv. 18). The factor which takes the seen, and brings it within the inner sanctuary, is an elevating force.

Prayer takes the visible and tangible into the region of the invisible and intangible. He who prays takes these there as a King and Priest of God. In so taking them he enters into dominion over them, and appropriates what is in them of service. In this way the material can become spiritualized. As a man I touch the material, and it has influence upon me. But I take it in prayer to God, and my relation to it changes. For there are now three in that audience chamber.

There is God.

There is myself.

There is the person for whom I pray, or the cause I am thinking of, or the idea, or the wish.

The relation of myself to those for whom I pray must forever be modified by the fact that it is not I alone who have to do with them, but God and I together. Their action must be controlled in so far as they have now to deal with One to Whom I am allied. They will not find me the weak, easily-conquered creature that I was before, for coupled to me is the Eternal Strength. They will not find me the foolish being I was before, for now God grants in my aid His Eternal Wisdom. They will not find in me the selfish and egotistical person that I was previously, for my attitude to them is approximated to His, which is one of Love. I shall be sympathetic because He enters into my relation to them. Their influence on me thus becomes a controlled one.

Surely this is what many of us require. The fear of man is upon us. The desire of the praise of men is a constant and over-recurring snare. If we work in the office, if we preach from the pulpit, the constant wish which seeks to make itself felt is that of

being seen of men, and of receiving their approbation. When, however, we bring them before God, they enter into a new relation. The fear of them, the desire for their praise, becomes secondary matters, may become altogether non-existent. In that conclave the One whom we have to consider is God. He, we, and the other are together. God impresses us most, and the other is relegated to his rightful position.

It is evident how our thinking of others will affect our own attitude to them. For they now present themselves to us, consciously or unconsciously, in the presence of God. This is why we have to pray for them that despitefully use us. Not only for their sake, but for our own. Our relation to them becomes the same as God's, who makes the "sun to rise on the evil and the good" (Matt. v. 45).

It is not so easy to see that our thoughts of men will affect them. Thought seems such an intangible thing that its outgoing has practically no limit. Yet thought is one of the most potent entities in our world. Judged by results, thought transcends matter. This mighty thing going out in a certain direction cannot be useless. It is, however, not only

thought, but thought coupled with desire, and with desire expressed. That is to say, your will or mine, as the case may be, in regard to a certain person, idea, or cause, is expressed.

It is not difficult to believe that the expression of will must have direct effect on the object of such expression. Scientists generally agree that this is so. This, however, is only taking it in a human psychological manner. When, as does occur in Prayer, the thought and desire expressed are brought into conjunction with God, Who is All-Power, then a new factor of immeasurable import is introduced. Prayer is seen at once to be a reasonable and sequential matter. To obtain answers to Prayer is seen to be perfectly within the range of human achievement. Not to expect so to obtain answers is seen to be an entirely unreasonable attitude, and one unworthy of true manhood.

Our path of victory over the world and all its dangers and subtleties is therefore made plain. They are to be brought by us, in obedience to the direction of the Holy Spirit, through Christ, to the detailed notice of our Heavenly Father. Our lives are to be uttered in detail in Prayer to Him, before

being manifested to the world. Our relations to men, to the world, to the devil, to the flesh, to success, to ambition, and in fact to all things whether heavenly or earthly, are to be brought by Prayer into subordination to God, to receive His mighty impress and His determinative touch ere yet they have being.

Thus Prayer becomes a living of the outer life in the inner sanctuary. The visible is brought into the sphere and under the influence of the invisible. The praying man is in the line of the great sequences, and to him belong the secrets of the Lord, both in the heavens and the earth.

THE UNVEILING OF THE INVISIBLE

X

THE UNVEILING OF THE INVISIBLE

BY Prayer, as we have seen, the visible is taken into the region of the invisible, the soul of the material is discovered. By Prayer also the invisible is disclosed, that which seemed not to exist is found to be the great reality.

Faith is a much despised thing in some quarters. Even devout souls frequently regard it as being a creature of the emotions. Not "faith," they say, but "reality," is what we must have. We must not simply believe a certain thing, we must know it, and it must be capable of demonstration. Faith, however, is not an operation of the mind whereby things are created. True faith is an apprehension of that which really exists, but which cannot be seen except by those who have this inner sense. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. xi. 1). To the eye of faith, the inner things are as evident as are the material to the physical eyesight.

One of the great objects in Christ's coming was that He might open the eyes of the blind. One of those whom He cured said that he saw men as trees walking. This was only a passing phase, for he soon saw everything with the strong eyes of a youth. The power to see which Christ gave was not a fitful one. Those who received sight saw in a normal fashion. In this there is encouragement. The normal of the Christian is seeing the Lord Jesus, living in the region of the invisible. "We see not all things put under man. . . . We see Jesus" (Heb. ii. 8, 9).

It is not that the invisible has to be created. It is there already. What has to be created is the power to see. Here the same principle applies to other physical powers and visible entities. Prayer not only transmutes the physical, it also deals with the perceptive power. The physical or psychological sense of perception is also brought into the region of the spiritual.

Formerly we dwelt on the objective action of Prayer on material things. Thus when we pray about some one, or some thing, or some idea, we at once bring that within the influence of the inner and spiritual life, and subject it to the forces working

there. But more is done, for in bringing the material there, our own thoughts and minds are brought there also, and thus the influence becomes subjective. The mind, being thus brought into this sphere, has the power of beholding, studying, and apprehending the powers of the inner world.

In this way the invisible becomes real, because the mind and heart have acquired the faculty of apprehension. This is the new birth, the being born from above, the being born of the Spirit, the receiving of the life of Christ into ourselves. For spiritual vision implies spiritual life. There can be no sight in a dead man. Christ in us can not only live, He can perceive, He can know.

“He is made unto us the Wisdom of God” (1 Cor. i. 30).

Our spiritual vision is according to our spiritual life. Many a Christian is unable to see clearly. The things of the Spirit are hazy to him. As he strengthens in the inner man, he begins to live in the region of the invisible, until it is more real to him than the passing things of the material world.

The more life, the more vision.

To get the greater vision we must get a fuller life.

Not by hard study and puzzling of the brain, but by becoming more and more one in Spirit with the Master, does true Knowledge come. Thus it is that God has "hidden the deep things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes" (Matt. xi. 25).

Conversely, it is thus that many men handle deep doctrines, and these turn to withered branches in their hands. What was rich and nourishing, and a channel of blessing, becomes a set formula and an arrangement of ideas. The tendency is ever thus. Life finds an outlet, an expression: it vivifies. Then it is expressed verbally and the form remains while the inner force too often departs.

Life gives the power to see. Life gives the power to pray. For to see the invisible is to live in the Spirit world, and to learn the Spirit ways, and to wield the Spirit forces. This is where we are to come. Into the invisible world. To withdraw from the visible and to be at rest in our true home, the land of the Spirit. True Prayer brings us there. It is the door into Heaven.

Jesus said: "The Son of Man which is in Heaven" (John iii. 13). He knew the entrance, and He walked in bliss there. No wonder that Heaven came

down to Him on the mountain-top. No wonder that the voice of God broke through the visible, and through the audible, and made itself heard. That is where we also must come. Into the invisible. We must become at home there. We must so enjoy it, so be at one with it that when we walk on earth the invisible will be with us, and men will feel the Heavenly atmosphere.

Prayer will thus not only modify the things about which we pray. It will not only be an objective force. It will modify us. It will be subjective. It will bring us into the region of the heavenly. One of its greatest works will be the production in ourselves of the affinity for the spiritual. It will create a new world for us by creating us in correspondence with that new world. What the Christian heart sighs for in its thoughts of heaven, the vision, the joy, the power to see and to serve—to all these Prayer gives the key. Even now, we, like our Master, can be "in heaven," through Prayer.

"Lord, give us the vision, give us the entrance into Thy presence, that we may see Thy face and serve Thee now and evermore. Amen."

THE GODWARD SIDE OF PRAYER

XI

THE GODWARD SIDE OF PRAYER

PRAYER is usually regarded as a very selfish affair. The general principle seems to be, how much can we obtain from God and by what means? There is, however, another aspect. Prayer is something which God wishes. The Lord's words to the Samaritan woman bear on this. "The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him." It is such a rare thing to get a true spiritual worshipper, that the Father seeks for such an one. It is such a rare thing to get men who can enter into the inner chamber and pour out their souls, that God places a premium on such. We therefore come to a further stage in our thoughts on Prayer.

We have seen that we should pray because Christ wants us to, from His knowledge of the need and of the position of affairs. We have seen how our prayers may not be ours, but His through our being

one with Him in His holy desires and aims. There is this more personal note still. The Lord wants us to pray because He loves to hear us, because it makes us conscious of our dependence on Him, because it therefore makes our union with Him a greater reality. Anything which will make His loved ones cling more closely to Him is welcome to His heart. For we are now the lot of His inheritance; He has taken out His shares in the Universe in the great Human Family.

Someone has beautifully said: "God likes to hear His bairns ay asking for bread." The sound of the voice of men uttering their petitions to Him comes with the fragrance of incense before His holy altar. "Another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand" (Rev. viii. 3, 4.) "The four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints"

(Rev. v. 8). The hunger of the Father's heart is satisfied when He finds His offspring turning to Him, and placing simple confidence in His unfailing promises.

Love's chief delight is giving, yet Love is an imperious force. It demands something from the loved ones. Not legally, but under the great law of love. God's great Heart of Love delights in giving. But by this very giving He seeks to bring out the latent qualities of our hearts. How reserved we mostly are! How hidden from our nearest and dearest! This reserve He claims shall be broken down towards Him. There must be no reserve between the human spirit and Himself. Love cannot bear reserve. It must abolish it. How sweetly simple does Prayer again appear to be! Could anything be more effective for breaking down human reserve than the appearing of the unmasked soul in the presence of God? How satisfying to Him that His loved ones should appear before Him in conscious and entire surrender!

A new significance is thus given to Prayer. We do not pray simply because a great need has arisen or some difficulty has suddenly appeared. These

may be the immediate causes of our getting to Prayer. There is a deeper reason for it. We pray because by this we enter God's presence and become one with Him. Because of our unity with Him, He can give us out of His great fulness, laid up for us in Christ Jesus. In giving to us the blessing, He imparts to us Himself and receives from us "ourselves."

Prayer becomes a mystical act. It is no mere asking, and granting, and receiving of material or even spiritual benefits. It is Love giving itself out in answer to love's request, and receiving the returning worship and surrender. Therefore when we come to pray we shall remember that our prayers are pleasing to God; that they are acceptable to Him.

Shall we express the matter in colloquial language?

He would rather that we should pray than that we should not. He would much rather that we should pray. He really wishes us to pray. He has so designed things that we must pray.

So Love is at the root of Prayer, and Love gets its way. Not only does Love wish to grant the gifts, but Love wishes to hear the voice of the loved one

expressing the need. Those voices which were silent in spiritual death are now learning to speak the language of heaven. Love delights to hear the first lisplings and the gradual perfecting of utterance. Love so delights that it urges to further speech and further requests. The Spirit leads the spiritual child on until the voice becomes the voice of a full-grown man in Christ Jesus.

ENLARGEMENT OF GOD'S SPHERE

XII

THE ENLARGEMENT OF GOD'S SPHERE

GOD'S operations are limited by boundaries which He Himself has set. We are accustomed to think of God as the Infinite One, Whose will is supreme, and to Whom none can say nay. This is true in the ultimate. God is supreme, and He is working out His own purposes, not only in spite of men's opposition, but by means of it. How weak and vain all opposition to His will really is, will one day be evident.

It is nevertheless true that just as God has set bounds for the going of the sun, so has He set lines on which His grace shall proceed. He does not ignore life as it is in humanity, but He takes into account the will and the affections and the energy of them as important factors.

He became man in the person of Jesus Christ, His Son, and in so doing He made manifest a great truth which has always had force. This truth is that in

His dealings with men He comes on to the same plane as they, and makes His actions to correspond with their constitutions and their inherent limitations. This, of course, is a great general rule. Wherever a superior force comes into play, it has to find outlet according to the nature and capacity of the medium through which it is manifested. This naturally applies to God's dealings with man. We are not straitened in Him, but in ourselves.

Hence the Infinite God, in His dealings with finite Man, has to limit Himself according to the constitutions and capacity of men. Now the glory of the Christian is that he has received an enlarged capacity, and that he can therefore be a greater and more effective medium for God than he could be in his natural state. This is speaking comparatively, and not dealing with the more comprehensive truth that only they who have been renewed can in a real sense be media at all.

The Christian then removes, or at least reduces, the limitations which are set to the actions of God. It is evident, therefore, that he adds to the opportunities for God's action. That is to say, and it is a wonderful thought, that God is able to do more be-

cause there is a renewed heart and life in a man, or a body of men, than He could otherwise do.

This gives Prayer a new dignity. The humble soul bringing petitions to God lifts that for which or those for whom he prays on to the plane where God can operate. God's desire is to bless, but there are so many hindrances and obstacles that His grace cannot reach the objects of His desire. Then comes Prayer. It realizes the need of blessing for those persons or objects, and it lifts them right up to the floor of Heaven, in front of the Mercy-Seat of God. Now they are in a position to be dealt with. Hitherto they were difficult to get at. Now they are brought within the great benign sphere of influence.

Thus Prayer is found to be not so much a means of bringing God to see as we do, and to act as we desire, but rather the giving of opportunity to the Lord to carry out His great desires and purposes. The Christian can thus very simply and effectively raise that which is low and sordid right into the presence of God, so that the glorious rays from His presence may have direct influence on what is prayed for.

How beautiful it would be if we were thus con-

tinually lifting up our surroundings and those whom we meet. Here is a young man whom we see in the same car as ourselves as we go to business in the morning. We feel interested in him, and lift our hearts in prayer to God about him. We have taken that young man right into the presence of God.

We next encounter those in the office, our clients, those who obtain orders from us, our relatives, our social friends and acquaintances, our minister, our co-workers; each and all we lift into the presence of God, and thus create greater possibilities for them. What a thought that those with whom we come into contact stand in a new and more hopeful relation to God because of our acquaintance with them! Surely to us life will become the richer, and we shall feel in some measure like the apostle, "as poor, yet making many rich" (2 Cor. vi. 10).

The blessing which is sure to follow our action should be sufficient incentive to us. It is, however, a less sweet thought than this, that by so doing we are allowing Jesus Christ to realize more fully His great love towards mankind. We are removing His obstacles. We are making Him more effective.

THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER

XIII

THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER

IT is probable that as soon as the individual begins to realize the value of Prayer, he will encounter difficulties in the exercise of it. Now difficulties in Prayer, as in Life, are more often practical than theoretical. It is the practical difficulty which keeps back thousands from the exercise of the Prayer function.

Custom, or a sense of need, draws one to Prayer. For a little the thoughts flow and free utterance is obtained. Very soon, however, the mind wanders. Something of the earth creeps in, and force is brought to bear to get the mind centred on the petition. This is a constant hindrance to the exercise of Prayer.

The lack of confidence and quiet assurance is another. For the matter is largely intangible. There is a veil. We are dealing not with flesh or blood, not with what we can handle, but with something which

is "just beyond," and which needs the exercise of the faculty of faith to realize.

These two difficulties are largely one; the visible outweighing the invisible; things materially present counting for more than things spiritually present; the noise of the outer world more audible than the whisper of the inner; the expression of the outer, as it were, within the sanctuary of the inner; the echoes of the hurry and bustle of life heard above the suggestions of the quiet and peace of the heart. This is the great difficulty which faces all who endeavour to get into the presence of God, and to learn the art of Prayer.

It is a practical difficulty and its solution lies to some extent in practice. If it is the noise of the world which is shutting out the whispers of the Spirit, then quiet must be wooed and cultivated. The heart must learn the art of detachment from the visible and the audible, and the withdrawing of itself into its own sanctuary.

Now Prayer is largely coming to oneself. A withdrawal from the world, and into the sanctuary of one's own experience, means a discovering of oneself in the springs of one's being. If this self which

is so manifested is a fevered restless being, then Prayer must to some extent be coloured by this restlessness.

What therefore is wrong is that we are not living in the spirit of Prayer. When we seek to pray, what we really are is manifested. When we try to bring ourselves to rest, it is a departure from our ordinary manner of life if our lives are restless. We are assuming an attitude which is foreign to us for the greater portion of our existence. Were we to live in the spirit of Prayer all day, our times of special Prayer would be a focussing of life's ordinary ultimates into set occasions. These would be found to be our greatest times, for they would be the flower and culmination of the highest and yet the most characteristic within us.

Thus the practical difficulty has to be met by practice in the larger sphere. We must live in the attitude of Prayer. The presence of God must be a constant atmosphere, and not sought only when we have petitions to offer. This is the broad rule for the general life, but it does not dispense with the necessity for special preparation. Quiet must be cultivated, and to this end meditation is of great

service. Meditation and Prayer are in fact twin sisters. Meditation on the Word, on the Love of God, on the Grace of Christ, on the operations of the Spirit, and on the needs of man, will lead to an outflow of desire and petition.

Although there is a danger of making our prayers too set and formal, yet there is also a danger of them suffering from carelessness. We are to have a grand freedom when we come into God's presence, but when we so come we are to come whole-heartedly and with full realization. Our petitions have not to be prepared so much as ourselves. If our hearts burn within us, if we realize God's grace and man's great need, we shall be able to pray in an effective fashion. We require to be more thoughtful and to grasp the issues better. Then, having made these our own, and having become duly impressed by them, we can approach God. It is not reasonable to expect that we can impress God, if we are not impressed ourselves.

What we need to offer is not Prayer only, but Prayer with our thought and very being put into it. When we present our petition, we should be presenting a part of ourselves. This cannot be unless

we and the petition are one. And this cannot be unless the mind and heart have dwelt upon the need, and have been stirred and interwoven with it. When this is so, we shall be able to pray, for it will be we ourselves being uttered.

PRAYER CUMULATIVE

XIV

PRAYER CUMULATIVE

THE Lord said: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal" (Matt. vi. 19). This command has been the cause of much heart-burning. Many earnest souls have acted on it literally, and have made no provision for the future. With this aspect we do not deal, but there is more in the text than the negative side. The Lord went on to say: "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (Matt. vi. 20). Thus there is a right way of laying up, as well as a wrong way.

The principle of providing for the future is right. What is to be provided is the great question. Now Prayer is something which can be accumulated. This is contrary to our usual idea, which is that as the need arises it can be met by Prayer, and thus sufficient grace can be obtained. This surely is a very

hand-to-mouth existence. There is in this way very little chance of becoming spiritual millionaires.

The power of Capital is realized in the material world. By it great things are accomplished. True, Labour is necessary, but Labour alone is not sufficient. Labour, the power of the present, and Capital, the stored energy of the past, are both required for material progress.

It is so in the spiritual world. The Bible is so much Capital which our Heavenly Father has stored up for us. The heritage of our Christian hymns, such as "Jesus, Lover of my soul," "Rock of Ages, cleft for me," "O God, our help in ages past," and "Jesus, the very thought of Thee," is one which awaits our entry into the Christian life, and makes us from our very start "rich towards God" (Luke xii. 21). We are indeed indebted to those writers, both ancient and modern, who have left us such rich treasure of song and literature.

Now there are others than these writers who are not so well recognized, but are yet as effective. There have been men and women, aye and little children too, who have lived in the presence of God, and have uttered their petitions in His ears. We are the in-

heritors of these prayers. There is no limit to their action, for Science emphasizes this point—that the result of an act is infinite, and no limit can be set to it.

Think of it. These men and women in the Catacombs of Rome, or in the wild beasts' arena. These old worn-out folk in the dim attics, away from the rush and hurry of life. Those greyhaired ministers in the quiet of their country parishes. Those young fresh hearts going out and grasping the world in the hope of youth and bringing missionary effort into the presence of the Eternal: all of these storing up energy, amassing Capital, in the power of which mighty deeds can be done by the active army of the Lord.

There is a story of a Scottish matron last century who spent many an hour in prayer. The main burden of her petition was that not one of her descendants to the end of time should perish. She had such a fear of this that she prayed specially that all descending from her should be saved. It was Prayer with a point. We cannot realize what a privilege it must be to belong to such a race. The blue blood of kings is nothing to this.

For Prayer in this case modifies the tendency inherent in human nature to get away from God. Prayer, ere yet the engine be constructed, has taken and laid lines for it, and those lines have the heavenly city as their terminus. We do not discuss whether the train will of necessity arrive at the terminus with its full complement of carriages. What Prayer does is to make the way plain, and to make it harder to depart from the living God.

Now the accumulation of capital in the material world is often largely made for the benefit of one's children. Parents realize that their own lives are but a span, but they desire that their children should get every chance in life. The busy man determines that his boys will not need to be handicapped as he was. He toils and moils, that one boy can go to the university, and that another can learn engineering with the best firm that one girl can have her taste for the violin indulged, and that another may give herself to painting. The father and the mother gradually lose ambition in regard to themselves, and centre it in their children. To the father and mother there comes a great desire to do the best they can for their young people. Efforts are redoubled, econ-

omies are practised, and the young people have every chance of starting life with a fair opportunity of success.

But what of the inner and real life? Shall the outer be provided for, and not that which is more essential? It is done too often. Many a consecrated man forgets to consecrate wife and family. But by Prayer he can provide for his family. One boy is going to the university. Why cannot the father precede him there in Prayer? What kind of life will he lead? What sort of temptations will the young man need to contend with? What sort of influence does the father's heart wish the son to exercise? What is to be the upshot of it all? Why should the Lord and the father not hold holy intercourse regarding this new phase which is coming on the family life?

And then there are the daughters. Shall not father and mother guard their steps as from a watch-tower? What pits may be lying before the innocent girls! What an expanse of joyful love, or what depth of shameful misery! Who can tell? Many have been as beautiful and sweet and innocent as they, and have been dragged down by some

enemy. Shall not the parents then place them under the protection of the Almighty?

Here is boundless opportunity for those who desire to pray. Prayer is not limited to the present. It is linked up to the past, it deals with the present, and it is potential energy for the future. When we lie cold in the ground, forgotten by nearly all on earth, or perchance looked upon while still living as "old fossils," our prayers can go flowing on. They may be as fountains from the hills of God. Some of us know in our own case that our lives have been encircled by the prayers of those who have gone before us.

It is not only as regards our descendants, or the Church, or the men of the future, that Prayer thus applies. It can apply to ourselves. Why should we always be on the defensive? Why should we need to pray chiefly when we experience attack from the enemy? The trenches of Prayer are grand places for making a stand and preventing the enemy sweeping the field. But ours is a cause which is essentially aggressive. If we do not go forward, we are driven back in defeat.

Let us be prepared for what is coming on us, but

let us be more. Let us be ready in the name of the Lord to be the assaulting party. Let this assault be made in the inner chamber first. Then let us send forward our reconnaissance parties. Let us measure up our enemies' position, let us talk it over with our Commander-in-Chief, let us meet the foes' forward movements almost ere they have begun.

So what is yet to come, as well as the present, is brought within the field of operations, and we learn that our Commander is equal to the future also. We require accumulated heart strength and spirit richness. We need to be "rich towards God" (Luke xii. 21). And we can be, if we get into the inner chamber with our God, and allow Him to give us wealth upon wealth, and strength upon strength.

IN THE SCHOOL OF PRAYER

XV

IN THE SCHOOL OF PRAYER

THE Christian needs a great deal of training, and God has many schools. There are the School of Affliction, the School of Life's Experience, the School of Persecution. One of the grandest schools is that of Prayer.

It is usually a long time before the Christian discovers that he has been put to school when he prays. His first idea is that he is the eager one, and that God waits behind. There must be compulsion used. His views must be impressed on God. He must be urgent, else what he wishes may be passed over.

How things change as the years go on! The self-confidence is lost. By bitter experience he learns that what he wished and prayed for has not always been what is most desirable. He understands that text: "The Lord gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul" (Ps. cvi. 15). Then he also begins to find out that he is not the eager one

after all. God may seem to keep behind, but He is really never late. The young Christian is often premature. He would plunge into new ventures, he would commence what might never come to fruition. He would do worse than this. In his zeal to plant new flowers in God's garden, he would root out many existing ones. His clumsy foot would crush the little sprouting blades which are doing their best to force their way through the crust of the earth.

God's ways are more gentle. He does not roughly root out the tares, lest the wheat also may suffer. He does not condemn wholesale the Church organization, although He may refuse to confine Himself to recognized forms. He may seem more indifferent, but He is really more farseeing. "Let both grow together" (Matt. xiii. 30), He says, and His great Love hopeth all things. As the Christian soul realizes the Lord's tenderness in regard to His dealing with itself, it realizes also that He is tender with others also.

"There's a wideness in God's mercy
 Like the wideness of the sea;
 There's a kindness in His justice
 Which is more than liberty.

.

For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man's mind,
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind."

The tenderness is, however, found to be blended with persistence. The Christian learns that the soft gentle touch of the Spirit is very sensitive. No liberties can be taken, or the sense of the abiding presence is withdrawn. So there comes a realization of a constancy on God's part, of an eagerness to bless, before which his own little desires to help pale. He discovers that God, after all, is the Eager One. He had waited on the Lord, only to find that the Lord had gone on in front. The Spirit may forbid to speak at Mysia, but He gives the call to go to needy Macedonia. The heart discovers, as it draws closer to the Throne of Grace, that its own little feeble yearnings are but echoes of the great yearnings of Love which has filled the ages.

Prayer becomes a heart analysis. The Christian at first makes Prayer all voice, later he begins to listen. The mouth says less, the ear hears more. For a calm comes into the heart, and a sense of expectancy. There is an unconscious waiting on the Spirit for His promptings. The soul desires to be led out

in petition. As new revelations come, as a flash of light is thrown on a purpose, or something to be sought after, the heart of the seeker is illumined at the same time.

We pray that a certain Christian work may be blessed. In the very praying we learn how much the tendency to self-glory in that work seeks to come in. We pray for closer union with Christ, for a greater sense of prayer. As we pray, the consciousness of the desire being for blessings on ourselves, individually, comes home. We are forced to go on and pray for others. Nay, when we proceed, we discover that in our very prayers we have been selfish.

Our very seeking of union with the Lord begins to take a new meaning. For we learn, not only that we should be united with Him in being, but that He calls us to union in sacrifice. Union is seen to be not self-aggrandisement, but self-expenditure. If we yield to this Man of Nazareth, He can only do with us as He did with himself. He can only spend us on behalf of humanity.

The tendency to introspection, and the nourishment of the self-life, which is promoted by turning inwards, is counteracted when we find that we are

united to the greatest Self-Expenders who ever existed. Prayer introduces to sacrifice. We spell the word slowly at first as we turn the pages of our Prayer-Primer, but it is one which comes over and over, and we shall learn to utter it fluently. Sacrifice comes from the open, and enters the chamber—from the outer life into the region of heart and will. The great surrender is made at Gethsemane, and Calvary follows in natural sequence. Meditation on Him who sacrificed Himself has, as its complement, intercourse with Him Who is still the One Who lives for His people and expends Himself for them. As the spiritual conversation flows, the sacrificial spirit is caught, and welcomed.

The Lord does not only introduce to sacrifice. He gives His joy, fulness, and abiding peace. "He that loseth his life for My sake and the Gospel's shall save it" (Mark viii. 5). The Lord makes good those words. We enter into His purposes, we catch His spirit of patience and resolution, we willingly yield ourselves to carry out His will.

Judged from one standpoint, to be a Christian is the hardest thing in the world. Experienced from the inner side, being a Christian is not only easy,

it is unavoidable. For the Lord impresses Himself on His follower, and the believer can do none other. Hence it is that the Apostle John writes: "He that is born of God, cannot sin" (1 John iii. 9; v. 18). It is unnatural for the new nature to sin, it is natural for it to love and obey God, and to love and serve mankind. Thus sacrifice and service, in common language, are second natures. The soul pines to serve, and the Lord's joy in giving Himself on Calvary becomes in some measure His servant's joy, as he "lets go" his life, and carries yet further his Master's self-abnegation.

There is thus much in this School of Prayer. We have seen that wisdom, tenderness, resoluteness, sacrifice, and gladness in service are all fruits to be gathered in His garden. The great truth of dependence on God, and its corollary of comparative independence as regards man, also comes home to the heart. Dependence on our fellow-men is felt by many, especially in the poorer walks of life. The rich man smiles, and the poor man can lift his head and his heart, for life will not be so oppressive as formerly. The rich man frowns, and the whips become scorpions.

It is a marvellous thing that the Lord should suffer His own to be at the mercy of men of no principle. Sensitive flesh and blood can suffer much, and the fine delicately-moulded spirit can have its fibres strained to breaking-point. Yet He allows all this, and the world looks, and asks why He does not interfere. He will do so one day. All this will stop. But now He enters into the inner life and gives grace to bear. He is one in the inner life with the sufferer, and pours the oil of His grace over the gaping wounds. Thus a deeper sense of dependence on Him grows in the heart, and along with this comes a feeling of independence of the outer.

Not that the outer is ignored, but that the inner is seen to be so very much more important, and the visible is relegated to a secondary place. The soul places less stress on it. "I say unto you, my friends," said Jesus, "be not afraid of them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do" (Luke xii. 4).

In this School of Prayer there is much to be learned. Just as in a university it is not so much the subjects which are studied, but the master-mind which deals with them. Years afterwards, when the

details of the study have been forgotten, the marks of the vigorous personality, and commanding intellect, and comprehensive emotions of the professor are felt by the student. In the School of Prayer we learn much. The learning is largely personal. For it is the coming into contact with the Great and Perfect One which ennobles and teaches. The very lifting of the latch in this school brings us into the atmosphere of spiritual culture.

CORPORATE EXPRESSION

XVI

CORPORATE EXPRESSION

THE individual is the germ of the Church. Not only is he the unit of which the Church is built up—the molecule—but what applies to him individually applies in a collective manner to the Church. Thus any advantage or disadvantage in a method or system applies to Church as well as to individual. There are of course modifying influences, but taken as a whole, what is good for the unit is good for the mass. Now, Prayer has been seen to have a tendency, in regard to individuals, to develop the gentler characteristics. The robuster qualities were perceived to be in some danger of being neglected.

It was found, however, that in the individual case there was a compensatory element. The will of man, although brought into subjection to God, was called into action in a virile manner. Prayer in the corporate sense has also a tendency to develop

the finer qualities. As the heart of a people turns inwards, the outward part of its existence loses much of its glitter. A great deal of the showy part of church-life would disappear if Prayer became the ruling element in its life.

Some things would drop off very quickly, and practically without conscious action. Many things may be felt to be inconsistent, and are probably only tolerated because they are a seeming necessity. These would quickly take their place outside the sphere of Church organization. There are practices in the way of raising money which civil law frowns on. Prayer would soon show that spiritual law was yet more exacting than civil law, that Jesus Christ demands greater purity than the magistrate.

There are also, however, things right in themselves which would cease altogether or take a subordinate position. For instance, much of the organization for which Churches are famous would disappear. This is no slight matter. If many were asked what stands between the world and the deluge of worldliness and sin, the answer would be an organized Church.

Think of it! Take away the organization, and

the whole fabric of truth and right appears to be threatened. For organization is the form, the body which the Church takes. We cannot conceive of spirit without form. Our minds ever seek to create a form for the spirit. Yet though we are bodies and spirits the spirit ever strives against the body and the body against the spirit. Christ has redeemed both. A yielded body becomes the servant of the spirit. Yet it must ever be kept in its rightful position as a servant. So the organization of the Church is a redeemed and sanctified body. Yet here also, although it should be on the lower plane, it ever seeks to become the predominant feature.

Now Prayer brings a Church low. There is little form, little show, no appeal to the general public. All is a proclamation of weakness. Yet all can be a declaration of strength. The Church triumphant, the Church regnant, is the Church at the foot of the steps of the Throne of Mercy. They who love the Church wish to see her strong in influence. They wish to see her admitted on all hands as mighty. They wish to be able to say: "Beautiful in all the earth is Mount Zion."

But recognition of influence by the world is little

compared to possession of influence. The world will be forced to take note when the influence is felt. The Church must become influential with God before it can become influential with men.

What applies to the individual applies to the Church also. What she is in her inner heart, she will be very soon in her outward bearing. Why has the Church so little influence in many quarters? Because she is sick at heart. Because she has lost touch with God. Because the inner is withered. We have outlasted our inward vigour. The fire and energy built up a vigorous body, fair and strong. The body is here still, but the fire is to a large extent absent.

So the body is withering also, and we must devise this means and the other to keep our membership up. Very simply and very quietly, however, must we learn that only as we can express ourselves to God can we utter ourselves to man. Only as we are impressed by Him can we impress the world. Only as we appear before Him in our naked reality can we tell upon our fellows. The truth will out—what we are in what we can give expression to. The Church must ever be deeper than she appears;

more earnest at heart than in action. The outward is ever only a development of the inward.

The triumph of the Church is to be no mere future matter. To-day she can be queen, regnant, overcoming, the joy of the whole earth. The Church even now can rise above her failures and enter into that dominion which is hers, by right of her Lord's love and grace.

It is well to long, seek for, and rejoice in, the life of victory for ourselves. Grander far to seek it for the corporate body of Christians; that all should desire, know, and exercise the power which is the right of all, through Jesus Christ the Lord of the Church.

"With His own blood He bought her
To be His holy bride."

If it be true that "Christ loved the Church" (Eph. v. 25), we too should place her above our own spiritual interests, and long for her cleansing and sanctification. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like unto them that dreamed. Then was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with singing" (Ps. cxxvi. 1, 2).

It is no easy matter for the individual to learn

to pray. It is more difficult for an organization. There is a Divine art in it. It often takes time. The petitioners have to be like players in a team. They have to pray together often before they learn to be complementary to one another. Yet how glorious would be the result of men learning to pray in the Unity of the Spirit! Such prayers have an influence greater far than the combined single units of prayer. For the fire spreads until each heats the other and all are afire. The fire spreads, there is a bright red glow, there is dark red, and lo, at last, there is white heat. Then can the great Master Worker fashion as He will.

FULL ASSURANCE

XVII

FULL ASSURANCE

THERE are many Christians who rejoice in full assurance of Salvation. Yet they have not full assurance in Prayer. There was a day when to rejoice in full assurance of Salvation was taken as almost presumptuous. The old Scotch idea, "Na, na, I wouldna be too positive," was the expression of the thoughts of many devout souls. Nowadays it is not considered as honouring to God that Christians should entertain doubts as to their eternal Salvation. To doubt is now felt to detract from the promises so freely uttered in the Word. In a similar fashion the Christian should be free from doubts as regards his prayers. He should utter his wishes and feel the eternal quiet in his heart as in full assurance he leaves his petition with his God.

The writer of the Hebrews speaks of this. "Let us," he says, "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Heb. x. 22). What supplies

this assurance? It is not because we are convinced that we are asking the right thing. It is because we are assured of our right to draw near. Here is how it is put. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. x. 19-22).

What makes the writer so confident is his vision of the Christ, crucified for him, and interceding for him. It is the vision of Christ as the great High Priest, first offering up Himself, and now representing us in the presence of the Father. When the soul realizes that it is accepted in the Beloved, it comes with confidence to the Throne of Grace. It rejoices that it does not come in its own name, but in the name of Christ.

"Whatsoever," said Jesus, "ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name I

will do it" (John xiv. 13, 14). And again: "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go forth and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you" (John xv. 16).

Christ places great stress on "In My name." What does this mean? Its significance is always understood in the case of an ambassador. What he does, he does in the name of the King. More than this, he does it instead of the King. He really makes the King do it.

The significance of this is great in the spiritual realm. What we do in the name of Christ is done by us on behalf of Christ. We really make Jesus Christ do it. That is where the awfulness comes in of doing anything unworthy, when we name the name of Jesus or, in common language, when we profess to be His followers. For one of two things must then happen. Either we seek to drag Christ into an unworthy position, or He has to withdraw from us. We do not abide. He does not abide in us.

There were seven brothers who thought that by naming Jesus they could exorcise devils. "Jesus I

know," said the evil spirit, "and Paul I know, but who are ye?" (Acts xix. 15), and the men suffered severely for their presumption. They had used the name of Jesus, and had found that it was a sword to smite them.

It is no light thing to use the name of Jesus. We have to beware of taking His name in vain. Yet on this account we must not shrink from using it. The son who bears his father's honoured name is proud to use it. It gives him entrée to social and business circles, to which otherwise he would be a stranger.

The Lord knows the potency of His name. "All power," He said, "is given unto Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. xxviii. 18). But with Him the rule always is "that where I am there ye may be also" (John xiv. 3). There is no joy for Jesus which He does not wish to share with His people. The name which God has placed above every name, "that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and every tongue confess that He is Lord" (Phil. ii. 10, 11), that name and its glory He wishes to share with us.

He knows its potency. He knows how it prevails

with God. Therefore he says: "Ask in my name." "Pray," He says, "as if I were praying. I am in Heaven, you are on earth. Pray instead of Me, let Me pray through you. I do so wish to utter petitions for the blessing of man. Be you My mouthpiece, whereby I can utter My deep longing. And when you pray," He promises, "I will take these prayers and make them Mine. They will come before God, and He will hear them and answer them."

This then is what will bring confidence to our hearts. He is worthy. He is the Eternal Son of God. He is the Messiah, the Anointed One, the One set apart for this work. He is worthy because He has given His life for the redemption of the world. He is worthy, for He is set apart by His own great act of consecration. He is worthy, because this is His business, He lives for this. Ah, how our souls come to rest as we regard His worthiness!

"This is my rest, Here still I'll stay,
For I do like it well."

Thus we find ourselves in only a secondary position. It is not, as we had crudely imagined, we who are the originators or instigators of Prayer.

We are not in front of the Lord, and we do not therefore require an effort to bring Him to our way of thinking. Our part is that of auxiliaries. We have to learn humbly and simply what His will is: to catch His spirit. Then when we are imbued with His desires we offer them up as complementary to Him, as "filling up" here on earth, perhaps in a very crude way, what He stands for in heaven.

There is that Mighty One at the right hand of God, is seen He who is the Chief Factor. On Him all depends. Here, in the valley, are seen His humble co-operators. To their hands He has entrusted His interests. It is no child's play this. It is Christ's work being done on earth.

This is the thought I need. It will not overpower me. The very greatness of it will lift my prayers from the low level. It will set them in the high tide of the Master's own purposes. In prayer as in every department of life it will be, "Not I, but Christ who liveth—who prayeth—in, and through me."

"The Lord, He—He Himself—is become my salvation."

EXPENDITURE AND RECOUPMENT

XVIII

EXPENDITURE AND RECOUPMENT

THE heart which spends itself in Prayer has often the "spent" feeling. It has given itself away for others, and it feels weary as regards itself. Many an earnest soul rises from Prayer with a sense of weakness. The realization of this weakness is apt to hinder the full flow of assurance. It is well, therefore, to know how to reassure the heart. There is one great source of assurance—the Word of God. There are many ways in which the Word will assist. Of these there are three which are main lines of help.

In the first place, the promises given in regard to prayer itself are purposely designed to encourage. "In everything, by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. iv. 6-7). "He that asketh receiveth. He that seeketh findeth" (Matt. vii. 8). "Pray without ceasing"

(1 Thess. v. 17). "What man among you? . . . How much more shall your Heavenly Father" (Matt. vii. 9-11). "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you" (1 Peter v. 7). And so on, for the Bible is full of promises in regard to the answer of Prayer.

Then there are the promises in regard to specific needs. Is one troubled about the state of the Church? then we can read: "Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion" (Ps. cii. 13). "Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it" (Eph. v. 25). Are our material things perplexing us? The promise runs: "Your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" (Matt. vi. 32). Is it the power of Sin which threatens our peace? We again take heart, for "where sin abounded grace did much more abound" (Rom. v. 20), and "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law but under grace" (Rom. vi. 14). Or is there a resurrection of our old sense of guilt? How calming the words: "Who forgiveth all thy iniquities" (Ps. ciii. 3). With what arguments does the Word supply us, and what heart assurance does it afford for every position!

The third characteristic action of the Word in regard to Prayer is that it stimulates to closer intercourse. It is not only the specific passages dealing with Prayer, nor those special promises dealing with individual needs, which help Prayer. It will be found that the devout soul is readily drawn to petition and soul intercourse by meditation on any portion of the Word.

The believer reads about Abraham. He ponders on this man who gave up home and country, and went forth at the call of God. He dwells on his faith in regard to the birth of his son; he thinks of his willingness to give up his boy. All this comes home to his heart, and a great longing arises that he too may be a pilgrim in the earth; willing to follow the call and obey the direction of the Spirit. When the fire begins to burn, and the desires to bubble up, there must be recourse to Prayer, for the heart itself is beginning to yearn and to crave for utterance.

Thus it will be seen that the entrance into the court of Prayer is most often through the gate of the Word. It will be found also that the exit from the court of special Prayer, if exit there must

be, can be made through that same gate. For the soul, having enjoyed the precious promise, and having thus been moved, gives itself to Prayer, spends itself, and thereby brings a reaction of weakness upon itself.

A gentle resting of the Spirit for a little in the sweetness of some promise, not now for stimulation, but rather for sustenance, will make a fitting ending to this period of spiritual exercise. The soul will be refreshed, and the faith will receive a new assurance. There will be a song on the lips, as well as in the heart, and a quiet resting in God Who has said that the mind that is stayed on Him shall be kept in perfect peace (Isa. xxvi. 3). Perchance, however, there may be no need of such sustenance. The fragrance of the stimulating thought has outlasted the exercise of Prayer and continues while even the feet are turned into the paths of the busy life again.

The young believer is apt to perplex himself because after Prayer he does not have a glorious thrill. It may even be that the success of his Prayer is that which takes from the keenness of the feeling in regard to it. If one takes a piece of food into the

mouth, it is sweet at first, but after a time it becomes tasteless. This is not that it is less beneficial to the body, but that the process of assimilation has so far proceeded.

It is so as regards Divine truth. A truth will come home with the beauty of youth to the soul. It will sparkle, it will fascinate, it will be full of flavour. The soul dwells on it with great delight. There comes a time, however, when it may not have the same pristine sweetness. This is not necessarily because the truth has been lost. It may be rather that it has been incorporated. It is now so much one with him who is partaking of it that the joy of incorporating that which is an outside factor no longer exists.

Similar is the experience in Prayer when a great longing takes possession of the heart. Something desirable is prayed for. As long as it is not granted, the heart goes out in eager unsatisfied longing. There comes a time, however, when the expression of desire flags. The soul endeavours to whip up the emotions. It cannot arouse itself to the same urgent thoughts as it had before. It becomes introspective; it wonders if it has broken the unity with

the Saviour, or grieved the Holy Spirit in His great desires and purposes.

May it not often be that the prayer has been heard and the answer given? May it not be that the special time for Prayer has now come to an end, and the special time for action has begun? For there are times to be in the quiet, and there are times to be in the open, times to speak in the chamber, and times to proclaim from the housetop.

The soul which is in immediate touch with the Spirit of God will not endeavour to force itself to Prayer if the Master wishes it to act. The essential thing is not that petition should be made, but that the inner union of the Divine Spirit with the human should be maintained, and that absolute control should exist without break. The inner life will find manifestation in the outer, and the believer must ever be ready to watch for the signs of the Spirit when He calls for action.

The cultivation of the inner life must not be regarded as the end-all. Even this, precious as it is, must be held in obedience to Him who is Lord both of the inner and the outer, both of the Spirit and the body. Moses retired into the wilderness,

and there cultivated the inner life. But God wished something more from him. Because he knew the power of the inner, God required him to be a leader in the outer and active existence.

It is well, therefore, not to be downcast because the mood of the mind seems to change in regard to the exercise of Prayer. It should make us all the more alert to know what the Lord's mind is, and to endeavour to obey that. There are rich opportunities at every turn to the soul that comes into line with the holy will of God, and has learnt the art of being awake to His delicate leadings.

MYSTICAL PRAYER

XIX

MYSTICAL PRAYER

THE mystics are regarded by men of our day as dreamers. They are thought of as non-practical beings, dwelling in a haze, in a sort of unearthly mist. There are, however, many things which they can teach us. Our temptation to-day is to get too far away from their inner exercises and their trend of worship.

To them Prayer was largely beneficial because of its subjective influence. We are advised by some of these old writers to dwell on the Love of God, to draw in our wandering thoughts, concentrating them on Him and His great attributes. The heart may be sluggish at first, but afterwards the fire will begin to burn. It will be a sensible effort to begin with, but afterwards the process will be as not from ourselves, but as from a fire lit within us.

This applies to the individual exercise of Prayer—to the special times when the soul withdraws from

the world. It may also apply to the whole course of Prayer. The soul which seeks God at first seems to find a difficulty in getting into His presence and remaining there. "Oh that I knew where I might find Him" (Job xxiii. 3), is the eager utterance of the panting spirit. But afterwards there seems to be a bond of union created. The soul does not search for her Lord. She has found Him, and now she abides in His Love. There seems but little difficulty in maintaining the sweet intercourse.

Possibly business has engrossed the attention. It is, however, with no sense of rupture that the spirit re-seeks immediate audience with the Master. The audience is granted so easily and readily that the soul realizes that it has never been away from the Sacred Presence. There comes a glad sense of carelessness or perhaps rather non-carefulness. The responsibilities are as great as ever, the need is even more poignantly felt than before; but it is no longer borne apart. The issues belong unto the King, and in His hands all will be well.

A developing sense of unity with the Lord, and of complete absorption in His will, gives to the soul that rest which is the basis of all true activity. This

rest not only forms the foundation for new expenditure of power. It is also the opportunity for the Lord to give Himself in greater measure to His servant. For effort to pray, although well intended and in most cases necessary, is yet of a lower order. "Perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John iv. 18). He that is made perfect in love knows and abides and rejoices. The flow of prayer comes naturally. It is of the Lord. It is subject to His mind. It flows and ebbs with the tides of His purposes.

Unity of Aim. Unity of Desire. Unity of Heart. Unity of Action. Unity in Suffering. Unity in Joy. These are the links which bind the Master and servant together. Prayer becomes a flow and return of desire and blessing, of instruction and reception, of indication of will and immediate response.

When this blessed state comes, whether as an isolated experience, or as one which lasts over a long period, it is well for the soul to realize its blessedness. Not only is there, as we have seen, a cessation of heart energy and desire when prayer has been granted, but a great calm may also come from out the unity with the Master, and by reason of the unbroken fellowship which exists. This

should not be interfered with. It may seem a blank. It may seem as if the life were not so fruitful.

If, however, we abide in Him, the promise is that we shall bear much fruit (John xv. 5). How this fruit will show itself we know not, but assuredly it will be manifested. It can, of course, only manifest itself as it has ever done. For now, as of old, the fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, and Self-control (Gal. v. 22).

Prayer is twice blessed which not only gains its desire, but, in gaining it, obtains yet more conscious proof of the great and blessed unity of the Lord and the believer.

REASONS FOR NON-PRAYER

XX

REASONS FOR NON-PRAYER

THE grace of God as manifested to men who are in rebellion against Him fills the discerning heart with wonder. It is of such outstanding merit that God Himself refers to it: "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. v. 8).

Yet there is something which excites the wonder and surprise even more than this wondrous grace of God. It is the hardness of the human heart which can resist its offers. There are two great outstanding facts: the outpouring of free and unmerited grace towards fallen man by the God whom men have sinned against: and the stubborn refusal to accept such grace on the part of so many of these men. Nothing depicts sin in its true colours like this.

"This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light,

because their deeds were evil" (John iii. 19). "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin" (ch. xv. 22). "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father" (v. 24).

Similarly are there a wonder and a contrasting wonder in regard to Prayer. If one-half of what we have been discovering about Prayer in its nature and potentiality be true, then it must be held to be one of the most powerful agents within the scope of man's domain. If it were a thing which had never been spoken of, never even imagined, and then some scientist in the spiritual realm discovered it and hinted at its nature and gave a suggestion in outline of its possibilities, surely a spirit of inquiry would be created in thoughtful circles.

The closest analogy in the natural world is perhaps that of radium, or the marvellous properties of the ether. These have now been taken out of the domain of speculation, and harnessed to the practical service of man, and they form the subject of keen inquiry, both as to their inherent nature and as to

their adaptability to human needs. Some of the greatest scientific minds are devoting themselves to special study along these lines.

Now we have been finding that Prayer is also one of the great possibilities, and that results can be expected from it which will be marvellous, as they will be on a plane of a higher order than the natural. Thus we have something potential and wonderful to hand. It lies at the call of every man, it awaits utilization by rich or by poor, by learned or by ignorant.

Is it not therefore a marvel that it is not more put to the test? Is it not strange that it should be allowed to lie undeveloped? There must be some mighty reason or reasons for this. It cannot be that it is mere chance whereby such a mighty weapon is left in the armoury, instead of being donned and carried out into the thickest of the fight.

And there are some reasons which act powerfully as deterrents. Two are most conspicuous.

The basic reason is that there exists in man an evil heart of unbelief. When excuses have been made, and everything allowed for, it will be found that the marrow of the matter is that the heart does

not believe God. Realize this, and failure in Prayer is seen to be natural. If in the depths of our hearts we do not believe in the promises of God, and in His character of truth, of which these promises are the outward declaration, then it is natural for us to find no joy in Prayer, and to be weak in its exercise. Granted, however, that in our heart of hearts we believe God, and can with assurance rest on what He has told us, then we shall quietly go on praying, assured that He hears and will answer.

There is a very solemn word in the First Epistle of St. John, with regard to those who reject the Christ of God. "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son;" and a little further on John continues: "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us" (1 John v. 10, 14).

Believing in the record that God has given brings confidence. Want of confidence implies that there has been a corresponding want of acceptance and belief. The heart of no confidence is the heart which rejects. The heart of little confidence is the heart which largely rejects. In so far as there is non-

appreciation of Prayer and non-expectancy of answer, there is the sin of unbelief and rejection of the Christ.

It is no light thing, this. It is not modified in its heinousness because it is so common. It is a sin of the inner man, it is the result of an evil heart of unbelief.

Our want of Prayer will be found on investigation to arise from this fundamental cause, that our hearts are not stayed upon God, and that we are not trusting His declared word. If we are not praying because we think it useless, then we are practically proclaiming that God is false, and His word is not to be depended on. Prayer is a natural thing to the man who is in accord with God. It is not an assumed characteristic, requiring great effort of will. It is the spontaneous expression of the attitude of a lesser mind and heart to the greater Mind and Heart. It is as natural as breathing. And therefore the absence of Prayer is a sure sign that the heart is not in accord with God. To many this furnishes the starting-point in the Prayer-life—lowly confession of guilt, of the inward alienation from God, of a heart which does not place Him on the throne.

When it is realized that non-prayer denotes a sinful state of heart, which is of primary significance, then will the soul be glad to know that "Jesus, the Saviour from sin, will most assuredly save us from this sin, and guide us into the path of a life in daily fellowship with God."

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive . . . and to cleanse . . ." (1 John i. 9).

A secondary reason for non-prayer is that the average Christian does not comprehend the power which is in Prayer, nor does he know how to set about praying. It is quite common to find Christians possessed with only a very hazy idea of what Prayer is, and what it can reasonably be expected to accomplish. Jesus said: "The truth shall make you free" (John viii. 32), and to know the truth in regard to Prayer and to recognize its possibilities is at least to have a powerful incentive towards it.

It is hoped and believed that the analysis of Prayer in the foregoing pages will serve as a means of illumination to many who before were perplexed. A powerful aid in this matter is allowing oneself to be led into understanding of Prayer by the Holy Spirit. Much may be obtained from books, and

direct teaching from Bible precepts and examples. Much also will be received by the direct gentle promptings of the Spirit, Who will lead into the truth regarding Prayer, and Who gives the heart of burning.

As has been said, Prayer and the spirit of prayer are natural to the man in accord with God. Yet will it be found that the desire for Prayer and the practice of it can be much stimulated by taking thought. Therefore it will be well worth while to consider how best to proceed that we may become practical men in this great business.

IN THE WORKSHOP OF PRAYER

XXI

IN THE WORKSHOP OF PRAYER

IT is a vital part of the problem that we should understand what part Prayer has to play in God's processes and operations. Is it a secondary part, or is it a primary one?

We know what was the view current in most Christian circles till quite recently; the view, in fact, that holds in many minds to-day. This is that the real work of the Church and of Jesus Christ is done in the pulpit and on the platform, in the class and by personal influence. This is the real work, and Prayer comes in as supplemental to it. It is granted that it is much better if this real work has an introduction of Prayer, and that it be wound up by Prayer.

Prayer is as the condiment to the meat, as the polish to the oak, as the final to the top of the church spire. It gives the finish; it is even necessary; it certainly is better there than if it were lacking. But

the real work is the preaching and the speaking, the personal influence, and the activities of definite service. This is the conception of the relative values of Prayer and work. Prayer is recognized, but it is given a secondary place. We may profitably inquire if this is right.

And first we may remark that it is natural that it should be so considered. For the work that is in evidence has more affinity with the material than that which is conducted in the secret chambers of the heart. A teacher goes every Sunday to speak to his children. Here is something tangible. He knows that he has to forfeit certain leisure, and others also recognize this. A minister goes into the pulpit regularly, and delivers his sermon. This is a concrete fact, appealing to his hearers as an evidence of work undertaken and carried through.

Both of these workers may spend a longer time in communion with God, and in intercession for their scholars and hearers than they do in the study of their subjects, or in its composition. Yet that time of prayer is a matter unknown save in its blessed outcome. They have gone into the secret of their prayer-chamber, into the recesses of their

heart, and none but God and they have known. It is a more inward thing, it is an act which withdraws itself from the public gaze. It is happy in the fact of its own accomplishment. It does not seek to be published. And so, like many a modest person of worth and value, it is unnoticed and passed by while recognition is given to others.

Prayer, however, though hidden, is yet work. It is hidden work. It is this conception that we have to get into our minds and hearts. That when we get to Prayer we get to work. That there can be a toiling in this workshop as there is in the outer one. That there is a call to sacrifice here, an opportunity for the display of patience and perseverance, and room for high ideals and strenuous endeavour. What one meets with in the outer sphere, one can encounter here. Gethsemane is as necessary as Calvary. Where the Lord came to rest is as necessary as where the Lord fulfilled His Father's great purpose. Paul's prayers for his beloved Churches were as necessary as Paul's Epistles to them.

There is a call for many a Christian worker to revise his estimate of the values of spiritual forces. Many a one to-day is getting thin and attenuated

in soul because he is spending his force, and not being rebuilt. He speaks, and he preaches, and he organizes, but it all comes to very little. It will be well for him to try another plan. This plan is to make Prayer his chief work.

There are boys in the class. Much teaching has been given, little clever artifices have been used to gain their attention and their interest. Books and tracts have been presented or lent, and all in the hope that something would arrest. And Prayer? Why, Prayer of course has not been forgotten. There has been earnest prayer that God would use these means to bless and to serve.

Now shall not a new way be tried? It is the old way, but the emphasis is different. Let us begin with Prayer, as if there were no teaching and no organization. There are the boys. "O God, teach us how to teach, how to get at them, how to introduce just that element which will meet the need! Lord, right into Thy presence we come with these dear lads. We and they together. Our interest, their interest; their interest ours. Lord, even now, do Thou Thy mighty work."

And so the genesis is in Prayer. The foundations

are laid therein. And as we get to Prayer, and as each boy is brought and prayed over, we ourselves are brought into line with the purposes of God, and the whole teaching waits on the gracious influences of the Spirit set in motion by our prayers. When we teach we but give the complement to the work already accomplished in the secret presence of the Lord.

This method, of course, applies to preaching. The minister takes his flock to heart, and then takes them to God. He then takes to them that which he has received from God. The work has been done in his study, and mainly on his knees. And not in preaching only, but in such things as pastoral visitation. The heart of the pastor goes out to those homes which he intends to visit, and he takes God there. Lo, when he actually visits, God is waiting for him as he enters. He is waiting there, but He also enters with His servant, and the visit is doubly blessed both to people and pastor.

The art is to learn how to accomplish life's great purposes in the presence of God, how to solve the problems there, and then, with these problems solved, to go into the presence of men, and translate

into the outer what already exists in the inner and real world. In the workshop of Prayer, the great manufacture is carried on, outside in the world's mart, that which hath been made is merchanted to men. That which hath been spoken in the chamber is proclaimed from the house tops.

THE BURNING HEART

XXII

THE BURNING HEART

“**M**AN looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (1 Sam. xvi. 7). Man considers the expressional form of the prayer, God looks deep and sees the yearnings.

“Delight thyself in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart” (Ps. xxxvii. 4). It is the state of mind and heart that God heeds. He hears prayers unuttered when the heart is right. He hears nothing when the prayer is words only.

It is thus in regard to the Divine life in a man's soul. Individual acts are of course important, but that which is most important is the trend of the heart's affections. The condition of a man's soul is more to God than isolated acts. These may be manifestations of the condition but the latter is the important factor. Young Christians are apt to be taken up more by their individual acts and failures or successes. “Make the tree good,” says Jesus,

“and the fruit shall be good” (Matt. xii. 33). The general state of spirit is the index of the power to bear fruit. And this is the criterion for the Prayer-life.

Why, when a man receives the burning heart, Prayer becomes both a necessity and a delight! He longs to get into the presence of God. All life takes its value from that standard. Many things become shabby-looking to his eyes; for they are really shabby and mean when viewed on the plane of the ultimate. Other things begin to delight, for their unfailing inherent worth becomes more and more manifest.

As the heart gets deeper, it finds that it not only gets its desires purified so that the Lord can readily grant them, but it finds its desires becoming centred in one great desire—this desire of the Lord Himself. “Delight thyself in the Lord.” The heart delights itself in Him, and as the feeble love begins to go upwards, the great Heavenly Love must respond. God becomes the great Desire and that desire is granted in ever fuller measure. “God is, and He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Heb. xi. 6). This is what the man with the burn-

ing heart finds, and as he finds it he counts everything else but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord.

And thus the path of Prayer becomes an alluring one. There is Someone Who is waiting to be talked to, Someone wishing to whisper the sweet words of love and to hear the returning faltering accents of affection; Someone Who, as the Lord Jesus did on the way to Emmaus, opens the Scriptures, talks of life, admits to the secret of His purpose, and makes the heart burn still further.

For there is no end to this burning heart. The soul which has tasted the sweetness of communion pants for more. If the voice of the Loved One is not heard, there is a mourning and a searching. There is the call of dependence. There is the cry for yet further and fuller intimacy, and to such cry the ear of the Lord is never heavy nor His heart apathetic.

The flame in the burning heart has come from God, and it burns up the hindrances and the disabilities and the fears. Love calls to love, and that which was impossible between acquaintances, on mere talking terms one with the other, becomes

habitual between those who are knit together in the bonds of closest affection.

And thus the path of him who really prays, like that of the just, becomes as a shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER

XXIII

THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER

IT is one thing to desire, it is another to possess. Yet oft-times desire is more than halfway towards possession. It is so in regard to Prayer. When the benefits of Prayer come home to the heart, and the desire is created, the soul is not far from realization of its kingship and priesthood. Were the heart captivated with the possibilities, it would find a way to enter into possession of the power. It is the sluggishness of desire which keeps back from such entrance.

To the heart truly desirous of praying, there are two great things to do. The first is to Ask, and the second is to Pray.

The first is to Ask, and by that is meant that in this particular matter direct request should be made. Too many people try to attain to a state of strength and power by resolution and strenuous endeavour. Instead of this, what they have to do is to obtain it from God.

This heart of prayer, this heart on fire, is a gift of God. We cannot light it ourselves. We may see the beauty of it, may realize what it could accomplish, may understand in some measure what loss its absence means, and yet we may not have it. Then usually we make good resolutions, and a course of action is resolved on. And yet the blessing tarries and we get weary and forget, until another reminder comes and again we set out in the quest.

All the time it belongeth unto the Lord. It is one of His rare gifts, not rare in scarceness but rare in being of inestimable worth. And as such we must humbly seek it. We must get low before the Lord, confess the great unworthiness of our hard prayerless hearts, and ask Him graciously to give us the burning heart, the heart of faith, the heart of quiet confidence, the heart of the large vision, yea, the very heart of the Lord Himself. And He will give it.

Prayer is a definite factor, and to pray for the gift of Prayer is to accentuate the element of definiteness. If Prayer for prayer be not answered, then Prayer for aught else comes under suspicion. But it will be answered, for it is according to His

holy mind and will, and everything so asked will be given. The promise here stands firm: "Ask, and it shall be given you" (Luke xi. 9). Ask for a spirit of prayer, seek for your Beloved, and ye shall find Him; knock at the portals of His great audience chamber, and He will open them Himself, and give you your heart's desire.

But besides the necessity of direct asking for this blessing, there is something else to do. That is, to Pray. By this is meant to give oneself to Prayer. To make a business of it. To go on praying despite the seeming discouragements, and notwithstanding what may seem to the soul the want of response from the Lord. He is never apathetic, but He does not give away His best gifts unless they are highly esteemed. He tests us, He sees if this is really what we set highest. Do we consider Him and His fellowship and what He can give in the way of power and endowment worth all else? Do we "esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt"? (Heb. xi. 26).

This is where our own direct action comes in. It were futile to endeavour to become strong men in Prayer simply by resolution and effort. It must

be the gift of God. He must of His grace bestow the trend of mind and heart. But on our part we must give play to the mighty forces He waits to set in motion. We must turn on the switch, and He will see to the power and the light. The power and light often do not come into operation because we omit to do our part of switching on the current. And the great thing which counts in this turning on of the current is simply to pray.

A subscriber to the telephone system could not understand why he was not able to send or receive any message in the early morning. On ordinary occasions in the day-light he could use the telephone all right, but during the night and early morning there was no response. He communicated with the head-office and an efficient operative was sent up. He took the receiver and transmitter to pieces and put them together again, but all to no purpose. Again was complaint made, and again he came up. Then at last the responsible foreman of the department came up himself, but he also could find nothing. They went into the roof space, and gradually tested the lengths of wire until they began to locate the fault. And at last they found it.

It was a place where the wire was broken in two but was held together by the outer covering. The space between the two ends of the wire was very small but it was sufficient to interrupt the current. When the heat of the day was on, the wire expanded and the two ends came together and the current got through. When the cold of the night came, or when a day was extremely cold, the wires contracted and contact was broken. It required the heat to bring the ends together.

And this is like our prayers. Here on earth our connection with Heaven is often of the nature of the broken wires. It is one of the joys of hope for the future that there will be no flaws in the connection. Here, however, there often is. We cannot "get through." We can neither send our messages to God nor get His from Him. What are we to do? It is a matter of heat. It is a matter of coming into such a frame of mind and heart that the communication is reopened. And to do this we must pray.

We must be resolute. We must wait on Him. We must not take "No" for an answer. We must deny the truth of appearances, and launch out on what we know to be true, viz., that God does hear,

that His ear is not heavy, that no sigh or wish or aspiration or expression of ours will be useless. All are precious to Him, and He will answer them in His own magnificent manner.

And so the great simple rule is just to pray. Pray, *pray*, PRAY! Keep on praying. Stumble along as we did when we learnt to walk as children. Push along somehow, as we did when we first learnt to ride a bicycle. Strike out, as with fear we did when we first learnt to swim. Keep at it, with resolution, with purposeful determination, and with readiness to sacrifice. For this is worth putting oneself out for. This is worth getting up early in the morning, so that we may see the face of God before we see those of our fellow-men. This is worth cutting out of our reading much that is light and ephemeral, so that we may enter into the presence of the Unseen.

Here, then, are the two great secrets of successful Prayer—simple, childlike, humble, believing, asking for the grace; and resolute, definite, and self-sacrificing movement along the path of Prayer.

Given these two, and more will follow.

There will come, to some more than to others,

a developed system of Prayer, so that there will be no longer a mere jumble of ideas, but all will flow in sweet order. The mind and heart will also be on the alert. It will pick up guide-marks from books of devotion. It will eagerly get into conversation with ripe Christians, and find how they comport themselves in the presence of their Lord. It will study the record of the Master and of His apostles. It will yield itself to the gentle drawings of the Spirit, and learn to speak the Spirit language correctly. In fine it will discover that here is a department of philosophy and activity both captivating and ennobling.

And as response comes in the personal life, and also in the lives of those prayed for; and as a deepening sense of God's presence is realized, the heart will yield itself yet more and more, and it will find its true home in His presence. Then will come the great yearning for the time when it shall continually abide in His courts, and when there shall be no interruption in the flow of its communion with Him. For thus it is written: "His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face" (Rev. xxii. 3, 4).

PRAYER AND FAITH

XXIV.

PRAYER AND FAITH

PRAYER is Faith in action.

Faith is the inner heart of Prayer. Faith is a conviction of the reality of the unseen. The eternal verities are the environment in which the man of faith moves. His is the vision of the invisible. He enters into communion with God. That communion is Prayer. Faith in activity in its relation to God resolves itself into Prayer.

Not only, however, does the man of faith come into contact with God. He comes into other contacts also. Of necessity he is in touch with his fellow-beings, and with what appertains to them. This connection becomes a hallowed one, for the man of faith, in rising into the presence of God, brings his fellow-beings there also. By Prayer he lifts them on to the plane of Divine operations, and by Prayer he brings down God's blessing on them.

Prayer and Faith are essential to each other.

On the one hand Faith is essential to Prayer.

There are two elements in Faith, and each is a necessity. Faith is a well-grounded assurance of that for which we hope. Prayer, in its character of request, demands the element of hope. Let hope fail, and Prayer would of course cease. Faith, being the assurance of the things hoped for, has both the stimulating effect of hope, and the calm derived from the factor of certainty. Faith is also a conviction of the reality of the unseen. It is thus an essential in regard to Prayer, as they who come to God must believe that He is. Prayer is a dealing with the unseen. It therefore requires Faith to supply conviction in regard to its reality.

On the other hand Prayer is essential to Faith. Faith is more inward than Prayer. It comes into the region of activity in two ways—through Prayer and Service. The proper order is Faith at the core, then Prayer as an intermediate step, and then Service as the outcome. Faith is the essential, Prayer is the expressional, and Works are the resultant.

Might we not reverently draw a parallel from the manifested operations of the Majesty of the Godhead. The Father is the great Centre and

Essence, the Son is the Express Image and Declaration of the Invisible God, and the Holy Spirit is He who operates in the hearts and lives of men. As the Father required the Son to Express Him in terms of humanity, so does Faith need Prayer to make it a potent force in men's lives. Prayer becomes the link which unites Faith to Works, without which, as the Apostle James tells us, Faith is dead.

And thus both Faith and Prayer are great necessities in the life lived to God. Possibly some may find that it is through the absence of Faith that their prayers fail. They lack both the assurance of what they hope for, and also the conviction of the reality of what they cannot see. To know where they are failing may bring them to see the way of deliverance.

But it were wrong if the realization of failure either made them stop praying or brought them into the place of bondage. For the search after Faith can become a weary and profitless one.

As the soul, when first seeking Christ, may have gone wearily looking and searching for a Faith which would bring it into touch with the Lord, so now the believer's heart may so yearn after a fuller Faith that it will endeavour to create a heart

condition that may ensure the blessing. But the heart at first could never come to rest in the fact of its Faith. Lo, the vision of the Christ came, and the heart, forgetting itself, and beholding only the beauty of the Lord, was filled with sweet rest in Him, and that rest was Faith! To the believer likewise the entrance into the life of Faith, and therefore also into that of effective Prayer, is through the vision and the fuller knowledge and the clearer comprehension of the Lord Himself.

Now it is just here that Prayer pays back the debt it owes to Faith, and proves itself to be a necessity to that which is its own centre and vital essence. For when the soul in Prayer gets into touch with its Lord, when the thoughts go out and centre in Him, when time is taken so that He can impress Himself on the waiting heart, then Faith arises in its strength, the vision becomes clear, and Prayer also becomes alert and effectual.

And as the intimacy deepens and heart speaks to heart and finds response, the action and interaction of Faith and Prayer are such that the one is blended in the other, and Faith becomes Prayer, and Prayer is but Faith in expression. It is but a more outward

semblance of that inner and mysterious unity which takes place between the Lord and the believer. For the Holy One bends down to the worshipper and suppliant, and so gives Himself to His servants, and the human so unreservedly yields himself to his Divine Lord that the creature loses himself and the fulness is of God.

ALL-PRAYER

XXV

ALL-PRAYER

JAMES, the Practical Apostle, comes to the root of things with an incisiveness of speech very characteristic of him, when he says: "Ye have not, because ye ask not" (Jas. iv. 2). It is very simple this. It becomes a little more complicated as he proceeds: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss" (v. 3). The latter statement brings in the question of prayers expressed but unanswered, because of their unworthiness. It however does not nullify the preceding proposition: "Ye have not, because ye ask not."

Some do not obtain, because their motives are wrong; most people do not enter into possession, simply because they do not ask. The great, easily understood and fundamental cause of the non-reception of good in its multifarious aspects is that it has not been asked for. The great, easily-under-

stood and fundamental course to follow, if Good in any of its many phases is desired, is to ask for it.

The natural heart does not like this. As James says: "Ye fight and war." Men will strive and struggle. They will injure others to obtain their ends. But this better way of obtaining by asking is foreign to them. "Ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not" (Jas. iv. 2).

Prayer is not content to be an occasional thing. It demands that it shall take its rightful place and title of "All-Prayer." Into every department of life, in every exigency, in the time of placid peace, in the weariness of waging war, in each and in all, Prayer claims its place. It refuses to be regarded as a poor relation to be called in on set occasions, or even as a rich relation to be sent for when need arises. It claims to be one of the family who shall identify himself continuously with life as it is lived in its multifarious aspects.

Is there a buckling on of truth and of righteousness; of peace and of faith; of salvation and of the Word? Then Prayer also is to come into the accoutrement; it, in fact, takes a special place. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication

in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints, and for me . . . ” (Eph. vi. 18, 19).

Here, then, is something which speaks with the voice of authority, and which we dare not silence on peril of our highest welfare. Possibly we have hitherto had a dreamy idea that Prayer was desirable. Now we awaken to find that it is imperative. We dare not trifle with it. It is not a question to be played with. If we desire the highest, here is the road which leads to it. Without this we cannot attain. Solemnly and earnestly we must recognize that in everything we must “by prayer and supplication make our requests known”; that as regards time we must “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. v. 17); and that we must be “praying always with all prayer and supplication”; that when we take the world-view, then first of all must there be “prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks for all men” (1 Tim. ii. 1); and when we think of the Church our supplication is to be “for all saints.”

Is there care about? Then Prayer must deal with it direct: “Casting all your care upon Him” (1 Pet. v. 7). Are we proceeding along the varied paths of

life? Then Prayer again comes in. "In all thy ways, acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" (Prov. iii. 6).

Further, it must enter into the hidden life of the mind and claim a place there. "Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established" (Prov. xvi. 3).

James lifts Prayer up as the great refuge. Is it wisdom we lack? We must "ask of God." Is anyone afflicted? "Let him pray." Is any sick? "Let there be the prayer of faith." This from the practical apostle is exceedingly noteworthy. Evidently pure religion and undefiled, as exemplified in visiting the fatherless and widows, and the works which the apostle considered as necessary to show the existence of faith, required as a foundation this grace and habit of All-Prayer. "Submit," he calls out. "Draw nigh to God." "Humble yourselves in the sight of God." And these are all part and parcel of Prayer.

Prayer, therefore, is and must be an integral part of life. People may smile, and shrug their shoulders, and say that it is very curious how some men seem to live without Prayer at all, and that therefore

surely if it is given a certain play in the activities it is all that can be expected. But this is to ignore the fact that many people in God's sight are "dead while they live." That expression is used in reference to that exact phase of existence which the world holds up as "life." "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth" (1 Tim. v. 6).

There can thus be apparent life when in reality death holds sway. And it is not only the life of pleasure which is held to be the life of death, it is all life apart from God. "I am come that they might have life" (John x. 10), said the Lord. It is this life, the real life, the only true and abiding life, which demands prayer as a necessity. And therefore the scientific postulate can be made that in so far as Prayer does not enter into the sphere of thought and activity, in so far life is absent in beneficial operation. Prayer is a necessity to life. The Christian to be healthy must be a man of All-Prayer. In so far as All-Prayer is absent, in so far is he not an All-Christian.

THE LORD JESUS took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistering. And, behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias: who appeared in glory, and spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.

* * *

And He came out, and went, as He was wont, to the Mount of Olives; and His disciples also followed Him. And when He was at the place, He said unto them, "Pray that ye enter not into temptation." And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done." And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Luke ix. 28-31; xxii. 39-44.

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