

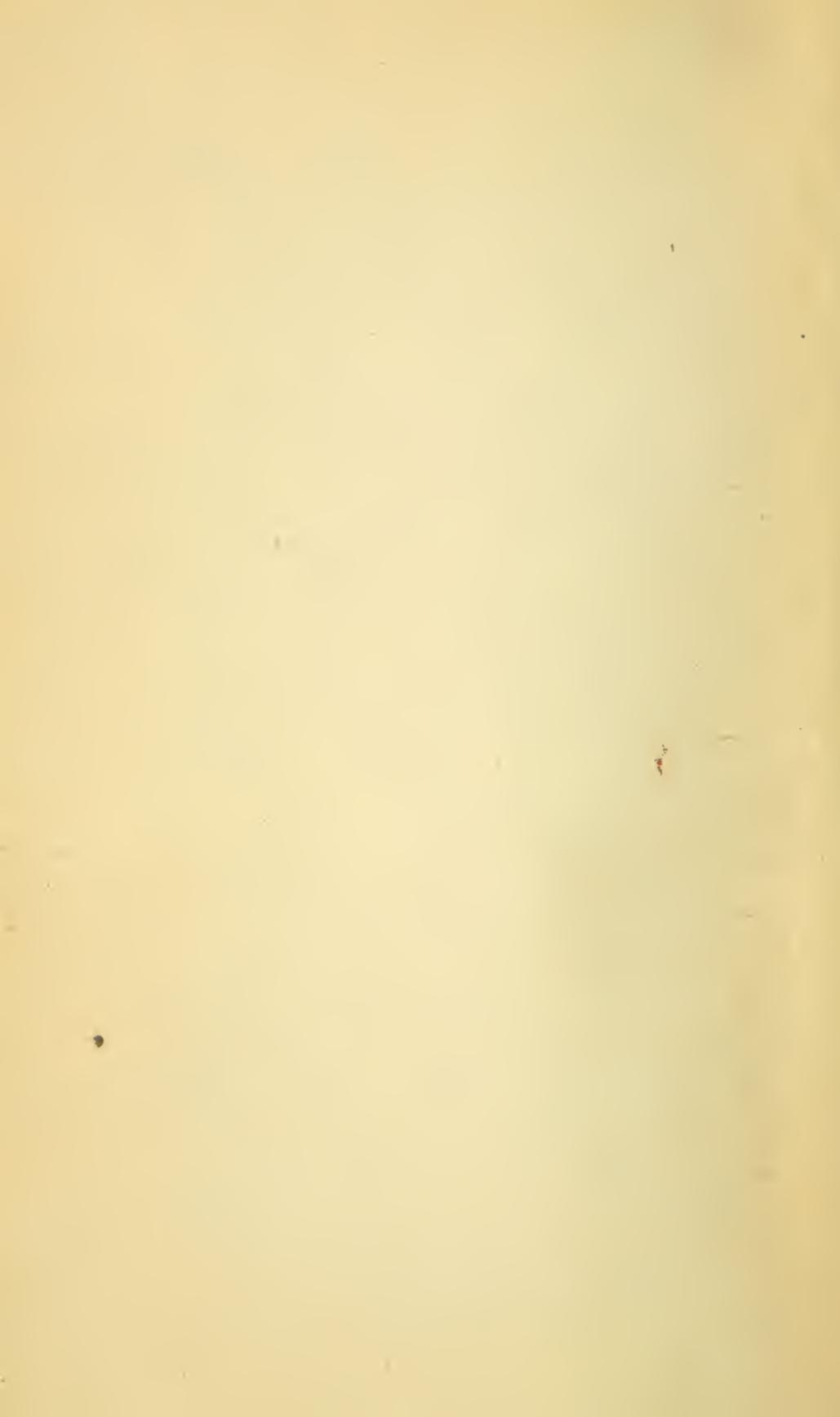
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The mercy-seat, or, Thoughts
on prayer



THE

MERCY-SEAT;

OR,

THOUGHTS ON PRAYER.

BY

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THE
MERCY-SEAT.

I.

INTRODUCTORY.

I. PRAYER A WANT.



LET a visitor from the last-discovered planet come and observe the devotional usages of our race. What does he behold? He sees all Christendom studded with places of worship, to which an aggregate of millions periodically resort. He sees the children of Israel, in their dispersion, supplied with synagogues. Five times a day he hears the muezzin summoning Mohammedan nations to prayer. Where Braminism and Buddhism bear sway, he finds countless multitudes taking the posture of devotion. Africa bows in the constant worship of fetishes.

Let this stranger glance at the religious ruins of our world. Numberless sacred mounds, prostrate temple-columns, and scattered fragments of altars, meet his

eye. Many a mountain and hill, grove and stream, tell of genii who were invoked by former generations. Plutarch steps forward to say, "that if one traverse the world it is possible to find cities without walls, without letters, without kings, without wealth, without coin, without schools and theatres; but a city without a temple, or that practiseth not worship, prayers, and the like, no one ever saw." Athens rises up to tell how she banished the first atheist found within her limits. Seamen weighing anchor, citizens at their festivals, armies on the eve of battle, sing or cry to the gods. The human heart, whether paralyzed with grief and fear or throbbing with joy, demands some superior being to whom it may turn. Wide as the feeling of want and guilt is the recognition of a Deity.

We would like to look into the dark dungeon of the soul of Democritus, or of Thomas Hobbes, and search carefully to see whether no trace of a Supreme Being were left; whether no private altar, though hid and dilapidated, remains. The philosopher Bion, and many another theoretical atheist, when seized by mortal sickness, pray for recovery, and vow to God, as if they never doubted his existence, or his willingness to hear their cries. Men must have a religion of some kind; but the existence of God, or of gods, entitled to worship, is fundamental in all religions; and prayer is universally regarded as an essential part of worship. So far as man is a religious being, he is one that prays.

What is prayer? Well does John Bradford, reformer and martyr, reply, "Prayer is a simple, unfeigned, humble, ardent opening of the heart before God; wherein we either ask things needful, or give

thanks for benefits received." It is not a cool conception, a chain of reasoning, a recitation, the lashed effort of memory. Logic, rhetoric, and mnemonics, are hardly its handmaids, even. Prayer is a devout movement of the soul God-ward; not an endeavor of recollection, but an impulse of emotion; not language so much as desire. It is a humble recognition of God as creator, sovereign, and judge,—the God of providence, upholding and controlling all things. Prayer is a closing of the eyes on things seen and opening them on things unseen. It is penitence vocal, faith making its profession, and love kindling into a flame. It is a heart brought to the altar, a flower opening to the benignant eye of Heaven; it is a putting off the shoes at Horeb; it is a walk to Emmaus; it is to be present in the upper chamber; to sit quietly by the Saviour's side, lean the head on his bosom, and feel the beating of Immanuel's heart.

But who shall teach men to pray? Where is a rational, authoritative rule of worship? We smile at the Indian with his Manitous; we are shocked by the human sacrifices of the Canaanites, the Phœnicians, and Druids. We betake ourselves to the seat of classical refinement, but soon detect a heartlessness which awakens disgust. Passing by and beholding their devotions, we find an altar "To the Unknown God." We hasten to Egypt, the reputed cradle of wisdom. We visit the sacerdotal colleges, and hear the hieroglyphics expounded. But Egyptian divinities and rites are senseless. Priest and people are swayed by the most gloomy superstition, paying their devotion to herbs and insects, to the cat and the crocodile. Can

the Zend-Avesta satisfy us? We are not prepared to turn fire-worshippers; nor can we prostrate ourselves before the Grand Lama. What is there in Hindoo worship on which we can look with complacency? Little better do we find the Koran; there is nothing in fatalism to cheer us; we discover nothing potent or any way valuable in the black stone at Mecca.

Modern speculations, too, infidel and pantheistic, only chill and lead at best to a heartless and godless formality. The race is no wiser in divine things than it was fifty centuries ago, nor any better satisfied with the result of its efforts to commune with Deity. Looking at dark places of the earth, full of the habitations of cruelty; looking at its high places, signalized by abominations under the garb of worship; turning to academic groves, where philosophy has taught her profoundest lessons; perusing the whole history of civilization and of delusions, we can only cry out in despair, Who will show us any good?

My conscience is ill at ease; I have dark forebodings; this inner self, I am assured, is immortal. That there is a holy God, I know; his righteous retribution I dread. Wherewith shall I come before the Lord? In that bitter exclamation, desponding, feverish humanity utters its voice. To look within, and find the necessities of a guilty soul what they are; then look abroad and survey the amount of fruitless effort to arrive at satisfactory communion with Deity, must startle, if not drive to despair. What costly volume, what hoary hermit, what divinely-commissioned priest, what sacred oracle, shall teach us?

Blessed be God, there is an answer. Thanks to him,

there is an authoritative volume which saith, "O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come!" which saith, "There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;" which saith, "Wherefore, let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need;" which saith, "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Here is the Book of Common Prayer for all men. The question is answered. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul!"

II. PRAYER A PRIVILEGE.

The Scriptures everywhere take it for granted that believers will pray. Our Lord does not so much enjoin the duty as teach us how to perform it. All who are adopted into his family will of course cry, "Abba, Father;" for a prayerless disciple is a paradox. So characteristic is prayer of the Christian that beyond almost anything else it inspires confidence in the sincerity of his profession. When Ananias was sent with a fraternal salutation to one whom he had known only as a furious persecutor, the Lord said, "Behold, he prayeth." Had he never prayed before? He had only said his prayers; he had made prayers, many and long; had punctiliously been at prayers, without ever praying.

Bending the knee, or pouring out words toward heaven, is not devotion. The man who rejects Jesus of Nazareth, or hates his true followers, cannot pray. Prayer is the cry of penitence and humility. In order

to pray really, a man must feel his sins, see his Saviour, and, because he cannot help it, cry, "Lord, Lord!" One flash of divine light teaches the Pharisee more that he really needs to know than all of Gamaliel's lectures. What a change it effects in him! A moment since, his very breath was a stream of fire to destroy this sect of Nazarenes, and the name of Him by whom they are called; now he breathes in supplicance to their Lord and his. He is a young convert; all young converts pray. This is the beginning and pledge of piety.

The Platonist was wont to reason thus: "He that prays is either worthy to receive what he asks, or he is unworthy; if the former, he will obtain it, though he ask not; if the latter, he shall not obtain it, though he ask." But where is the worthy recipient to be found? Alas for us, if we were to receive no more than we deserve! Overwhelmed by guilt, sinking under the load of our necessities, what shall we do? Application to God we must make; a hearing we must have, or we perish. Can he be approached?

Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him! Behold, all these worlds above us have come forth at his bidding; by his hand are upheld and guided; every particle and every movement are constantly observed by him; and in his own peculiar home thousand thousands of holy angels minister unto him; to each thought, each note, of theirs he gives heed. But does God care for men? Can he afford time, and can the universe afford to have him stoop to the cries of little creatures on this poor planet?

Let it be announced that once in the world's life of

six thousand years, Jehovah will hold his court on earth; that he will bow the heavens and come down to hear petitions from the children of men; that all who will may come and offer each a request. Should we not look for a universal jubilee? Would not the mountain-tops be lighted up to guide thronging pilgrims to the spot? Would not all the valleys ring with hallelujahs at such condescension? Would not every hymn to the end of time rehearse the event?

Widen the supposition: let it be an annual visit which the King of kings will make for this purpose; what should then be said? Advance farther, yes, to the amplitude of actual facts, to the gracious certainty that, not yearly alone, but every hour, every moment, God stands ready to hear the supplication of each child of Adam; not merely one solitary address, but all devout aspirations, however multiplied. Who has a mind large enough to comprehend, or a heart warm enough to speak of a truth like this?

Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace. Not the throne of state; not the throne of judgment, such as Daniel saw, to which we are not invited but shall be summoned. We lift our eyes far above Sinai, above Ararat, to the "hill of God," where is the throne of grace. Does not a holy rapture kindle in every eye that discovers it, that sees the rainbow round about it, the sea of glass before it, and the pure river proceeding out of it? The skill of mortals never fashioned, poetry never dreamed of such. Was the ancient sanctuary gorgeous and glorious with its holiest of all, its golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, and over it the cherubim shad-

owing the mercy-seat? That was but dimly symbolic of the great Propitiatory on high. Is there not some mistake in regard to our being invited to do anything more than look from a distance at that wonderful object,—that we are invited actually to approach it? The One who speaks knows whereof he affirms. We are not sent on a pilgrimage to Rome or Jerusalem; not bidden to climb the stairs of St. Peter, nor bow toward Mecca. To the most costly throne in the universe are we invited to come; and how freely!

It was said anciently of an earnest female Christian, "She is modestly impudent before God." Who is there that asks up to the measure of his privileges, up to the measure of God's ability and readiness to grant, up to the scope and full encouragement of that throne to which he is invited? Other thrones are usually guarded. Access is infrequent, always difficult, and often impracticable. Here, with a right spirit, one may go boldly, and expect free access.

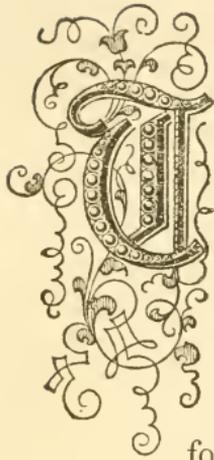
When may this be enjoyed? In time of need. Sickness is a time of need; disaster is a time of need; business perplexity, domestic perplexity, is a time of need. It is a time of need when the young man goes forth to an untried situation; when the husband and father leaves his family for a season; when the waywardness of children fills parental hearts with solicitude. Does the hour ever pass which is not spiritually a time of need,—need of the mercy of forgiveness, need of strengthening, illuminating grace? Does the moment ever come when there is no exposure from a wicked world, a busy adversary, or a roving heart; when no more of light, peace, faith, or fervor remains

to be desired? Constant as is our want, so constant is access to the throne and the ready ear of Him who sits thereon. He has no set hours for audience. From earliest morning till nightfall, and onward through the night-watches, he bends patiently to every suppliant. For each one there is a private passage up to the throne; and from every sick-room, every nursery, every counting-room or workshop, may be found direct approach to the mercy-seat.

II.

EFFICACY OF PRAYER.

I. EFFICACY DEFINED.



THE main question is not the general acceptableness to God of devotional exercises. That suitable addresses of any kind are pleasing to him, there can be no doubt; this is a dictate of natural religion. But there are those in Christian lands who maintain that only thanksgiving and praise are appropriate forms of devotion. They never venture upon a request; they define worship as nearly synonymous with adoration, and exclude supplication.

Petition is now contemplated; not a piously discursive movement of mind toward sacred themes; not merely devout meditation on nature, eternity, the heavens, or on Him who sits enthroned above them. Shall the soul come face to face with Him who is a spirit and offer specific requests?

It is not maintained that other devotional exercises are inappropriate or valueless. We only oppose the idea of those who deny all direct efficacy in supplication, and who affirm that properly there is no such thing as an answer to petitions; that all the good derived is by way of reaction on the worshipper, his

heart being thus fitted for blessings. This is subversive of the main office and chief value of prayer, which, as an appointment of Heaven, has real power.

Belief in this truth is necessary in order to derive even reflex benefits. The inner world is not moved except by a fulcrum outside itself. Only when duties are performed in obedience to the command of God, and so for their own sake, is there healthful reaction. To ask God for humility or faith, simply because the asking tends to make one humble and believing; to ask him for temporal favors only as an incitement to greater effort in obtaining them ourselves, is a species of ceremonious mockery, of devotional impertinence, which no honest person will be likely to practise. Complimentary petitions are an insult to God, and too circuitous a method for upright men. Praying on such a scheme has no heart. There is needed a belief that God answers prayer; that suitable requests, offered with the proper motive, and with faith in Christ, do certainly bring answers, which otherwise would not come. The main benefit of prayer lies in its efficiency; that it is the appointed means to that end; that it is the provided conduit for certain blessings. Neglect that, and these refreshing streams will not flow.

In the spiritual kingdom, as in the kingdom of nature, are certain universal laws, among which is that of cause and effect, means and end. Amidst the abounding illustrations of this appointment, we find supplication to be an ordained condition of certain favors from God. The chief point is, whether devout petitions are, in any proper sense, answered; whether the requests of a suppliant do literally stand in the

relation of means toward securing what is asked? Does God bestow that which he would not bestow but for petitions? Does he arrange his providential and gracious dispensations in accordance with prayer?

No one will affirm that everything called prayer is effective. Much that passes under the name of devotion is of little use; but can anything be more unreasonable than to argue from such abuse against what is genuine? In speaking of prayer, it is assumed that there enter into it the essential properties of faith and love,—faith in the mediation of Christ and the promises of God; love to God as the highest motive, and disinterested love to man, with which penitence and humility are always associated.

As for proof of its efficacy, it is enough that God requires prayer; that he has promised to answer it, and for thousands of years has been fulfilling the promise; while, on the other hand, he rebukes the prayerless. How are such requirements and assurances to be taken? As mere oriental imagery, setting forth the simple truth that acts of devotion have a salutary influence upon the worshipper? Does our God thus mock his children? Is his merely a figurative sincerity and fidelity? Let his own word interpret: "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." Did not the prayer of Moses stay the plague of fiery serpents; that of Joshua arrest the sun and moon; that of Elijah bring back the departed soul of the widow's

son; that of Hezekiah bring destruction upon the Assyrians?

A childlike confidence in the efficacy of prayer characterizes the hidden life of a believer, and is the soul of spiritual Christianity. A conviction that beyond its reflex influence, independent of its manifold benign effects upon the suppliant, genuine prayer has a positive and direct agency in securing blessings both present and future, both upon the petitioner and others, — such a belief, accompanied by a devout performance of the duty, should exist in every renewed heart. Experience supplies ample confirmation, every age being able to boast of its heroes who, as princes, have had power with God and with men, and have prevailed. Not by prophets and apostles alone has such prayer been offered. Each generation furnishes examples. In reference to the defeat of the Emperor Julian's designs, Nazianzen exclaims, "How many myriads and squadrons of men were there whom we, only praying, and God willing, discomfited!" The reformers of the sixteenth century were eminently men who believed and illustrated the same truth. "There is a certain omnipotence in prayer,"¹ said one of them. Queen Mary confessed that she feared the prayers of John Knox more than an army of ten thousand men. Through the whole history of the church there have been men who, by this instrument, "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the

¹ Est quædam precum omnipotentia.

armies of the aliens." "Prayers and tears are the Christian's all-prevalent armor."¹

II. DOUBTS AND DIFFICULTIES.

One of the early English deists expired with these words on his lips: "If there is a God, I desire that he may have mercy on me." Forlorn skeptic! The abyss of darkness is opening to his view. Perverse speculation and vicious indulgence have deadened his moral sensibilities; yet, amidst the last struggle, he is aroused in dismay to the consciousness that mercy is needed. But what an impious effusion is this paroxysm of deistic piety! With an atheistic doubt, a possible Deity is invoked!

As a general thing, the heathen pray abundantly in their way, but look to sacrifices and penances to propitiate the imaginary beings addressed. Of a fixed connection between simple prayer and the gift of blessings, they know nothing. Philosophy brings them little light. Maximus Tyrius devotes a whole dissertation to the proof that we have no need of prayer at all. Seneca says, "It is disgraceful to keep wearying the gods. What need is there of vows? Make thine own self happy." With respect to persevering in a wise regulation of the mind, he exclaims, "How foolish is it to wish to pray for it, when thou canst give it to thyself! There is no need of lifting hands to heaven." There was at Crete a statue of Jupiter devoid of ears, — a symbol of the philosopher's deity in all ages. A

¹ *Preces et lachrymæ arma Christianorum.*

glance at the writings of Lord Herbert and his infidel successors in England and on the continent of Europe supplies painful illustrations of this.

Even in the minds of many pious persons there is a vagueness of belief touching the efficacy of prayer. People truly Christian and devout are sometimes tormented with the skeptical suggestion, "What profit shall we have if we pray unto him?" These difficulties present themselves to some minds as embarrassments, and to others as objections. If harbored, they prove a hindrance, and may prove the death of prayer.

One difficulty arises, as is alleged, from the exalted character of God. Will the Lord of the universe, inquires a spurious humility, an affected reverence, — will a Being of infinite majesty stoop to the petitions of man? Is it not derogatory to him to suppose that he will occupy himself with the petty affairs of this little planet; that, infinitely glorious and forever independent in himself, he can stoop to interests so insignificant as mine? Is it not presumptuous to think of catching his attention, and still more of laying before him any of my small concerns?

But was it beneath the Almighty to create a being of such little importance as yourself, and to arrange all the minute circumstances that concern you? Can it be any more derogatory to him to superintend those affairs? Here is one of his chief glories, that he constantly presides over the smallest objects and events, no less than the larger, — over motes in our atmosphere, no less than over worlds beyond our vision; numbering the very hairs of our heads, and caring for every sparrow that falls to the ground.

Enough for us that God himself does not regard it as beneath him. We are not called upon to be more careful of his dignity than he is. His infinite exaltation did not suffer by creating numberless animalculæ too microscopic for our vision, nor is his providential glory tarnished by caring for the lilies. "Are ye not of more value than many sparrows?" Are not your spiritual necessities of more importance than your temporal? If he hear the young ravens when they cry, will he not hear his own children? If he sends the food which perisheth, will he not send the true bread from heaven? If he numbers your hairs, will he not your tears also? You have mistaken the nature of true dignity. You are ascribing somewhat of human pride to the King of kings. You seem not to understand that one of the brightest glories of the Supreme Being is his gracious condescension. Prayer and providence correspond to each other. If there is nothing beneath the divine oversight, there is nothing too trivial to be a proper subject of devout mention to God. He is particularly honored by being recognized as presiding over the minutest equally with the most magnificent objects and occurrences.

The benevolence of God is sometimes pleaded as a reason adverse to prayer. "He is infinitely disposed to grant every good gift without our asking; his desire to bestow favors cannot be augmented; while to ask implies an unwillingness, and is, therefore, an affront."

Those who advocate prayer do not yield to others in their appreciation of the divine goodness. Has any one who prays intelligently an idea that he renders God more gracious? We have no suspicion that he

is indifferent to human affairs, as the Epicureans taught; or that he is indisposed to do for men all that boundless benevolence can consistently do. By his own nature he is most benignly communicative; yet not by necessity nor blindly, but in the exercise of a wise discrimination.

We believe that other attributes besides unmingled love enter into the character of God, and that he has other ends in view besides the display of this attribute in dispensing bounties. We believe justice to be no less a divine perfection. We believe the whole race of Adam are under a curse; that all the good they experience is purely of grace, and that one design of the present economy is to make them feel this. Well does it harmonize with that to make receiving dependent upon asking. It is no disparagement to a man's benevolence to say that he is most ready to give if only requested. Does it impeach the goodness of God that, while he has rendered the harvest certain, he has ordained that seed-sowing shall precede? Are devout entreaties any more derogatory to him than the labors of a husbandman? It is no more superfluous to offer minute petitions than to sow kernels of seed, the harvest from which God foresaw in past eternity.

How do you know, inquires the skeptic, that events would not occur just as they do if no prayer were offered? How do you know, we reply, that they would occur as they do if prayer were not offered? How do you know that this does not stand in the relation of means to an end, as much as anything else which precedes those events? Will it not be as well to take the testimony of Him who alone can answer the question?

He to whom all his works are known from the foundation of the world has enjoined prayer as a duty; has given explicit promises that when duly offered it shall be answered; has furnished an illustrative record of numerous instances of its efficacy; and what more need be said?

The honest mind, however, as well as the one uniformly skeptical, finds difficulties, and is sometimes fiercely assailed with doubts. The inquiry comes, Is not God omniscient? Why, then, tell to him wants, or express wishes in regard to events distant or future, which he already understands infinitely better than the suppliant? An English deist¹ employs this as an argument against all prayer, and scoffs at the idea of addressing God in any way, since all that can be said is perfectly known to him before it is uttered.

True, it is not for the purpose of information that God bids us pour out our hearts before him. He never sleeps, is never languid, nor unobservant; but by his omniscience he sees that prayer is the most effectual means through which the sinner can obtain the self-knowledge he needs, that this is indispensable as evidence that the petitioner feels his own wants and the wants of others, and that the exercise of believing supplication is the most important means which could be ordained for securing certain results in the great spiritual kingdom.

Another difficulty, sometimes avowed as an objection, is the immutability of God. His purposes, covering the whole course of human events, were formed in eternity, and are irreversible. Hence, affirms the ob-

¹ Chubb.

jector, it seems vain and impertinent to offer petitions.

Thanks that he is unchangeable! It never was designed that prayer should move him to vary his plan of government, or any particular appointment. Our security and confidence are grounded upon this very truth of divine unchangeableness; for among the eternal and unalterable purposes of Jehovah was this: that prayer should have part as an agency, as a means in our world; that it should be as truly indispensable and efficient as any other. The succession of events he so pre-arranged that each petition was to have its place and influence no less certainly than the sowing of seed before a crop, or the promise of a reward before the doing of an act. In order, then, that an answer may come, it is so far from being necessary that God should change his purpose or system, it is necessary that he should not change. He must reverse one of his precious decrees before prayer can cease to have efficiency—can cease to be a real, living power among the agencies of his all-wise appointment. If there were any force in the objection, it would lie equally against every form of human activity, and would stop short of nothing but the starkest fatalism. God from all eternity determined, and in his Word has bound himself to hear prayer; he administers his providence under this as truly as under his other decrees; and he is unchangeably faithful. In the whole realm of divine government there is nothing more certain than that we shall “have profit,” direct and reflexive, primary and incidental, if we call upon him. Prayer is not only a line for drawing the boat to the

shore ; it is a line attaching it to the majestic, swift-sailing ship. Being drawn, it has influence also in steering.

III. PRAYER A TELEGRAPH.

It was a noble achievement of modern science, when the Atlantic and Pacific shores of our country were brought into immediate intercourse. Still more sublime was the event of instantaneous communication between two remote continents, — when persons began to talk across and under the ocean, and it was supposed that almost as readily as messages are sent at night from the outer door to the pillow of a physician, they might be sent through the dark and silent sea to a friend thousands of miles away. No intercontinental event so stirring had transpired since Columbus's first voyage of more than two hundred days. It was fitting that there should be demonstrations of delight in the ringing of bells, in processions and illuminations, at an occurrence which was announced simultaneously in the evening journals of two hemispheres, and which was to give impulse to the whole civilized world, helping on to a practical ubiquity of enterprising minds, and to a recognition of the brotherhood of all nations.

If now from this world, as Valentia Harbor, there were carried a cable across the vast ocean of space, touching at the moon ; then at the nearest planet of our system ; thence to the farthest one ; thence to some fixed star ; and so onward, from constellation to constellation, till that distant place were reached,

where we may suppose is the more immediate presence of God — the Trinity Bay of the universe, — and thus between that remote abode and our world, this mere islet of the great sea, instantaneous communications could take place, what a sensation ought it to create! How should the mountain-tops be lighted up! How would the spheres give a new and louder chorus; the sun come forth from his tabernacle with a more smiling face, and the pale moon fill her horns anew;

“ While all the stars that round her burn,
And all the planets in their turn,
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.”

Such a spiritual telegraph exists; it was laid centuries ago, and has held two worlds in unbroken connection.

The great mass of men, however, seem to have no practical belief in any real intercourse between heaven and earth. The only Son of Him who put the worlds thus in communication has come hither to bear witness to the truth: “ Pray to thy Father in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.” Did not that Son come from the bosom of the Father? Is he not perfectly acquainted with the whole system of intercourse, and with all arrangements at the celestial station?

A well-known European astronomer was accustomed to announce his discoveries in a publication called *Nuncius Siderius*, or Herald of the Heavens. There have been spiritual astronomers, men familiar with the celestial mechanism, who have published their observations. It is certainly pertinent to take the testi-

mony of witnesses who have made proof of the reality and power of this instrument. Going back to an early period, and looking into the biography of the father of the faithful, we find this wonderful apparatus in full play. Abraham said unto God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before thee!" and the answer was, "As for Ishmael, I have heard thee." In the memorable intercession for Sodom, what rapid and repeated transmissions from earth to heaven and from heaven to earth! The great general and lawgiver of Israel, at a certain juncture, said, "I beseech thee show me thy glory;" and the answer was returned, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee." Samuel, urged by the elders of Israel to give them a king, prayed to the Lord; and the Lord said unto Samuel, "Hearken unto the voice of the people in all they say unto thee." In critical circumstances, David inquired of the Lord, "Shall I go and smite these Philistines?" and the word came to David, "Go and smite the Philistines." One of the longest despatches of old was at the dedication of Solomon's temple. The immediate response ran thus: "I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication which thou hast made before me." It was in the temple, and while at prayer, the message came to Paul, "Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem." Answers have also come without words in the bestowment of what was asked. While Abraham's servant was saying, "I pray thee send me good speed this day," behold Rebecca presented herself. When the children of Israel fell into idolatry in the very light of burning Sinai, Moses besought the Lord, "Turn from thy fierce wrath," "and the Lord repented

of the evil which he thought to do unto his people." Samuel asks for thunder and rain amidst the wheat harvest, and "the Lord sent thunder and rain that day." Elijah prays for rain, and the heaven gives rain. He prays for the restoration of a widow's son, and the soul of the child comes into him again. The supplication of Asa went up, "Help us, O Lord our God;" so "the Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah." Peter prays in the room of Dorcas, and she opens her eyes. Can any one doubt the reality of intercourse between heaven and earth through the medium of prayer?

This spiritual telegraph is no private enterprise; nor is it designed for the few, but for the many, and is open gratuitously to all. The old man and the child, the learned man and the one who can neither read nor write, the millionaire and the beggar, are alike welcome to the freest use.

There are no mistakes in transmission. Much as it may be crowded, various as messages may be in length, topic, and character, they are sent forward without loss of a word. Be the language what it may, grammatical imperfections what they may, there is no confusion and no inaccuracy when despatches reach their destination. Peter on the house-top, the thief on the cross, Daniel in the lions' den, Jeremiah in the dungeon, Jonah in the depths of the sea, may alike send up a word. Every one, at home or abroad, by land or sea, in the counting-room, the closet, or the sanctuary, can lay his hands at once upon the keys of this divine instrument. Break or derangement can never take place. Constant access and constant success are the privilege of all.

Signals often come from above, sensible intimations from the other world. The first recorded prayer in the Bible is Abraham's, when Jehovah specially revealed himself. "Thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear." With what promptness should these divine hints be heeded! With what eagerness should every such gracious monition of our Father's special desire to communicate with his children be noticed! It is peculiarly the time for Esther to make known her requests when the king, stretching out his sceptre, invites her approach.

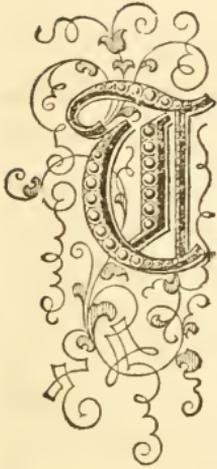
Here is the ladder Jacob saw, reaching to heaven, and on which angels ascend and descend. Who need ever be lonely? Here is a nerve going direct to the central heart of the unseen world, and along which every feeling, every desire, may pulsate immediately and sensibly to Him who is head of the church; and along which in return the Holy Spirit sends the fulness of his consolation to waiting souls.

A British soldier in India was lying near death. He had neglected and even reviled religion; but now he was dying, and had no one near to tell him how he might be saved. He bethought himself of a Christian friend living at the distance of one hundred and sixty miles, to whom he sent a telegraphic message, "I am dying; what shall I do to be saved?" Instantly the message went back to him, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Thus messages kept passing till the soldier sank in death; and he expired with words of hope and joy on his lips. To every wounded, sin-sick mortal there is telegraphed from the best of friends, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! Look unto me, and be saved!"

III.

THE BEING ADDRESSED.

I. GOD THE SON.



THE character of every system of religious belief is determined mainly by the received character of the being worshipped. The kind of homage paid shows what views are entertained of him, and what influence those views have upon the worshipper.

A personal, intelligent, supreme Being alone can be the proper object of worship.

The dreamy mood which utters itself in a semi-religious dialect; the liveliness of fancy which, with impassioned or plaintive language, apostrophizes clouds, sun, heaven, nature, the unknown God, is no part of Christian worship. A great deal of poetical soliloquizing passes under the name of devotion. Rhapsody on the infinite, the beautiful, the good, may abound, and there be no just apprehension of the adorable Creator, and no emotion of true piety. If anything be adored, it is the stars, trees, and streams. We have seen these mawkish idolaters

“Pluck a wild daisy, moralize on that,
And drop a tear for an expiring gnat,
Watch the light clouds o'er distant hills that pass,
Or write a sonnet to a blade of grass;”

we have found them alive to all that is vast and beautiful in creation, but with hearts apparently hard as the frequented rocks they sit upon. It is one thing to offer the sacrifice of a contrite spirit, and quite another to burn incense on high places; "to take up the star of their god Remphan, figures which they have made to worship them."

That God as such, or that God the Father, is to be worshipped, no one questions. But is Jesus Christ entitled to divine honors? If not, then most of the prayers offered by evangelical Christians for centuries have been, not a volume of sweet-smelling incense, but a cloud of continued offence to Jehovah. The settlement of this question depends upon Holy Scripture. The proposition is not, Shall we pay to him, as the Son of God, a subordinate homage; shall we honor him as an ambassador or representative of Deity? but, Shall we render to him supreme religious worship; shall we honor him in the same way, to the same extent, and for the same reason, that we honor the Father?"

To exhibit a complete view of Bible testimony, it would be necessary to examine the titles given to our Lord, as God, the true God, the great God, the Lord of glory; to glance at the peculiar works of Deity ascribed to him, as the creation and preservation of all things; the miracles wrought by him; forgiveness of sins granted by him; and the future judgment to be dispensed by him; as well as other proofs that the Son is equal and one with the Father.

Waiving that primary evidence, we will examine the direct testimony. Even in this department, we pass by certain classes of proof-texts and all the Old

Testament Scriptures so far as pertinent to the subject. We also pass over those acts toward Christ in the period of his humiliation, and before he rose from the dead, and ascended on high; such as that of the wise men who "fell down and worshipped him;" of the leper who "cometh and worshippeth him;" of the ruler who "came and worshipped him;" of the disciples who "came and worshipped him, saying, Truly thou art the Son of God;" of the Syrophenician woman who "came and worshipped him;" and of the mother of the sons of Zebedee who "came to him worshipping." The reason why we refrain from urging these as instances of supreme, intelligent homage, and as such proving the divinity of Jesus, is, that in each of them an objector may with comparative plausibility raise the question whether, at that period, any one had a distinct apprehension that in the highest sense Christ was the Son of God; and hence, whether these persons intended anything more than social respect, though most profound, — such respect as they paid the Messiah, without having attained to the full conception of what he was to be. The argument is abundantly cogent without these citations.

Looking at our Lord's own claims, we find him declaring "that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father." This is of itself explicit; but the context shuts us up to one interpretation. Jesus had just healed the impotent man, and it was done on the Sabbath. For this reason, the Jews were so enraged that they sought his life. "But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto and I work:" God the Father continues constantly his prov-

idential operations; he pauses not on the Sabbath. I the Son, by the same right, do likewise. Was not this Christ's meaning? Did not his hearers so understand him? Let the next verse answer: "Therefore, the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God." Here was the time for Christ to explain if his hearers were laboring under any important misconception as to his meaning. No honest man could suffer them to continue in a mistake less grave; how then in one that is so vital? But what did the Great Teacher do? Did he rectify or did he substantiate the inference which the Jews made? A few moments after, and in immediate confirmatory connection, he said to them, "As the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." The case stands thus: The Jews are exasperated against Christ for a supposed profanation of the Sabbath; Christ justifies his act on the ground that he, as well as God the Father, is Lord of the Sabbath. The Jews are all the more excited by this, thinking it blasphemous in him to claim equality with God the Father. Jesus immediately sanctions the construction thus put upon his words, by affirming that he does now and will yet perform divine works as well as the Father; and hence that he is equally entitled to divine honor. Plainly does he claim religious worship for himself.

Turn to John xiv. 13. "And whatsoever ye shall

ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." To offer supplications in the name of Christ, with the expectation of receiving answers directly from him, is to worship him. Open to the baptismal formulary, and hear the risen Jesus proclaiming, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Accordingly, believers were baptized in the name of Christ. But that is an act of solemn religious dedication, implying explicit recognition of the divine dignity and authority of him in whose name the rite is administered. From these passages it is abundantly evident that Jesus Christ claims divine honors in the highest degree.

Did he, while personally present on earth, do anything clearly sanctioning such worship? We have already volunteered to exclude from testimony to be cited numerous instances, in which, apparently, to say the least, individuals designed to pay him a kind of homage which they would not have paid to any one whom they regarded as merely man. But after Christ's resurrection, — the event to which he had referred his disciples as justifying his claims, — he received homage repeatedly before ascending to heaven. That homage must have been comparatively intelligent; and the presumption is that it was paid and received as strictly religious. The women who had been to the sepulchre, when hailed by Jesus, "came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him." Afterward, the eleven disciples, "when they saw him, worshipped him."

If, however, any are skeptical in regard to these

instances, no one can have a reasonable doubt as to that of Thomas when he said, "My Lord and my God!" This was not an exclamation so much as a confession of faith. The incredulous disciple, beholding Christ with his own eyes, is bidden by him to examine the print of the nails and spear; thus convincing himself of the reality of Christ's person. He is then charged, "Be not faithless, but believing." "And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God!" The connection and deliberateness of the reply are noteworthy. Jesus presented to the senses and to the mind of the disciple, who had probably before this relinquished his unwarrantable doubts, the proofs that he was the very same person who had claimed equality with the Father, and had also predicted his own death and resurrection. He says to Thomas substantially, Can you doubt any longer? Will you withhold proper homage? The penitent and believing man then "answered and said unto him, My Lord," and not only that, but "my God." Here is a calm, reverential, direct profession of faith. Christ claimed religious worship, and confirmed that claim by sanctioning the act itself.

Apostolic and primitive practice is confirmatory. Opening to the twenty-fourth chapter of Luke's Gospel, we see the Saviour leading his disciples out to Bethany. We behold him parted from them and carried up into heaven; and "they worshipped him." We pass on to the first chapter of the Acts. In proceeding to fill the place of Judas, the eleven "prayed and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen."

The connection shows that it was the Lord Jesus whom they addressed. Paul and Barnabas, having ordained elders in every church, "commended them to the Lord on whom they believed." Contemplate the martyrdom of Stephen. This dying witness for the truth ejaculates, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Here is a man, "full of grace and the Holy Ghost," who sees "the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God;" who in his last moments asks forgiveness for his murderers, asks it of Christ; and who, in surrendering his spirit, surrenders it in prayer to the Lord Jesus.

Paul was in the habit of praying to Christ. In reference to one grievous trial, the messenger of Satan that buffeted him, he mentions particularly that he "besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him." In his second communication to the Thessalonian Christians he prays again, "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work." Examining his devout salutations, and those of other apostles, we find them to be uniformly on this wise: "Grace to you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." We listen to the apostolic benedictions, and find the same uniformity: "Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love."

We hearken to inspired doxologies, those comprehensive summaries of deliberate, supreme homage, and their testimony is, "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; To

him be glory both now and forever. Amen." Indeed, so habituated were the apostles and other first Christians to pray to Jesus, that they came to be designated, "Those who call on his name." Yes, before and after they were called Christians at Antioch, they were spoken of under the descriptive title, a kind of appellation, "They who call on his name." Eusebius, the early ecclesiastical historian, testifies, "Moreover, all the psalms and hymns of the brethren, written from the beginning by the faithful, celebrate the praises of Christ, the Word of God, and attribute divinity to him." Little as the heathen knew of Christians, they had observed that this practice was characteristic of them; for Pliny says, "They sing a hymn together to Christ as God."

Summarily, then, Christ claimed equal honor with the Father; when that was paid to him, he showed no displeasure; the inspired expositors of his doctrine and example prayed to him; and so common was the same practice among their immediate disciples as to give rise to the characteristic designation, "Those that call on his name." It follows either that Jesus is not the faithful and true witness, and the New Testament not a safe and sufficient rule of practice, or else that Christ is entitled to the highest form of worship. The unavoidable alternative to which we are brought is, either that Jesus Christ was an impostor, arrogating the honor due to another being, encouraging his disciples to bestow and to insist upon the same, or else he honestly and deservedly claimed supreme homage.

Now, would he not shrink with horror from assum-

ing or accepting honors that exceed his real dignity? Such a quick perception of all proprieties, and such an unbending rectitude as his, would have made him promptly repel every approach to idolatry. Cornelius fell down at the feet of Peter and worshipped him; but Peter took him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself also am a man." When, in vision, John fell down to worship before the angel, whom doubtless he had mistaken for the Son of God, the messenger said to him, "See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book; worship God!" Was the holy Jesus less jealous for the honor of the divine name than inconstant Peter, or than one of the angels who had been bidden to worship him? Nay, let Christ be true, and every man, every angel, a liar. We are compelled to deny common integrity to Jesus of Nazareth, or else yield him religious homage.

Something more than the obeisance of social regard, the highest of mere civil deference, is challenged. Courtesies and patronage from mortals the Lord Jesus does not ask. Bolingbroke, Gibbon, Rousseau, and many another infidel, have spoken well of him. One Roman emperor proposed to deify him, to have him enrolled among the gods of the Pantheon. Another heathen emperor actually erected a temple to his honor. Compliments of this kind are common in Christendom, but are architectural affronts to the Eternal Son. All men are bound to honor him "even as they honor the Father;" "he that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father." Impiety or idolatry is the alternative. If he be not truly God, anything like worship

of him is an abomination to the Father; if truly God, then to withhold worship is equally an abomination. This is a question of Christianity or infidelity; Christianity or Mohammedanism; Christianity or paganism. "Never will I consent to that," replied Chosroes, king of Persia, to the Christian emperor who proposed peace, — "never will I consent to that till you renounce him who was crucified, whom you call God, and till with me you adore the sun." There can be no compromise, no middle ground. Christ's enemies do not wish it; the Father will not have it. "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

II. THE HOLY SPIRIT.

"What is God?" said King Hiero to Simonides. The philosopher, surprised at so unexpected a question, desired one day to consider it; that being past, he desired two more, then three, until, in the end, he frankly confessed that the more he considered the question, the less able was he to answer. Rare instance of candor! The confession of all honestly reflective minds must be, that there is need of teaching from on high, that God only can comprehend his own nature, and that he only may prescribe the mode of religious worship, as well as determine who is its proper object.

Is the Holy Spirit to be addressed in prayer? A question eminently practical. When it is considered that since creation there have been only two great divine manifestations,—the gift of the Son and the gift of the Spirit; that the coming of the Spirit, for applying redemption, is no less indispensable than the advent of Christ himself; that every renewed soul now on earth, or gone to paradise, is a monument of his re-creating energy; that all spiritual life here is only a proof of his efficient presence,—it will be acknowledged that this is a truly vital theme. As the Father, God is over us; as the Son, God is with us; as the Holy Spirit, God is within us. Only by the Spirit and through the Son do we come to the Father. Earlier revelation was, for the most part, of God absolutely, with intimations of a plurality of persons; then more and more clearly the prophetic, and at length personal, revelation of Immanuel; while upon his return to glory commenced the present dispensation of the Spirit. Under this economy, to slight the Holy Spirit is an offence similar in aggravation to the rejecting of Christ by the Jews. Crimson as was that sin, it was not unpardonable. He who came to bear witness of the truth, though claiming that all men should honor him even as they honor the Father, yet taught that the most heinous sin, the sin which infinite mercy cannot forgive, is one against not the Father nor himself, but the Holy Ghost.

Why is there no more heard now from the pulpit and in social exhortation regarding the dignity and claims, as well as offices, of the Holy Spirit? Why is there no more of study to know what the Scriptures teach respecting him? Why no more of prayer to

him? As we treat him, so may we expect to be treated by him.

We cannot better begin an inquiry into what the adorable Spirit has taught respecting himself in Holy Writ than by supplication to him, the author of illumination. We may well adopt the words of one in the third century, Cyprian, who, in composing his discourse on the Holy Spirit, commenced with a solemn address, of which this is a part: "O Holy Spirit, be thou present, and from heaven shed down thy consolations on those that expect thee; sanctify the temple of our body, and consecrate it a habitation for thyself. Make those souls joyful with thy presence who desire thee. Make the house fit for thee, the inhabitant; adorn thy chamber and surround the place of thy rest with a variety of virtues; strew the pavement with ornaments; let thy mansion shine with the brightness of carbuncles and precious stones; and let the odors of all thy gifts inwardly discover themselves; let thy fragrant balsam perfume thy residence, and expel whatever is noisome and the spring of corruption; do thou make this our joy stable and lasting; and this renovation of thy creature do thou continue forever in unfading beauty."

It holds to reason, and accords with all right and reverent feelings, that, in contemplating this branch of the sublime truth of triune Godhead, we should carefully consult the lively oracles.

A moment may well be spent upon the Scripture names and titles of the Holy Spirit. He is called the Comforter, the Spirit, the Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of

the Lord, the Spirit of glory and of God, the Spirit of promise, the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation. It is not spirit in general to which reference is now made, nor a spirit, but the Holy Ghost as personally revealed; not divine gifts, graces, or operations, but the Holy Spirit, sharing the divine essence, one with the Father and the Son, in coequal and coeternal existence and attributes.

The simple term *spirit* is indeed used to denote air or wind; hence, too, any unseen powerful influence, including divine energy. So, too, the phrase spirit of God, and equivalent phrases, are employed by sacred writers to designate divine efficacy, without reference to personal and official distinctions in the Godhead. But however numerous these passages, their use does not conflict with the fact that there are other passages in which the same or similar terms denote a personal agent.

The main point to be established is the personality of the Holy Spirit. That done, other branches of Bible teaching on this subject assume their right form and place in the believer's apprehension. Against this the chief assaults of error have been made, from the time that Sabellius, in the third century, taught that there is but one person in the Godhead, down to the present day.

In citing texts of Scripture, it is well to select, for the most part, not from poetic and more impassioned portions of the Bible, but from the didactic and narrative; in other words, the plainest and least figurative. The proofs here following are not from one writer merely, but from many, and in almost no instance from

a passage where the rhetorical figure of personification might naturally be expected.

In the first place, personal properties are attributed to the Holy Spirit. Thus knowledge: "For the Spirit searcheth all things," — searcheth, has a clear understanding of. That something besides mere consciousness, or self-knowledge, simply considered, is here meant, appears from the previous part of the same verse (1 Cor. ii. 10), which brings a personal distinction clearly to view: "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."

Exercises of will are ascribed to him: "All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." (1 Cor. xii. 8-11.) Would it be consonant to Scripture usage to speak of the divine efficiency being engaged in such a distribution "as he will"? Does an impersonal energy or attribute exercise sovereign choice?

The possession of power is ascribed to him: "Through the power of the Holy Ghost." (Rom. xv. 13.) If personality be not here implied, we have only this senseless declaration: Through the power of a power; as would also be the case in the nineteenth verse. In Acts (ii. 4), a miracle is ascribed to him: "And they began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance."

The Holy Ghost is represented as one against whom specifically sin may be committed. "Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven." (Matt. xii. 31.) "To lie to the Holy Ghost." "To tempt the Spirit of the Lord." (Acts v. 3, 9.) "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." (Eph. iv. 30.) Offences of this kind are not committed against a mere operation.

The personal properties thus enumerated, intellect, volition, and the like, being attributed to the Spirit, we may reasonably look for the mention of personal acts. Such there are in abundance. Often and in varied language is the Holy Ghost said to speak: "The Spirit said unto Philip." (Acts viii. 29; Mark xiii. 11; Acts i. 16; xx. 23; xxi. 11; xxviii. 25; 1 Tim. iv. 1; Heb. iii. 7; Rev. ii. 3.)

The Holy Spirit uses authoritative language, issuing the order, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul" (Acts xiii. 2); as also a prohibition (Acts xvi. 6, 7). He reveals and inspires: "It was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost." (Luke ii. 26; 1 Peter i. 21.) He renews the heart. (John iii. 6; Titus iii. 5.) Sanctification is ascribed to him. (2 Thess. ii. 13; 1 Peter i. 2; Eph. ii. 22.)

Christian graces and gifts are imparted by him (Gal. v. 22, 23; 2 Tim. i. 14). In the latter of these is a very manifest distinction between the gift of the Spirit and the Spirit himself.

Teaching is one of his works (Luke xii. 12; 1 Cor. ii. 13); witnessing another (Rom. viii. 16). He invigorates (Eph. iii. 16); he guides (Rom. viii. 14); he exercises authority, sending forth and constituting overseers (Acts xiii. 4; xx. 28).

Besides passages already quoted, there are those which exhibit the Holy Spirit's personality in connection with that of the Father and the Son, presenting this prime characteristic in the same sense, and with as full reality as on the part of the first and second persons in the Godhead.

Such is the one describing our Saviour's baptism

(Matt. iii. 16, 17). The Father speaks from heaven, the Son is addressed, while the Spirit descends like a dove. Could the three personalities be brought to view with more distinctness? How preposterous to attempt an explanation by affirming that a divine quality descended from heaven in the likeness of a dove! With the ancients we would say, "Go, Arian, to the Jordan, and thou shalt see the Trinity."

The baptismal formulary is in point (Matt. xxviii. 19). That the Father is a real person, no one denies; that the Son also is such cannot well be doubted; by all proprieties of language, then, must the Holy Ghost be regarded as a person. Can we suppose that our Lord, in giving a form to be used whenever a certain religious ordinance is administered, would direct that water be applied in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the divine power? What an incongruity! Nowhere is this phrase, "in the name," placed in such connection with a mere virtue, a system, or anything else than a person, even where only one is referred to. How much less can we suppose it to be done here, standing as the words do in a solemn, formal category with two others who are admitted to be truly persons. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost—with parity of rank and equal distinctness of personality are the adorable three thus presented to us.

The apostolic benediction must not be passed over (2 Cor. xiii. 14). So too Ephesians ii. 18: "For through him [Christ] we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Tri-personality here stands out plainly. The Spirit by whom is not the Son

through whom, nor the Father to whom, access is enjoyed; but evidently one coördinate and coöperative in the work of reconciliation and in acts of worship.

Our Saviour's words in the fourteenth and sixteenth chapters of John, with respect to the Comforter, present a tripartite function and corresponding personalities. Is not the work which the Great Teacher attributes to the Spirit one to be performed only by an intelligent, divine agent? In that same memorable discourse the Holy Spirit is twelve times designated by such personal pronouns as he, him, and whom; just as in the same connection and elsewhere the Father and the Son are designated.

Can anything be plainer than that the sacred writers supposed all these would be understood as the acts of a personal agent? If, instead of thus furnishing incidental evidence, it had been their chief design, avoiding figurative language, to establish the personality of the Holy Spirit, how could they have done it more effectually? In brief, the evidence is this: such personal properties as knowledge, will, and love, are attributed to the Holy Ghost. He is spoken of as one against whom, specifically, sin may be committed. He is spoken of as performing the acts of commanding, revealing, regenerating, taking, teaching, showing, witnessing, strengthening, and the like. With no intimation of disparity, he is associated with the Father and the Son in the most solemn ordinances of religion. If, therefore, the truth of the Holy Spirit's personality, distinct, real, and literal as that of the Father and the Son, be not established, we know not what Scripture language would establish it.

Before passing to a further general division of the subject in hand, it may not be amiss to drop a suggestion touching the use of an impersonal substitute for a proper name of the adorable Spirit. It is peculiarly trying to hear the pronoun *it* or *that* employed with reference to this divine Being. Respect should also be indicated in the written use of his names and titles. Henry Ware remarks, "We see the words [holy ghost or holy spirit] printed in our Bibles and in other books in capitals, or with capital initials; and it gives us an impression of a person or agent of high dignity." Well it may. Is not God the Spirit entitled to an impression on our minds that he is a person or agent of high dignity? Let our Bibles at least—would that other books might also—be spared such typographical despite unto the Spirit of grace.

The Holy Spirit's personality being proved, the truth of his Deity follows at once, indeed is scarcely a different topic. So vital however is this as a branch of the doctrine of triune existence, and so immediately practical, that we may well look separately at the evidence. In reference to this whole subject of tri-personality, Dr. Priestley remarks with frankness, "The truth is, there neither can nor ought to be any compromise between us. If you are right, we are not Christians at all; and if we are right, you are gross idolaters." The interests at issue are sufficiently momentous to require certainly a measure of patience in this examination.

Is the Holy Spirit, the third person in the Trinity, God, as truly and in the same sense as is the Father and the Son?

We find the name God given to him. Peter said, "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." The sin referred to is pronounced to have been specifically against the Holy Ghost, and so against God; the two names, Holy Ghost and God, being used interchangeably; in other words, the Holy Ghost is called God. The offence was not so much against man; it was not against an angel; for the Spirit is neither man nor angel. Ananias had lied directly to God, because he had lied to the Holy Ghost. If the latter were not God, Peter would rather have said, "Thou hast not lied to the Holy Ghost, but to God;" whereas he affirmed just the opposite; and this, in the circumstances, is a stronger proof than if the apostle had, in so many words, declared the Holy Ghost to be God.

Similar is the interchangeable use in 1 Cor. iii. 16 and vi. 19: "Ye are the temple of God;" "The Spirit of God dwelleth in you;" "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost." A temple is a habitation of Deity; and believers are denominated the temple of God, or temple of the Holy Ghost, because of the Holy Spirit's indwelling. If he were a being other than or inferior to God, would such representation be made? We are then authorized to call the Holy Ghost God; not as another name for the Supreme Being, nor as merging his personality, but because to dwell in all true believers is an office peculiar to this one of the three persons.

Divine attributes are ascribed to him. The ascribing of one such would be sufficient, as would also be

one proof-text. The truth and importance of no revealed doctrine is to be determined by the quantity of corroborating passages.

Omniscience is predicated of the Holy Ghost: "For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." None but an infinite intellect can do that; nor does any other possess prescience: "He shall show you things to come." And is not omnipresence indirectly affirmed when it is declared that he dwells in all believers? Eternity is directly predicated of him: "The eternal Spirit." (Heb. ix. 14.)

Being, then, possessed of certain divine perfections, any one of which implies all the rest, and being by divine authority called God, it might be presumed there would exist the further proof of divine works performed by him. Do we not read of "signs and wonders by the power of the Holy Ghost"? Did not prophets speak as they were moved by the Holy Ghost? Is not regeneration a divine work? Did not all miraculous gifts come from him? Was it not by his power that Mary conceived the holy child Jesus; and was not Christ's resurrection also by him? (1 Pet. iii. 18; Rom. viii. 11.)

The Holy Ghost — to recur once more to a familiar fact — is a being against whom sin can be committed, and, as already suggested, the sin most eminently heinous. Reference is not now made so much to grieving the Spirit, and doing ordinary despite to him, as to the unpardonable sin. Precisely what constitutes such blasphemy admits of a question. Our Lord perhaps left an intentional uncertainty as to the form of this irremissible offence; present purposes do not

require a discussion of it. The chief point is, that if the Holy Ghost were not God, the sin would not be unpardonable; and, further, that it is not blasphemy against him simply as God, but because something pertains to him, his relations, or works, so peculiarly sacred, that it is against him specially, against him alone, that the blasphemy never to be pardoned can be committed.

The manner in which Scripture associates the Holy Spirit with the other divine persons proves his Deity. The often-cited formula of baptism is quite sufficient. Can it be supposed that our Lord, when establishing a religious ordinance to be observed so frequently, so widely, and permanently, would use an ambiguous expression, liable to be mistaken, and which by the great bulk of Christians ever since has been mistaken, if he did not design to have them believe that the Holy Spirit stands on a parity of rank with the Father and the Son? In this solemn rite there was understood to be a renunciation of every idol, and a dedication to the one true God. Christ had taught that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father; and now, in the initiatory ordinance, he directs that the Holy Spirit shall be associated with them both; saying not a word at that or any time suggestive of disparity. The competency or uprightness of Jesus Christ must be surrendered if he did not intend to have the impression made that the Holy Ghost is truly a person, and a divine person. Substantially the same is taught by 1 Peter i. 2: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,

through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus."

What, then, can be more plainly just than the inference that divine worship is due, and that petitions are to be addressed, to the Holy Ghost? But the propriety of this is not left to induction merely. The apostolic benediction, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all," supplies highest authority. Its designed use is in some measure a counterpart to the initial words of Christianity. Noteworthy it is that what was intended for a concluding formula of worship should be a prayer to the Trinity; the last petition in which is that the Holy Spirit would communicate his gracious presence to believers. No other passage, perhaps, in the whole Bible has been more uniformly repeated throughout Christendom than this; and nothing more than this passage would be required to authorize adoration and supplication to the Holy Ghost.

If it be asked, How do the three divine persons constitute the one true God,—how trinity in one sense and unity in another consist? we undertake no answer, because inspiration has not disclosed that inscrutable mystery. No one may be required or may attempt to explain what is inexplicable. That there is but one God, is plain; that he exists as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, neither of whom is absolutely and in all respects identical with either of the others, is plain; as also that there is no fourth person. Well does Gregory Nazianzen say, "I cannot think of the one but I am immediately surrounded by the splendor

of the three ; nor can I clearly discover the three but I am suddenly carried back to the one." Quite natural and just was it that early Christians, as appears from the most ancient doxologies, should habitually pay divine honors to the Holy Spirit. Excellently does Augustine declare, "If we were commanded to erect to the Holy Spirit a temple of wood and stone, forasmuch as God is the sole object of worship, it would be a clear proof of his divinity ; how much clearer, then, is the proof now that we are commanded not to erect one, but to be ourselves his temples." With utmost propriety did the martyr Polycarp close his prayer at the stake in these words : "I praise thee for all things ; I bless thee ; I glorify thee with the eternal and heavenly Jesus Christ, thy beloved Son ; with whom to thee and the Holy Spirit be glory forever and ever. Amen." Most heartily would we join in the *Te Deum* which rolls along in sublime anthem through the ages : "The holy church throughout all the world doth acknowledge thee the Father of infinite majesty ; thine adorable, true, and only Son ; also the Holy Ghost the Comforter ;" in the familiar Litany, "O God, the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners ;" and in the ascription, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen."

If the Holy Spirit be truly God, then not to worship him is a culpable omission ; one which must hinder, if not prevent, gracious communications to us from him. In the great economy of redemption and of providence, he has certain offices which should be distinctly

acknowledged and highly prized. No reasonable hope can there be of experiencing his inward operations, so indispensable, if his personality and Deity are discarded; while duty to honor him is to invite his reviving, illuminating agency.

IV.

PRIMARY CONDITIONS OF PRAYER.

I. IN THE NAME OF CHRIST.



O great is the majesty of God that we falter at the thought of approaching him. If merely dependent and needy, we might well hesitate; but guilt oppresses us; the sentence of outlawry has been pronounced upon us. How then shall we draw near to the throne of our offended Sovereign? Who will guarantee a favorable reception? What mortal may venture to the audience-chamber of the King of kings, save with the intervention of some one who can assure him of acceptance? The banished Themistocles hastened to the court of Admetus, where he had no reason to expect favor. Entering the palace, he caught up a son of the king, and thus presented himself. Seeing such a propitiation in the arms of the fugitive, Admetus could not deny his request. Only in a similar way can we draw nigh to God.

Sacred Scripture reveals a wonderful economy of grace, the mediatorial work of our Lord, by which divine justice is appeased, and through which the great legal barrier to reconciliation has been removed. One of the main purposes of Holy Writ is to assure

us that restoration to the favor of God depends on such mediation. If, then, there were no express testimony, we should be led to infer that prayer, the most sacred act and privilege of the household of faith, could be acceptably offered only in the name of Jesus.

Formal declarations, however, have settled the question. Near the opening of our Saviour's valedictory discourse with his disciples, there is laid down one of the chief canons of prayer: "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." Later, when about to bring those weighty words to a close, he reiterates the saying. There was need that special attention be called to the point, for it was a vital one, and was in some measure new. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." In all former times the idea of mediation has indeed prevailed; atoning sacrifices and an interceding priest, prefiguring my great work on earth and in heaven, have long had a place; they now have an end. The great offering is to be made; I am on the eve of passing to the right hand of Majesty in the heavens. I will now offer prayer, anticipating and illustrating my intercession on high. "Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name." Not till now had the hour come for me to be glorified, and for believers to pray understandingly in my name; and thus the greatest advance revealed in the privilege and power of supplication is among these parting gifts which I make to you.

It may appear to some a rhetorical blemish to employ the often-repeated expression, "For Christ's sake;" it may seem to indicate a poverty of language, a want of originality. Let such remember that on these words hinge the whole power of prayer. He who openeth and no man shutteth, who shutteth and no man openeth, has declared, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me."

This is not merely one acceptable method of offering prayer, but the only method. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." No wonder that so many are unsuccessful in their attempts to obtain audience at the throne. Though the ear of the God of Sabaoth is not heavy that it cannot hear the prayers of all his creatures, there is but One for whose sake he will hear any of them. The offerings of gratitude and penitence are indeed acceptable, but the appointed priest must present them. A prayer without allusion to Christ is not a Christian prayer. Pagans pray thus, nominal Christians pray thus, but no response is given.

You may perhaps by stealth find your way to the interior of an earthly palace, and compel the monarch to listen; but here a flaming sword guards every avenue save one. "Jesus saith, I am the door." His intercession is for those alone who come unto God by him. To reject him is heaven-daring contumacy. "He," says Ambrose, "is our mouth with which we address the Father; our eye by which we behold our Father; our right hand by which we present ourselves to the Father; without whose mediation, neither we, nor any of all the saints, have the least intercourse

with God." "I will know nothing," Luther was wont to say, — "I will know nothing of an absolute God; I dare not deal with God except through a mediator."

Even among those not denying the proper divinity, atonement, and intercession, of Christ, how many seem to have only dim apprehensions of the place he occupies in the kingdom of grace! How feeble is the hold they take of his outstretched hand, the only hand that can open the door and guide them to the throne! Need we go further than this to account for the want of spiritual comfort, and for the multitude of unanswered petitions? Whoever in his performances forgets the Saviour, or would make a Saviour out of his performances, has yet to learn what real prayer is. Constantine wrote the name of Christ over his door. That name, so significant, so precious and powerful, is the inscription over every truly devout believer's place for secret prayer, over the door of every truly Christian sanctuary, and over the portal to the palace of the Great King.¹

What is it to pray in the name of Christ? The name of Christ denotes the sum of his attributes and offices, the entire reality and activity of Immanuel as King, Priest, and Prophet; and to pray in his name is to come recognizing his authority, his atonement, and his veracity; it is to go to the Father with the eye of faith upon what Christ is, what he has done, and has taught, as supplying the warrant and ground of approach. Solely for Christ's sake; believing that, and

¹ Dr. Samuel Johnson once reproved the Rev. Dr. Maxwell — and the reproof was merited — for saying grace without mentioning the name of our Lord, and hoped he would in future be more mindful of the apostolical injunction.

asking in accordance with such belief, is prayer in the name of Christ.

But for him, there would be no access for any one, at any time. Acceptance at first in justification can be only on the ground of Christ's righteousness. Past life and present state, whatever they may be, are no hindrance, provided only the sinner take hold of the atonement, and humbly accept pardon and life freely offered him on that ground. It is not the prayers of our Lord by themselves that save us; "in Christ Jesus ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

What is thus true in regard to our persons is true also in regard to our petitions. Is the foundation, so indispensable at the outset, any less needed as the building rises? When accepted in Christ, it is not by the performance of good works, but to their performance, the offering of prayer being one of them. Dependence upon him is entire to the last, as well as at the first. Christ's intercession is to his sacrifice what providence is to creation; it is mediation continued and consummated. There is a corresponding relation between all later supplication and the first penitent cry for pardon. All the spiritual benefits designed for our race, having been purchased by Christ, are committed in covenant to him; and to that exhaustless treasury there is but one approach.

To pray in the manner now spoken of is something more than the mere mention of his name. The self-righteous man may do that for form's sake, or by way of meritorious compliment at the close of his devotional harangues. In the believer's lips, these words

mean more than all that precedes: they embody the sum of his hopes, and are the condensed profession of his faith.

Prayer is a devout conference with God concerning the fruits of redemption; and is an exercise in which the suppliant's unworthiness needs specially to be felt; and, being appreciated, he will be led in equal degree to feel the need of a mediator. When, therefore, in his addresses to God, he mentions the great High Priest, it is tantamount to saying, "Not in my own name, but because I stand in utter need of a Saviour; because Jesus Christ has made an atonement, and as an advocate has passed into the heavens, may I be heard."

Praying thus implies the whole act of justifying faith; it implies such a sense of sin, such an apprehension of Christ's righteousness, such spiritual aspirations, as enter into a saving acceptance of the gospel scheme. Anything short of that indicates ignorance as to the import of this weighty expression, "in the name of Jesus." The formula has no magical power in itself; its charm lies in being an echo of the heart to an articulation of the understanding.

Coming in this manner, how broad do we find our privilege! "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do." Who utters this? He who came from the Father, who has returned to him, and whom the Father heareth always; for he has entered into an irreversible covenant with the Son; takes infinite delight in him; and there is nothing he will not, for his sake, do in behalf of his people. Never was a bill, however large, presented, bearing his name, that was not honored.

Christ does not stand before the throne as a mere suppliant, and with conscious inferiority; it is as Prince and Saviour that he appears for us; never forgetting, never neglecting, never mismanaging, aught committed to his care.

Being one with his people, he does not so much present their prayers as his own,—what he moves them to utter; for nothing ascends to heaven that does not first descend from heaven. By virtue of their mystic union to him, believers are in telegraphic communication with the throne of grace; keys touched here have answering keys there. Is it not as easy, is there not as good authority, to ask for much as for little? What spiritual treasure or deliverance may not be had through such an advocate? Mentioning trustfully his name, we may have “all things whatsoever,” according to the pledge, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”

An English nobleman once received a ring from Queen Elizabeth, with the assurance that if ever, in distress, he should send the same to her, she would remember and deliver him. Has not God given thee a gem, a royal ring, enclosing his own image and superscription? Send it up to him. Think you he will disown the pledge? Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

By virtue of union to Christ, the feeblest saint has a hold upon omnipotence, and, however unworthy, may carry his point, provided it be agreeable to God's will; for it is not we that ask, so much as Christ; and

answers are not so much to us as to him. All petitions and praises need alike to go into his golden censer to be perfumed, and so to rise as sweet-smelling savor. His veracity is pledged. If you are not answered, his character will suffer, and hence he has the deepest interest in your success. He throws out no petition because not well worded: whatever is committed to him he puts into the very best form. No matter, then, who may be our adversary, so long as Christ is our advocate. Through him strengthening us we can do all things, and through him pleading for us we may win all things. Solomon's throne had lions round about; but in the midst of the throne to which we come is the Lamb, — the Lamb of God.

Desponding Christian, look upward! Behold your Intercessor, with the book of life, pointing to your name. Hear him speak of his coeternal glory with the Father; hear him plead the law vindicated, prophecies fulfilled, miracles wrought, wounds and bruises received; hear him pronounce death robbed of its sting, and the grave of its victory; principalities and powers spoiled and triumphed over;—and all this that you and your prayers may be accepted.

The case of *Æschylus* often comes to mind. He is on trial for life, and likely to be condemned. *Amyntas*, his brother, who has lost a hand in fighting for his country, enters the court, raises the mutilated arm, and, without a word being spoken, the culprit goes free. We are impleaded at the tribunal of heaven. Christ enters; he raises his wounded hands, and we are pardoned; yes, and every reasonable favor is granted us. Having a High Priest over the house of

God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith. Let us not be so stinted in our petitions: Christ is honored by large requests. Never shall we over-ask the merits of his death or the compass of his intercession.

II. UNION WITH CHRIST.

A layman of rare spirituality, in the seventeenth century, wrote thus: "As all ordinances are the galleries of intercourse between God and his people in Christ, so prayer hath this work in an eminency. It is the very intercession of God's own Spirit in them; it is the private retirement in which the soul is brought into the presence chamber, and hath private conference with Christ, and the Father in him. The very nature of prayer is a thirst after the living God. It is the very breathing of the soul's union with God, and the means whereby it is preserved, fortified, carried on, and confirmed; and whereby the sweetness and nourishing virtue of it to the soul is improved, enjoyed, and increased. Let thy prayers, then, be inward and single-hearted, chiefly aiming at and prizing this union; and refer all other things of a remote nature to the wisdom of Him to whom thou art united. Speak to him as one who is in his bosom, and consider him as thy only helper and thy most sure friend. Come reverently, believingly, with resignation of thy heart to his, and so creep forward into an humble intimacy and familiarity with thy God. This union only begets the true cry of Abba, Father, and nourisheth it."

Scripture teaches that men in their unregenerate

state are aliens from God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; there being no spiritual affiance or communion between the soul and our adorable Sovereign, Saviour, and Sanctifier. When, however, the great change takes place, when holy faith and love are inwrought, the believing penitent comes to Christ; and not only so, comes into him. Clad with the robe of his justifying righteousness, the child of God finds that in the kingdom of grace, "the Lamb is the temple thereof;" that Christ's followers are resident priests; and that there is the home of his soul, whence he is to go no more out.

A varied imagery sets forth this truth: "I am the vine, ye are the branches." The plant is an organized structure; it cannot, like a mineral mass, be divided without injury, and with no other result except that instead of one piece there become two; the plant, like the animal, has a principle of life, through which it is built up, and attains its form and functions. To remove a branch is to separate the same fatally from the life-sustaining stock. Equally close and indispensable is the union of believers with Christ. There are some parasitic plants, whose seeds sprout in the soil whence the root derives nourishment in the usual manner; but when the twining stem reaches a neighboring shrub or tree, it gives out aerial roots, which attach themselves firmly to the surface of the supporting plant, and feed upon its juices. The original root may perish, and all connection with the soil cease, still the plant lives and flourishes. Thus it is with the believer: by faith he embraces and cleaves to the Saviour; he has a new life, and becomes dead to for-

mer connections and dependences. He has passed from the state of nature to that of grace,—gracious union with Jesus Christ, and quickening dependence upon him.

Another similitude employed by sacred writers is drawn from the unity of the members and the body. “We may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” Christians belong to a body organized and owned by Jesus Christ, he the soul and ruler, while each one is as truly a member as another. The whole together forms a system that is pervaded by a common life and has a common end.

Believers are not thus represented as a body politic, over which Christ presides; nor a community incorporated on the ground of certain characteristics, and brought into certain relations to Christ; but as formed with him into an organized personality,—no one losing his individuality, yet each forming a constituent part of that whole which is vitalized, nourished, and governed by Christ; he being immediately the soul and regent of his church.

The similitude of an edifice is also made use of: “To whom coming as unto a living stone, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ.” The peculiarity here is that the edifice of the invisible church, being founded upon

Christ, the source of all spiritual vitality, and being made up of those whom he has raised to newness of life, is presented before us as an animated structure, all the materials being quick with the vital principle which pervades the whole, and renders it less a fabric than an organism.

This union, then, is something more than a mere relation. The mutual standing of friend to friend, or parent to child, is only most analogous to the connection now contemplated. The soul of Jonathan was indeed knit with the soul of David; but there was no such mystical union between them as between every believer and the Son of David. Yet, if asked to lay open to the eye the form and nature of those ties which bind Christ and his saints into a living whole, we confess to the want of ability or desire to do it. "This is a great mystery," said Paul, after using the additional metaphor of the marriage connection. No physiologist has yet detected and defined the principle of life in vegetable or animal organism; and no spiritual anatomist may attempt to lay open what is inscrutable in this union, any more than that of the two natures in Christ, and the three persons in the Godhead. It should be added, this is something else than what pantheists talk about, — a community of nature, a universal communism of essence and rank, the divine developing itself in the human, the great impersonal All arriving at consciousness in the individuals of our race. Nor is it what distempered mystics have sometimes dreamed and boasted of, — an actual vision of Deity, a personal revelation, an interior, immediate, visual presentation to the Lord Jesus, being "Christed with Christ," to quote their jargon.

These images, vine, body, building, reciprocal indwelling, and the like, will not be mistaken as carrying with them the idea of physical contact or of locality in any sense. The union is not that of aggregation, adhesion, or juxtaposition; it is as real in the case of the humblest believer on earth as of the favored disciple now standing nearest our glorified Redeemer.

While such ingrafting is the source of spiritual life, the basis and beginning of communion with Christ, one may be variably conscious of it. Its very existence as well as benefits may be obscured to an unfaithful disciple. Believers need to keep alive in their hearts the fact that they belong to Christ's family, and that it is their privilege to come into terms of close fellowship and abiding residence. It is for them to be with him when they rise up and when they lie down; with him at the table; with him when they go, shutting to the door, to pray in secret; and still to be with him when they go abroad. The chief question evermore suggests itself: Is this a present reality; not a remembered experience of the past, existing more in memory than in the heart, narrated when profession was made, and now labelled and filed away among dusty documents for safe keeping? To be anything, it must be a life,—a constant spiritual respiration and circulation, bringing with it warmth and activity.

“If ye abide in me.” To abide in Christ is not merely to abide under the shadow of his wings, nor to abide near him; it is to receive, trust, and love him; to have such assimilation of feelings and purposes, and such a continued sense of dependence, as shall make him to seem the very soul of one's soul. It used to be

said that between Alexander and Hephæstion there was but one soul in their two bodies, so close was their fellowship, so peculiarly mutual their joys and sorrows. What blessed self-oblivion, what free converse, may there be between an affianced soul and the Saviour! How does personal intercourse become a quiet and refreshing reality to one who lives on terms of household familiarity with the Lord Jesus! All thoughts are laid bare to him; for it is to the very heart of hearts that a reciprocal welcome is given. Such a believer's Peniel is no solitary spot in his pilgrimage: it is the place where he sojourns. What is the hidden life, yea, what is heaven, but a company-keeping with Jesus?

The bearing of this upon the efficacy of prayer is evident. Such a believer, enjoying habitual fellowship with our Lord, being under the guidance of Christ's indwelling words and spirit, will of course have desires and ask for objects that accord with the mind of the great High Priest. Only such are delivered from a spirit and purpose foreign to his family, and are taught how to pray and what to pray for as they ought.

They retain a lively sense of our Lord's mediation. It is of prime importance in the whole Christian life, and especially in prayer, that this be fully apprehended. Enlightened suppliants see that their petitions must be rejected, except as Christ shall present them, and they be looked upon by God only in their affiance to the Saviour, and as presenting themselves screened and emboldened beneath the personality of the Great Advocate. Nothing will rise to heaven except what comes down from heaven. Only by being in Christ, who came and has gone back again, does the

soul ascend; and, once mounting, it finds prayer to be the key of paradise. Supplications and praises in Christ go direct to the mercy-seat, where is his official home.

It was said of Luther,—and it is sometimes quoted as if a remarkable fact,—that he could have what he would of God.¹ But who uttered, and of whom was it said, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you”? What more is needful for any one than to bear in mind Christ’s prayers, promises, sufferings, sympathy, and present intercession?

Rightly using our advantages, we may beg ourselves rich, and enrich a poverty-stricken world. The danger is not that we ask too much, but that we fail to enter into the munificence of God’s promises. Gleaving steadfastly to the Lord Jesus, kept and keeping in quick sympathy with him, we may indulge a reverent pertinacious audacity. Queen Elizabeth asked Sir Walter Raleigh when he would cease begging of her? “Not,” replied the bold knight, then a favorite,—“not till your majesty cease giving.” So may we keep on asking.

Royal attachments are seldom permanent; earthly monarchs are seldom easily accessible. One king of Portugal never was within the limits of his kingdom; but the Lord our Saviour is ready to take up his lasting abode with the humblest as with the highest of his friends; he comes to sit down with them, and talk with them, on terms of the most endeared intimacy.

¹ *Hic homo potuit apud Deum quod voluit.*

There is no one else whom we could bear, or whom it would be safe, to have literally always with us. Brief separation, at least, from all others is important regularly, that each may come more fully to a consciousness of his own individual position and wants, and to a more undisturbed fellowship with his constant divine Inmate.

Would that the wondrous fact of union to Christ with its immunities were more pondered upon! Never will believers rise to a full appreciation of their high privileges, resources, and duties, till, in all its length and breadth, they take in this idea, — that the whole Israel of God were chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world, were given specially to him by the Father; that antediluvian, patriarchal, and Jewish believers form a part of that commonwealth of which he is the head and life; that true believers, since Christ's advent, have been contributing to make up the complement of his body; that all such now living, whatever their name or nation, are one in him, his presence and his honor being their common comfort and aim; that those yet to be born and born again will come into that same homogeneous society; that the spiritual life, joy, growth, and glory of all depend upon their being part and parcel of his invisible church, his kingdom, his body; and that they are thus conjoined to their Lord, in order that, abiding in him, they may call down the largest blessings upon themselves individually, upon the whole church militant, and upon the world. Blessed union! sublime office of communion and supplication!

III. OFFICE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

In no other exercise is there such a wonderful combination and circle of agency as in prayer. A mere creature here on earth comes before the high and lofty One, in the name of an adorable Redeemer, and with the aid of an indwelling Comforter. A helpless mortal and the three persons of the Trinity are immediately concerned. If either party were wanting in the transaction, the circuit would be broken.

No feature in this arrangement is more animating than the part borne by the Holy Ghost. One with the Father and the Son, he dwells without measure in Jesus Christ; proceeding from the Father and the Son, he dwells also in renewed hearts, and thus is the immediate agent, the bond of union and communion between Creator and creatures, between Redeemer and redeemed. In him and by him, heaven and earth are linked in hallowed co-operation. When he moves supplicants to the mercy-seat, then do they as princes have power with God and prevail; it is God with God at Peniel.

While there is a natural gift, there is also a gracious gift in this exercise, indicated by the topics, the language, and emotions. The most important branch of the Spirit's office is the awakening of right affections; and we do not understand that, independent of them, there is a grace of prayer. These, however, are called forth to an unusual degree when the Comforter makes intercession for us; and under no circumstances is so lively an exercise of them demanded as

in an act of worship. Then eminently does the soul need to apprehend the mediation of Christ; then, in a peculiar manner, is realized what the Saviour said: "He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." Does not the Spirit give to the believer a full persuasion that no man cometh unto the Father, but by the Son; that Christ's righteousness, apprehended by faith, is the sole ground of justification; and that the suppliant has a prevailing advocate before the throne?

We do not believe that Christ's promise, "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance," was limited to those miraculous gifts bestowed upon the apostles. It will not be exhausted till the last disciple on earth shall have been relieved from all his infirmities. While, without doubt, the office of the Spirit in prayer lies mainly in purifying and quickening the affections, shall we say that his office extends no farther; that memory receives no aid, or that even appropriate language is not suggested? "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord." "As a mother," says one,¹ "dictates its prayers to her child, so does the Holy Ghost to us, who repeat them with a faltering tongue."

True penitence, love to God, faith in Christ, all gracious ability in prayer, are fruits of the Spirit. Must we not suppose that in every instance of fellowship with the Father and with the Son, a devout impulse and concurrent aid are imparted by the divine Comforter? Is not he the friendly messenger who fur-

¹ St. Martin.

nishes the wedding garment, and awakens a favorable disposition in the reluctant guest?

One branch of the Spirit's office-work relates to the subject-matter: "For we know not what we should pray for as we ought." The common impression is otherwise. It is usually supposed that men know well enough what to ask,—the only difficulty being the absence of suitable desires. True, there are many stated objects of petition in regard to which there can be no doubt, and a criminal backwardness of some self-seeking motive is often the only obstacle. Yet every suppliant finds that the more devout he grows, the more specific he usually becomes; and experience teaches that when he descends into particulars he needs special guidance. Beyond the points of ordinary spiritual necessity in himself and devout desire for others, he finds that what to ask is by no means plain, and to ask aright by no means easy. The states of feeling and the outward circumstances through which he passes are various. It becomes evident that many times he has desired what was not indeed unlawful, yet was hurtful; that beyond the kindness which he had supposed would grant a given request, there was a higher kindness which denied him. A wise physician does not allow what the patient craves if contrary to health. A person's own good, the good of others, and the glory of God's concealed purposes, often stand in the way of an answer, when, in choosing topics, the mind has not been led by the Spirit. Elijah, Job, and Jonah prayed prematurely that they might die. Abraham interceded that Sodom might be spared, while Lot only was to be rescued.

Jacob asked the name of that mighty wrestler with whom he engaged; the secret was not made known; but he obtained a confirmation of the great Messianic blessing. Moses said, "I pray thee, let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain and Lebanon;" the Lord said, "Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter." The great apostle knew not what would be best for him, when he thrice asked to have the thorn in his flesh removed; but there was an underlying, unexpressed desire which brought down the answer: "My grace is sufficient for thee." He sought the removal of a grievance; the Holy Spirit sought for him help to endure and improve the trial. Still less did James and John know what to pray for as they ought, when, with intemperate, resentful haste, they would have called fire from heaven on the Samaritans; or the mother of Zebedee's children, when she sought for them a place on Christ's right hand and on his left in his kingdom.

Often is there a disproportionate earnestness for temporal blessings; and, in general, as to the form of supplication for ourselves or others, how can we know what is right and best, except as we are taught and moved by the Holy Spirit? Now, while unsanctified philosophy makes our ignorance an argument against all prayer, inspiration reverses the plea. "Likewise the Holy Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered." A scoffer might by this be reminded of certain well-known extrava-

gances. He would summon up to his view a company of whirling dervishes, or their counterpart in some of the nominally Christian sects; or perhaps the nervous perturbations, the contagious agitations, involuntary outcries and prostrations, sometimes witnessed among truly Christian people. But no supposable amount of delusion, or mere animal excitation, no actual ridicule which it may occasion, should deter us from maintaining what this passage declares and Christian experience confirms, — that “the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered,” — that there are times when believers have irrepressible and inexpressible longings in prayer; when their desires for the advancement of God’s glory in their own sanctification, and in the triumphs of truth, are of a kind for which human language does not appear to have been framed. Their emotions in view of the divine attributes and their own vileness, and in view of the wonders of redemption, are such as angel tongues alone can utter. Yes, there are groanings under a sense of sin, and groanings under a burden of rapturous contemplation, which cannot be uttered.

Devout persons, accustomed to self-inspection, will not find it difficult to admit that, often, lower down than the zone of clear thought and of distinct perception as to what lies on the silvery surface above, or on the surface of the overarching firmament, there may be true spiritual life and movement. It is not strange to them that, owing to grief or other disturbing causes, a good deal of mental confusion and dimness of religious vision may sometimes exist. They can understand

David, when he cries, "I am so troubled that I cannot speak;" and Hezekiah, "Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter."

Amidst such infirmities the Holy Spirit affords aid, even in and through groanings that are unutterable, for which there are no words in terrestrial dialects. Not only, as already affirmed, does he assist in such prayer as finds distinct utterance, but, as he is sent forth into our hearts crying, Abba, Father, so he sends us to the throne with less articulate cries. What unrecorded and unuttered groanings of penitence were there on the part of "the woman that was a sinner," who bathed our Saviour's feet; and in the broken heart of Peter, when, going out, he wept bitterly!

We have, then, two Intercessors,—one in heaven, one in the heart; Christ for us, the Spirit within us; Christ at the mercy-seat, the Comforter in the suppliant's breast. Every believer's soul has a chapel, an oratory, where this heavenly guest is both prophet and priest. "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost;" and it is in prayer, if ever, that we are filled with all the fulness of God.

Not unfrequently does the mind enjoy a highly devotional frame without embodying its aspirations in very specific terms. There are longings and inward groanings that do not find utterance in definite words. Vociferation is, of course, not to be encouraged; nor is it that,—whether intelligent or unintelligent, articulate or sheer noise,—which we now have in mind. Those who live near to God have no need to cry aloud. The groanings spoken of do not escape from the lips; they echo amidst the silence of the soul.

There is liability to mistake in this matter ; a liability from which the illuminating Spirit alone can effectually guard us. Before coming out of the bondage of Satan into the liberty of Christ, Whitefield, as he confesses, practised a devotional penance. "Whenever I knelt down," he says, "I felt great pressure both on soul and body, and have often prayed under the weight of them till the sweat came through me. God only knows how many nights I have lain upon my bed groaning under what I felt. Whole days and weeks have I spent in lying prostrate on the ground in silent or vocal prayer." That was but mimicry ; Satan's counterfeit of genuine spiritual earnestness.

Not a word would we say to encourage vague fancies, a mere sentimental, organic fervor ; yet, no doubt, the soul may be in a state of decided spiritual earnestness, of rapture even, without being able to say positively what occasions the heavenward heaving, or to point out the precise bearing of her intense flames. As the heart may open though the lips remain closed, so may there be waves of aspiration though no articulate desires. Certainly, sometimes prayer is "the burden of a sigh." "Oh, Margaret," said James Laing, the little boy whose memoir is given by McCheyne,— "Oh, Margaret, I prayed to Jesus as long as I was able ; but now I'm not able, and he does not want it from me, but I'm just always giving him my heart."

"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." When these inarticulate aspirations, thus awakened, come before

him, God, the Father, approves. He knows well the intention of the Spirit. There is a perfect understanding between them. Such inward sighs are stirred by One who is versed in the counsels of the Godhead, — “for he searcheth the deep things of God,” — and who has no aim that is not in perfect triune concord. He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God; and all such genuine groanings are only God working in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

While, then, we learn that effectual prayer comes from the Holy Spirit, stirring us up, and guiding our affections; while we learn that mere fluency of devotional utterance is no proof that effectual prayer is offered, we get large encouragement from this truth. We find that a sobbing heart is the Holy Spirit's instrument; that in the ear of the God of Sabaoth the *Æolian* harp may discourse more acceptable sounds than any voice, however faultless the elocution.

Even hazy moods and gropings may not be valueless. While we discountenance all purely fantastic notions, all credulous reveries of imagination, we would at the same time persistently affirm the Scripture truth of groanings which cannot be uttered, produced by the Holy Spirit acting as a gracious auxiliary amidst our devotional infirmities.

IV. FAITH AND LOVE.

“Ask and ye shall receive.” The Bible is its own interpreter; and we must search to see if so broad a promise as this has any other limitations besides those already dwelt upon,—praying in the name of Christ, and with the aid of the Holy Spirit.

A further restriction has respect to the manner of asking, the exercise of faith being required. “All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” The want of faith is enough to defeat any petition; it silently impeaches the truthfulness of God, an attribute over which he is peculiarly jealous. Unbelief has the effrontery to say to him that he cannot or will not perform what he has engaged to do. The man of Uz cried, in his anguish, “If I had called and he had answered me, yet would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice.” Very different was it with the man from Ur; he “staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform.” Nothing so cuts the sinews of prayer, and takes its very heart out, as to allow the thought that there can be want of ability or readiness on the part of God.

When the people despised Christ's testimony, he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hand upon a few sick folk and healed them. What can be so unreasonable, so criminal, as to discredit the Lord of glory? He that cometh to God must believe

that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. It may seem singular that such an apparent truism should be laid down. The worshipper, it is affirmed, must believe that God exists. The occasion for this affirmation is to be found, not so much in its logical importance, as in a manner of prayer that is too common. Often is the act of professed devotion wholly a formal one, with no influencing apprehension of God's existence. It is performed as if no benefit were expected from the exercise. To be thus undevout is to be atheistical. The man who uniformly prays without any clear conviction of God's presence, is without God in the world; he has only a speculative faith, mere deism. Nothing avails short of the belief that there is real efficacy in prayer; that the child does not more truly obtain answers from its parent than the believing suppliant obtains good things from his heavenly Father.

Another limitation has respect to the motive of the suppliant; his aim must be the glory of God. Selfishness is the bane of devotions. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Holy love to God, loyalty to his name, was what nerved the mighty wrestlers of old. Thus did Moses plead for Israel when they had provoked the Lord by their idolatry at Sinai. So, when the people murmured in the land of Paran, he asked sparing mercy, lest the name of Jehovah should be blasphemed by the heathen. Joshua, after the offence of Achan, took up the same argument: "What wilt thou do unto thy great name?" David also employs it; thus too Solomon in his dedicatory prayer: "Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place,

that all the people of the earth may know thy name ;” and thus Jeremiah : “ Do not abhor us for thy name’s sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory : remember, break not thy covenant with us.” Such an appeal, mindful chiefly of the rights and dignity of the Great King, will prevail, if anything can. It so harmonizes with the revealed purposes of God in all his works that it must be peculiarly pleasing to him.

Are we not to suppose that the more unmingled this motive, and the more enlarged its scope, the more acceptable it is? Only when taking the widest range does it accord with the munificence of Him who heareth prayer, and who hath done marvellous things. Every suppliant coming with the right manner, medium, and motive, hears from the mercy-seat, “ Be it unto thee as thou wilt !” Is not the Great King honored by a confiding recognition of his resources and his readiness? Is it not as easy for him to feed five thousand as five? Does not the sun in our firmament get more glory to himself by illuminating a hemisphere than a single cabin? When Alexander bestowed a large gift upon one of his subjects, the man exclaimed in surprise and delight, “ This is more than I am worthy of !” “ I do not give it thee,” said the king, “ because thou art worthy of it ; but I bestow a gift like Alexander.” How fitting is the challenge, “ Ascribe ye greatness to our God,” — by expecting great things of him, — “ ascribe ye greatness to our God.” We would beware of asking only a little ; and never would we go to God as if he grudged to bestow. In his very nature he is imperially diffusive ; and not to ask large favors reflects dishonor upon him

whose delight is to give bountifully. Oh for a holy boldness to enter appreciatingly into the largeness of our devotional privileges; for a faith working by love commensurately with the promises of the Father, the high-priesthood of the Son, and the available presence of the Holy Spirit!

The objects of petition must come within the range of God's good pleasure. Faith and love would desire only such. "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will he heareth us." How shall that harmony be ascertained? Only by consulting the word of God. We may know, for instance, that whatever is required universally—as any virtue or any observance enjoined by him—accords with his purpose, and hence is a fitting theme of prayer.

So, too, whatever he promises. When we read, "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing," or, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," we may with the greatest confidence plead those words before the throne; every absolute promise authorizing absolute entreaty, but a conditional promise only conditional entreaty.

Whatever God has prophetically or otherwise indicated to be according to his will, is appropriate in petition. To the eternal Son he made a covenant pledge of the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. What encouragement and scope there are for supplications to God in behalf of the conversion of sinners! Not only the chief of apostles, but the most retired believer, pleading promises exceeding great and pre-

scious, in the name of the great Redeemer, may accomplish wonders. "When I first obtained a hope," said Harlan Page, "I prayed year after year that God would make me the means of saving souls; and I think I have had evidence that more than one hundred souls have been converted to God through my own direct and personal instrumentality. It is all of God's grace, and nothing that I have done."

The recorded prayers of inspired men embrace subject-matter in harmony with the divine will. Men of God were not moved to go beyond the limits of soberest propriety. Turn to the intercessions of one such man. For the Hebrews he prayed, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will;" for the Christians of Thessalonica, "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly;" and in behalf of the Ephesian Church, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth all knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God!" We are awed by such sublime expressions, such mighty strugglings of an intercessory spirit. If this were not an actual supplication, offered in behalf of persons then living, we should suppose it to be the fragment of an apocalypse; some prophetic vision of saints made glorious in the immediate presence of God and the Lamb: "Filled

with all the fulness of God!" With an example like this before him, what length or breadth, what height or depth, of spiritual attainments need any one ever hesitate to ask for himself or others?

It is to be noticed that the promises most explicit and least qualified are the ones relating to spiritual benefits. Genuine faith and hope do not rest on mere conjecture, on pleasant guesses, but on recorded authority from God. By the study of his Word we may fill our mouths with arguments, and embolden ourselves in that fervent, effectual prayer which availeth much. With these guarantees, and within these limits, what achievements may not be won? Grants are already made out in heaven: all that is wanting is an application in faith, in the name of Christ, and for the glory of God.

V.

METHOD.

I. ADDRESS AND ADORATION.



THE relations in which every suppliant stands are various; a corresponding variety of feelings may be expected to succeed one another in prayer; but the order in which they arise depends chiefly upon habit and previous thought. Ordinarily, method of some kind is for every reason desirable. Due arrange-

ment by no means implies formality, nor a want of reliance upon divine aid; "for God is not the author of confusion." While no prayer will avail by its regularity alone, it cannot on that account be any less acceptable to Him whose wisdom shone so eminently in reducing chaos to order. Without being mechanical, we may be methodical; and in no other way will a person avoid being desultory and repetitious.

Reference is now had chiefly to social prayer, a proper method being particularly important for the enjoyment and profit of others. Who has not listened to such incoherence as set all comfortable participation at defiance? The exercises of adoration and humiliation, of thanksgiving and petition, are certainly

so distinct that they cannot with propriety be commingled indiscriminately. Such confusion bewilders the listener if it does not insult God. Let all things, prayer not least, be done decently and in order.

True, there are circumstances under which method is not important, and is scarcely admissible. Such are sudden or peculiar emergencies, and the existence of any strong emotion, which necessarily gives a single direction to devotional exercises. Appropriate brevity, also, sometimes precludes much regard to plan. Ejaculatory prayer, in particular, must be as informal as it is unpremeditated.

The more usual parts of prayer are the address, followed by adoration, thanksgiving, confession, and petition. In human intercourse,—particularly when a superior is approached,—usage demands the mention of his name with some accompanying epithet. There is felt to be a similar propriety in coming before the Supreme Being. Looking at the Psalms and other prayers transmitted to us in the Bible,—those of Abraham and Moses, of David and Solomon, of Nehemiah and Daniel, of Christ and the apostles,—we find the following to be the more usual forms of invocation, both at the opening of prayer and during its progress: Lord, O Lord, O Lord of hosts, O Lord our Lord, O Lord our Shield. In the same manner, God, O God, My God, O my God, O thou my God, and O our God, O God of Israel, O God of Jacob, O God of my father Abraham, O God of hosts. Often do we meet with a combination of names and titles: Lord Jesus, O Lord God, O Lord my God, and O Lord our God, O Lord God of my salvation, O Lord God of heaven, O Lord

God of hosts. Descriptive modes of address are sometimes employed, in which no name of the Supreme Being is expressed, but one is understood: O Thou Most High, O Thou Holy One of Israel, O thou that savest by thy right hand them that put their trust in thee. There are also metaphorical invocations: O my Strength, O Shepherd of Israel, O Thou Preserver of men. Every child is familiar with those words the Saviour taught: "Our Father which art in heaven." Christ, in his own prayers, often employed a similar address, though sometimes, if not always, invoking the first Person in the Trinity, and not God as the universal, heavenly parent. Thus we hear him saying, Father, Holy Father, O Father, O my Father, O righteous Father.

In making these citations, it is not designed to intimate that no other modes of address are allowable. Scripture abounds with appropriate forms not occurring in the express prayers which it contains. Nor can any objection be raised to uninspired language in devotional exercises, provided it be reverent and in good taste. Neither is it intimated that any particular stress is to be laid upon this variety. The Mohammedans affirm that God has ninety-nine excellent names, which, together with that of Allah, make a hundred. For this reason their chaplets consist of a hundred beads, at each of which they invoke one of these names; and they have a saying, that whoever invokes them frequently shall find the gates of paradise open.

John Newton remarks, "Many, perhaps most people, who pray in public, have some favorite word or expression which recurs too often in their prayers,

and is frequently used as a mere expletive, having no necessary connection with the sense of what they are speaking. The most disagreeable of these is, when the name of the blessed God, with the addition of perhaps one or more epithets, as Great, Glorious, Holy, Almighty, &c., is introduced so often, and without necessity, as seems neither to indicate a due reverence in the person who uses it, nor suited to excite reverence in those who hear. I will not say that this is taking the name of God in vain in the usual sense of the phrase; it is, however, a great impropriety, and should be guarded against. It would be well if they who use redundant expressions had a friend to give them a caution, as they might, with a little care, be retrenched; and hardly any person can be sensible of the little peculiarities he may inadvertently adopt, unless he is told of it."

The fact and form of address imply adoration. This should be specified as a distinct department of prayer. Omission here is the only defect in that excellent definition given by the Westminster Assembly of Divines in their Shorter Catechism. What is plainer than that devotional feelings demand, and Scripture examples authorize, adoration? When the true worshipper bows down before Jehovah, he feels the propriety of an exercise other than thanksgiving, confession, or petition. As he approaches the Supreme Being, his soul is awed; a dread falls upon him; the divine excellency makes him afraid. His feelings find utterance in a reverent ascription to God of the glory due unto his name. This is adoration, though the word is often used with an extent of meaning equal to that of prayer

itself. To adore him is devoutly to acknowledge his perfections, to speak of the glorious honor of his majesty, and of his wondrous works. Viewed as an outward act, adoration is the rendering of divine honors to God in prayer; subjectively, it is that devout homage of heart which prompts such expressions. The feelings chiefly involved are those of humility and pious admiration. The worshipper contemplates God as he is in himself, or as seen in his works and ways. Then, if ever, are the emotions of sanctified sublimity experienced and expressed. Then is the spirit in sympathy with seraphim, and cries, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."

This exercise more truly than any other is common to men and angels, to saints on earth and saints in heaven. Confession ceases at death. The redeemed make no intercessions in heaven. But adoration, slight here, profound hereafter, will be the common employment of the whole family on high. "They sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy."

Recurring to prayers recorded entire or in part, we find that, as a whole, they are characterized by the element of adoration. The devotional song of Moses, after the deliverance at the Red Sea, is occupied wholly in celebrating the wonders of the Lord. "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power; thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who

is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" In the prayer of David recorded in Chronicles, one-half is taken up with elevated ascriptions to God: "Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thy hand is power and might, and in thy hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now, therefore, our God, we thank thee and praise thy glorious name." The prayer of Solomon, at the dedication of the temple, opens thus: "Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or in earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their hearts." Hezekiah prayed unto the Lord, saying, "O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth." Similarly did Daniel address himself to God. The introduction to our Lord's prayer should be noticed: "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." The Psalms, many of which are only rhythmical prayers, abound in the language of devout homage: "Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honor and majesty, who coverest thyself with light as with a garment; who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain." Again, "I will extol thee, O God my

King; and I will bless thy name forever and ever. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations."

These selections suggest an evident deficiency of adoration in many modern prayers. Must it not be that in pulpit instruction, and private meditation, there is a failure to dwell suitably on God's exalted nature, and his glorious government? We are impatient of delay in the preliminaries of prostration before the footstool, and of ascribing to him the glory due unto his name. In our selfish and irreverent haste, we too often hurry on to petitions; but will such disrespect to the Almighty speed the answers? "O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker."

II. CONFESSION.

The mercy-seat was not set up as a court of inquiry. God has no need to be informed what is in the heart of man, or that any should refresh his recollection. He requires an acknowledgment of sin as the expression of penitence, without which no prayer can be acceptable, and no favor can be granted. This is important chiefly from its relation to forgiveness. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Not that there is anything meritorious in con-

fession, or that it can be the ground of pardon. Acknowledgment of a debt does not discharge it; the criminal's disclosure does not bring him acquittal or reprieve. Yet no confession, no remission. Not that acknowledgment is atonement, but a condition of acceptance it is.

Concealment is the resort of guilt. No sooner had our first parents sinned than they hid themselves. Summoned from their covert, they attempt to cast blame on their insulted Maker. Thus has it been with their apostate descendants, who have loved darkness rather than light; the reason they come not to the light is lest their deeds should be reprov'd. Is not the overcoming of this criminal reluctance the first indication of a return to allegiance? The moment a sinner betakes himself to his knees, there is encouragement; the very attitude is the symbol of hope.

Confession to God is of course meant. The Man of Sin erects auricular confession into a sacrament, and makes a belief in the divine authority for such private communications to the ear of a priest essential to salvation. One canon of the Council of Trent reads as follows: "Whoever shall deny that sacramental confession was instituted by divine command, or that it is necessary to salvation, or shall affirm that the practice of secretly confessing to the priest — as it has ever been observed from the beginning of the Catholic Church, and is still observed — is foreign to the institution and command of Christ, and is a human invention, let him be accursed." That verily is to sit in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. "Against

thee, O God, thee only have I sinned," cries every one taught from his Word; to thee, thee only will I make confession.

It should be full. Not that in every prayer a large space should be allotted to it, or that uniformly, when sins are acknowledged, the same rehearsal should be gone through with. It is safe, however, to say that usually confession is too limited. There is too much haste to get on to the more agreeable exercise of petition. This reluctance to pause and go thoroughly into the matter is not unnatural. But the true suppliant says, as did David, "Mine iniquity is great;" he has no disposition to withhold or disguise anything. Assured that the eye of God has read every thought and witnessed every act, the humble soul pours forth acknowledgments of guilt, and intentionally suppresses nothing. Original sin is confessed: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity;" and actual sins: "I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me." Secret as well as open sins are confessed: "Cleanse thou me from secret faults;" and social as well as personal sins: "Since the days of our fathers we have been in a great trespass unto this day." So, too, sins of neglect,—neglect to comply with the suggestions of God's providence and Spirit; neglect to do good as there has been opportunity; neglect to warn the ungodly, to instruct the ignorant, to sympathize with the afflicted. Positive sins are acknowledged: violations of the several commandments; abuse of God's benefits; want of faith in his promises; undervaluing of his ordinances; a self-righteous spirit, and a spirit of worldliness. Looking at his

heart and life, the penitent finds countless idle words and sinful acts. Envy has arisen one moment, and jealousy the next. Covetous desires have flowed in rapid succession; while murmurings at the allotments of God's providence are frequent. Ill-will, in the form of petulance or revenge, has been a habit, pride almost uninterrupted. And then the want of due love to God, gratitude to him, adoration of him; the want of suitable attachment to Christ and zeal in his cause. But where would an exhaustive enumeration end? "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head; therefore my heart faileth me."

In making a full acknowledgment, one will consider the aggravating circumstances of his sins. The common estimate is not the standard by which a true penitent judges himself. Guilt is not graduated by public opinion. Everything is brought to the test of divine requirement. Viewed in the light of a law which enjoins perfect conformity; viewed in the radiance of God's glory, his own conduct appears vile to the last degree, and he cries out, "Mine iniquities have gone over my head; as a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me."

Confession, to be satisfactory, must be free. Pharaoh was scourged into his acknowledgment: "I have sinned;" and often does some loss or alarm wring out a similar exclamation. But if an offender expects that his language of contrition will be accepted, it must be unconstrained. Does the true penitent require to be urged to this duty? Quite different is his position from that of the hardened culprit after

witnesses have convicted him ; his are not such expressions as the dread of impending doom may extort. His avowal is spontaneous. "Resolved," wrote President Edwards, at twenty years of age, — "Resolved, Very much to exercise myself in this all my life long, viz. : With the greatest openness of which I am capable, to declare my ways to God, and lay open my soul to him, all my sins, temptations, difficulties, sorrows, fears, hopes, desires, and everything, and every circumstance."

Confession will be in a measure specific. The degree to which it may be suitably so depends in a great measure upon the circumstances of time and place. More of particularity is of course admissible in the private than in the public sanctuary. Mere general acknowledgments are insufficient at any time, unless thoughts are more definite than the language. Confession always contemplates reform ; but no one reforms in general, without reforming in particular respects. Confession also has a reflex influence ; it was designed and is suited to deepen the sense of guilt. Generalized and abstract language is not that which moves the feelings ; something definite is required. Besetting sins should be distinctly acknowledged, and those not habitual, which are specially aggravated. Paul confessed, not simply that he was the chief of sinners, but that he was a blasphemer and persecutor ; and not merely that, but that he had persecuted believers unto death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women ; nor yet that alone, but "when the blood of the martyr Stephen was shed,

I also was standing by, and consented unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.”

The most important element is penitential sorrow. The accomplice in a capital crime may turn evidence for the State, and thus screen himself from punishment; but in acceptable confession to God, escape is not the motive. To every indictment of conscience the convicted sinner pleads guilty; he takes God's part against himself. There are two kinds of sorrow for sin; the one divine as to its origin, the other natural. The one springs from love to God, the other from self-love; the former is awakened by a view of sin as intrinsically wrong; the other by a view of it as interfering with self-interest. The penitent sinner alone feels the first; the mere man feels the other. Godly sorrow, save its bitterness, may be known in heaven; the sorrow which worketh death is consummated in hell. Ahab humbled himself, and made acknowledgments; yet the proof of penitence is wanting. Judas regretted his crime profoundly, and confessed that he had sinned; yet was he the son of perdition, and went to his own place.

A total disregard of ourselves is neither required, nor practicable; but is there not a clear difference between an anxiety that begins, centres, and terminates in a regard to personal happiness, and one which is chiefly concerned with the honor due to God? The former proceeds from a consideration of what is convenient, the latter from a consideration of what is right. One is satisfied only when self is safe, the other only when God is glorified.

Humility as opposed to all ostentation is needful.

We sometimes hear — deplorable vanity! — a person ambitiously rehearsing his former misdeeds, narrating with a freedom uncalled for, his impiety, or his daring irregularities. What is implied? Is not the design, by contrast, to exalt present excellence? Is it anything more or less than an oblique method of self-praise? Is it not equivalent to saying, You see what a person of spirit I was; you see how eminent I was in that way; and you see how surprising a change has taken place? Something like this may at times be heard under the sacred name of prayer; but a contrite suppliant confesses his sin with unfeigned mortification. He never plumes himself on past iniquities. He does not exaggerate. When most thoroughly penetrated with a sense of guilt, the mourning soul feels as if no language could express the enormity of its sins. Hence, by a kind of unconscious hypocrisy, the man whose heart is unmoved, or but faintly moved, will undertake to impose upon himself and others by extravagant confessions; by recounting forms or degrees of offence, which are unreal or at least unfelt. But devout honesty characterizes acceptable confession.

And whose sins does the suppliant speak of? First of all, such as are personal. The Pharisee, having, as he imagined, no offences of his own, began to confess those of others. Self-righteousness is as eagle-eyed when looking abroad, as it is blind when looking within.

True penitence turns an eye upon the inner man, and fastens it there in sorrowful gaze. Particularly is this the case in secret devotion. In social prayer, the mention of sins is necessarily, for the most part,

less specific, and less personal. Confession, however, must have its place. Ezra closed his recorded prayer with these words: "O Lord God of Israel, thou art righteous; behold we are before thee in our trespasses; for we cannot stand before thee because of this." At the time when Nehemiah instituted a reform, the Levites acknowledged: "We have done wickedly; neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments and thy testimonies, wherewith thou didst testify against them." Jeremiah was directed to say, "We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers; for we have sinned against thee."

The acknowledgment of social offences is also appropriate in secret prayer. Common responsibilities and common delinquencies render it the duty of individuals, not only in their associated, but in their retired addresses to God, to make confession as members of the community, sacred or civil, to which they belong. Thus Daniel, in his season of private fasting and humiliation: "We have sinned and committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled." Yet particular care is requisite in this exercise, that the mind be not fixed too exclusively upon the sins of others; that the individual be not lost in the mass, and pharisaic self-complacency supplant a genuine self-abasement.

III. THANKSGIVING.

Prayer is often too restricted in its range; it is made practically synonymous with petition. Should not thanksgiving have a large place? Do the countless mercies of our heavenly Father deserve no mention when we come before him? Shall there be no notice of answers received? Prayer is spiritual respiration; with petition it inhales refreshment; in thanksgiving it breathes back an acknowledgment; and if the hidden life is well regulated, the one will seem as natural and indispensable as the other.

This exercise involves gratitude, the feeling due from recipient to benefactor; thanksgiving is the expression of that feeling. There may be abundance of the latter, a fulness of thanks, and not a particle of genuine gratitude. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are;" but acceptable thanksgiving is the homage of humility, the glad mention of divine mercies, the spontaneous overflow of a contrite and affectionate heart.

It is not a compensatory act. Though a reasonable service, it is not a reward; and though not adequate, it is acceptable. Mercenary views must, of course, be excluded. God does not bestow his bounties for the sake of a recompense; nor can any hypocritical profession of gratitude avail as a bribe to secure more. The remark of Seneca, in regard to the interchange of kind offices between man and man, applies here: "It is not our business to angle with one benefit for

another, or by bestowing a little to get more ; but because I ought to do it, and that to such a degree that, if I could not return a benefit without being suspected of doing an injury, yet, in despite of infamy itself, I would be grateful."

The main difference between adoration and thanksgiving is, that adoration contemplates all the attributes of God ; thanksgiving his goodness ; the former admires the divine perfections in themselves considered ; the latter dwells upon the divine benevolence as manifested in acts of kindness.

Gratitude is as rare as it is noble. All eulogize it ; few deserve to be eulogized for it. Scarcely a passion or vice can be named in which men have not gloried ; but who ever boasted of being ungrateful ? Yet the mass of mankind devour mercies ; like the grave, they are continually receiving, but never giving.

In all social devotions thanksgiving should form a part. "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving." Not only on the stated anniversary, or some other day set apart for praise, but from week to week, in their religious convocations, should every community unite in warm expressions of gratitude to Almighty God.

Should not the same have a place in private prayer ? Never does the season for entering the closet return without bringing with it some call for grateful acknowledgment. Ordinarily, it is common favors only for which public thanks can be rendered. Individual benefits which most deeply affect the heart require that specific mention which is hardly proper elsewhere than in the closet, or at the domestic altar.

Divine favors may be classified according to their

own nature, and also according to their relation to the one giving thanks. In the last respect some are personal. They come with an express designation from our benignant Father. They call for distinct individual acknowledgment as much as if conferred exclusively upon one.

Some benefits are relative. They come primarily to others; but, owing to our connection with the recipients, or our interest in them, we are constrained to render thanks to the common Benefactor. These indirect calls for thankfulness are often felt to be the most urgent of all, and this social gratitude is of the most amiable and commanding character. The introduction to nearly all of Paul's epistles illustrates it. To the Romans he wrote: "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world;" to the Corinthians: "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ;" to the Ephesians: "Wherefore I, also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you;" and to the Thessalonians: "For this cause, also, we thank God, without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God." This feeling is akin to that of angels who rejoice over spiritual achievements in our world; their gratitude being not so much for personal benefits as for the display of God's benevolence to others.

Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift! First of all let us cry, and let it remain the burden of our

souls, Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift! This is the foundation, the purchase of all the rest. It includes, it transcends all others. And what is it? Not the half of Herod's kingdom, not a hemisphere, not a world; but the Son of God, the Maker of all things, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. The preparations of four thousand years were necessary for its advent; it came from an insulted Sovereign to his offending subjects. Unspeakable gift! It was Deity unfolding the resources of love to us. It was infinite compassion taking our nature, revealing and executing what had been designed for us from eternity. By virtue of that, bondmen of sin and Satan become freemen of the Lord; heirs of perdition become heirs of glory; the wretched, poor, and miserable, become kings and priests unto God.

Thanks be unto God! Thanks in every prayer that ascends! Thanks that from the guilt, ruin, and degradation of the fall, helpless apostates may be translated into the kingdom of light! God has done worthily of himself, worthily of his infinite resources of wisdom and love. Let thanks be repeated with every breath breathed heavenward. Eternity will not be long enough to finish ascriptions of praise to him for his unspeakable gift.

Alas that any should deal always in devotional lamentations, and come to the throne with nothing but petitions and remonstrances. Intermingle the incense of gratitude. When in your daily intercourse you speak of trials, why go into such painful particularity of detail, but, when you come to speak of God's mer-

cies, have none but the most brief and comprehensive acknowledgments? Are the divine favors less numerous than your wants? Self-love may lead to supplication; love to God leads to thanksgiving. Cultivate that love. Ponder on the expressions of his goodness. As many moments of quiet rest as you enjoy, as many morsels of wholesome food as you receive, as many kind words of friends as you hear, so many occasions of thanksgiving have you. Not a promise, not a precept of Holy Writ is there but what deserves gratitude.

The birds are up betimes to chant their praises; shall they not shame us? The early Christians had their *Hymnos antelucanos*, — hymns before daybreak. The very name of the pious and persecuted Lollards denotes a “people that sing praises.” Are we not called upon to be more abundant in this holy recreation? What a cheerful frame does it introduce into the soul! What a savor of heaven does it leave behind it! But when drought or mildew comes; when the whirlwind or earthquake makes us tremble; when the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the destruction that wasteth at noonday, invades our dwelling; when war with its manifold evils scourges us; when the outrage and misery of a whole distracted world assail our ears; when fierce disease or the strong hand of violence takes hold of our persons, is there a call then to render thanks? “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong.” “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus con-

cerning you." There is probably more genuine gratitude, more sincere thanksgiving in times of trial than at any other time. If at this moment we were called upon to name that for which, next to what has been specially dwelt upon, ardent praise ought to ascend to God, what should we mention? Shall we lift up the voice of thanksgiving to him because ours is a land of liberty and plenty? Shall we give thanks for the glow of health, and for the paradise of our homes? Yes, we will. But Faith stops not here. She bids us look at the dark clouds that sometimes gather over us, and asks if there is no blessing in their contents? She points to our riches that have made to themselves wings, and as an eagle are flying away, and asks if, in the strong sunlight of heaven, they do not look more golden than ever? She takes us within-doors to look upon our diminished family circles; and there, in the midst of tears and swelling hearts, bids us say cheerfully, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

God works by paradoxes. When least apparent, there is the most real reason for saying, Thy will be done. Trials are his medicine for the soul. This is his affectionate discipline of such as are children. What if pain and privation be extreme; there is a kind severity in them. Was ever dross purged away save by fire? What servants of the Most High are ever cast into the burning fiery furnace, without finding one like the Son of God present with them? Who ever sat down weary and famished without finding a fountain springing up in the wilderness? With a proper sense of God's presence, the wreck of nervous

derangement, and the tortures of martyrdom, may extort only devout thanksgiving. When the proconsul gave sentence, "Let Cyprian be beheaded," "God be praised!" replied the martyr. Ridley at the stake lifts his hands toward heaven and prays: "O heavenly Father, I give thee most hearty thanks that thou hast called me to be a professor of thee, even unto death."

On the evening of the last memorable passover, before breaking the bread, and before presenting the cup, Christ gave thanks. Was he ignorant of the coming events of that night, and of the day following? Did he know who was to betray him? Had he not already bidden him do quickly what he was to do? Had he not yet formed the purpose to go out, so soon as they should sing a hymn, pass the brook Kedron, and enter Gethsemane? Had he no presentiment of his exceeding sorrow, his sore amazement there? Was he unaware of what would take place before Caiaphas, before Pilate, before Herod? Had he no intimation of the scene at Golgotha?

He knew it all. The traitor's kiss, the scourging, the thorns, the weight of the cross, the piercing nails were already felt. Distinctly did he see his disciples forsake him, and his own Heavenly Father abandon him to the power of darkness. Yet he gives thanks; foreseeing every insult, every pang, he gives thanks. In full view of those wonders which unsettled the invisible world and darkened the heavens, he once and again gives thanks. Through that scene, and beyond it, he looks at the triumphs of his gospel to the end of time; backward and upward he looks at

the army of saints already glorified, and therefore gives thanks. The present progress of his kingdom in "souls renewed and sins forgiven," on every continent and many islands of the sea, he surveys, and gives thanks. The omniscient Son of God knows that by his conquest of the principalities of darkness, by the wonder and joy awakened among holy angels, and by the redemption from sin and misery of so many human millions, unspeakable glory will accrue to the triune God and his government, and therefore gives thanks. May not the disciple, in sacred sympathy with his Lord, lift his thoughts above surrounding scenes? Though in the midst of trials, though stepping into the waters of Jordan, let him anticipate the praises that, on the other side, shall resound through eternity.

IV. HALLELUJAH VICTORIES.

Praise to God is the crown-jewel of prayer. To confess before him is permitted, for his forgiving mercy is thus honored; to ask favors is encouraged, for his munificence shows itself; but devoutly to extol his name is peculiarly pleasing, for then all his attributes are acknowledged, and in a way least liable to the intermingling of any motive that shall mar the service. Was the cry of the whole ten lepers, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us," so acceptable as the testimony of that one from among them who "turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks, and he was a Samar-

itan"? "Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me." In view of this noble employment, David calls his tongue his glory. It was with a hallelujah that the angelic choir once sang in our atmosphere, "Glory to God in the highest." Their occupation is the same in heaven, where "they rest not day nor night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty."

There are no circumstances or seasons when this celestial exercise is out of place. The eve of battle forms no exception. Never was a choir called upon at a juncture more appropriate than when Jehoshaphat "appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of holiness as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord, for his mercy endureth forever." To do this at such a time implies the highest exercise of that faith which is the peculiar gift of God. The very want of faith may drive a man to uttering petitions, while grief or fear would incapacitate him for adoration. It was a beautiful word that the suffering little son of Legh Richmond said to his father: "I cannot pray now, I am so very ill; but I have been praising." It was the spontaneous outburst of a highly-sanctified heart, when Lady Colquhoun, on learning the death of her sister, exclaimed, "Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest! I have heard that my beloved Hannah is in glory! What cause for praise!" The peculiar efficacy of prayer is concentrated in holy ascriptions. Let pious men go to the front, extolling the beauty of holiness, profoundly trustful and joyful, and raising the doxology, "Praise the Lord, for his mercy endureth forever," and if any address to Heaven can bring victory, that will.

Devout praise reacts happily on the hearts of an army and community. Such an exercise is the best school of courage and energy. Nothing so tires out the heart and makes all the sinews flaccid as despondency and complaining. A gloomy apprehension is liable, like an infectious disease, to propagate itself. Make up the mind that you are going to ruin, and you will go; indeed, you are there already, and are drawing others in the same direction. But what a miserable existence it is to go through life or a campaign foretelling and inviting disaster. The Russian soldier has little enthusiasm; his cheer is a mere whine. A hopeful habit, the habit of looking on the bright side of things, and of gladly recognizing God's good hand and his sovereign right, is worth everything in peace or in war. A determined cheerfulness of this sort is the basis of reliable bravery and endurance. The efficient workers and fighters of the human race have not been the peevish and sullen, but the buoyant, the "inveterate hoppers." Nothing but habitual, grateful recognition of God's providence can be relied upon to carry a person or people through the exigencies of war; and there is nothing like heartfelt, audible praise, to keep up that sense of dependence as an effective element of power. So long as men can sing, they will attempt or endure anything.

Praise, under such circumstances, has great effect upon the opposing party. When Jehoshaphat and the men of Judah marched out against the confederates at Hazazon-tamar, he "appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of holiness as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord,

for his mercy endureth forever." Their hallelujahs preceded the discomfiture of their enemies. There is wonderful strategic power in devout praise. With what strange awe must the children of Moab, Ammon, and Mount Seir, have listened to Judean singers as their notes rang through the wilderness of Tekoa, rolled down the valley of Engedi, and were echoed from the cliff of Ziz! That chorus carried more alarm than the fiercest onset of archers or spearmen could have done. It convinced the marauding host that Jehoshaphat and his men felt strong in the Lord, and that the God of heaven and earth was on their side. The veterans of Moab and Ammon were ready to give battle to any common foe, but what could they make of such tactics,—“the praises of God in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand!” To have espied the hosts of Judah on their knees in supplication, would have produced far less effect. Men composed and confiding enough to sing when drawn up in battle-array, give assurance of victory. In the fifth century, when the Picts and Saxons made an attack on the army of Britons, the latter, being unarmed, were ordered to shout Alleluia three times. At this sound the enemy fled in amazement, leaving the Britons masters of the field. Was not the battle-song of Gustavus Adolphus worth a brigade to him? If men will only trust in God, and extol him, he will not leave them without fresh occasion for raising their doxologies. The most signal deliverances on record have been those where men were least entitled to credit; where they were witnesses rather than instruments of triumph. Devout praise threw open the Philippian jail at midnight; it

overwhelmed the confederates at Engedi ; it has made many another valley a Berachah, — the Valley of Blessing to this day.

There are not a few — and they may be found in every party — who indulge habitually in complaining and foreboding. According to their estimation every contractor is a rogue, every unsuccessful officer a traitor, and all evil tidings verities. Some would almost rather see failure than lose the character of true prophets, though their predictions belong to one book only, — that of Lamentations. It is noteworthy, that the first specific bird mentioned in the Bible should be the raven ; and that the crow family, the common crow and the carrion crow, should be found in all countries. They are far more numerous and widely-dispersed than the dove. They do not appreciate the ark ; they prefer to roam about over the dark waters of a drowned world.

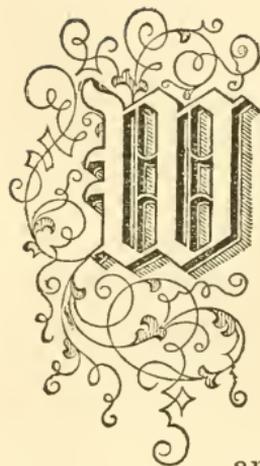
The way to make impossibilities is to fear them ; for despondency unnerves ; and the natural tendency of dejection is to fulfil its own doleful vaticinations. When was grumbling ever known to win a victory, or correct an evil ? What administration, or campaign, or general, was ever helped by election croaking and newspaper whining ? Borrowing is usually poor business, but borrowing trouble the most miserable of all occupations. It is neither to be demanded of an army that it cross the bridge before reaching it, nor to be sure that when they come to it they will find it burned, and that so they do nothing. It is a sad perversion of the musical powers of a band to learn nothing and play nothing but a retreat.

Even if one is melancholy by nature, he is bound to be cheerful on principle. Neither Scripture nor common sense confer the right to worry about what cannot be helped, or what can be helped. "Praise ye the Lord."

VI.

QUALITIES OF PRAYER.

I. HUMILITY AND DEPENDENCE.



WHAT is a devotional spirit? That state of the heart which is acceptable to God in prayer, which leads to the worshipping of him in spirit and in truth. The expression also implies such a love of the duty as prompts its frequent performance. It is not a simple element like faith and penitence, but involves the compound existence of several graces. In the fervent, effectual prayer of a righteous man all holy emotions are called forth; and the person characterized as devout is one whose pious affections often lead him to acts of worship; who manifests a holy alacrity in seeking converse with his Maker.

Let no one confound the gift and the spirit of prayer, for each may be possessed without the other. Melancthon, Luther, and Calvin, had little extemporaneous ability in public devotion. The last two were accustomed to use a written form, both before and after delivering their sermons or lectures; and yet, would it be safe to say that either was not a devout man? On the other hand, ready invention and com-

mand of language will enable a person, who perhaps never really prays, to excel in making a prayer. His volubility may impose upon himself, and those who listen; and God may render his performances serviceable to others, while for himself they have only a savor of death unto death. His is a ministering, not a sanctifying gift. Even those who receive aid from on high are sometimes in danger of beguiling themselves by a readiness of the lips, with which a sanctified heart has nothing to do. Hannah More remarks justly, "that we may not only be elated with the fluency, but even with the fervency of our prayers. Vanity may grow out of the act of renouncing it, and we may begin to feel proud at having humbled ourselves so eloquently."

Superior minds feel the want of help no less than others, particularly in more sacred duties and arduous undertakings. Such persons, even amidst the darkness of heathenism, have been accustomed to seek and profess special divine guidance. Distinguished legislators and philosophers of old did this, as Zoroaster, Pythagoras, and Lycurgus. Numa affirmed that the goddess *Ægeria* attended him, conducting him to a sacred grove, and to a concourse of her sister divinities, where he was told what laws and religious observances to introduce among the Romans. Some of the ancients indeed maintained that every individual has one of the genii assigned to him at birth, who continues a guardian angel through life. It is from the same necessities of our nature, and from the same superstition, that ordinary patron saints are adopted and invoked, and that, for instance, the Jesuit missionary

Cavallero, vaulting a little higher in spiritual ambition, chose the archangel Michael for his tutelary friend. It moves our deep commiseration to reflect how widely the pagan world, together with corrupt Christian communities, sharing in the common feeling of human weakness, have idly sought assistance from sources higher than man, yet lower than God.

Now, all that heart can wish is pledged to the humble Christian suppliant. The very act of worship implies an acknowledgment of immeasurable inferiority. Is pride ever so arrogant, ever such an affront as in this service? Elsewhere it may be simply odious; here it is impious, and becomes a personal indignity to the King of kings. However familiar and earnest, the petitioner must still keep upon his knees. In his protracted intercession for Sodom, Abraham said, "Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." The Lord in a special vision announced to Solomon, "If my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins."

Pride is the most inveterate of maladies. It was not the language of the Stoics alone, when one of their number, speaking of what he called virtue, said, "This is the chief good, which, if it be thine, thou art already beginning to be a companion of the gods, not a suppliant to them." In a strain yet more impiously vainglorious did another reply, when invited to assist in a sacrifice to the gods: "It is for them to come to me, not for me to go to them." Is not that substantially

the feeling of the universal heart of apostate man? "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God." But when the Holy Spirit discloses a view of Him who is on the throne high and lifted up, does not the discoverer cry out, "I am undone; I am a man of unclean lips"? Holy as unfallen angels are, they are humble; strange as it may sound in the ears of a brazen-faced age, there is blushing in heaven. Humility is the very essence of acceptable prayer. Who ever gave alms to a haughty, arrogant beggar? "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble."

Where neither the light of Christianity is enjoyed nor its power felt, the element of insubordination often comes out in most offensive exhibitions. Among the ancient gentile nations it was no unusual thing for a suppliant to pass from petitions to threats, endeavoring to intimidate the gods into compliance. Instances occur in which images were cast down and temples demolished out of revenge upon some unpropitious divinity. Visit Tartary now, and you will hear the Ostiaks, when their prayers for secular prosperity have not been answered, loading the god whom they profess to worship with a thousand reproaches, and insulting him as old and despicable. Visit the aboriginal tribes of our own country, and you may hear the most solemn speeches to their deities interlarded with expostulations and threats of neglect if requests are not complied with.¹ In Christian countries, fanaticism has sometimes run into an equally amazing arrogance. Thomas Munzer, the corypheus of fanatics in the six-

¹ See Franklin's Journey to the Polar Sea.

teenth century, taught that we should peremptorily demand of God a miracle, by which we may know that he has a care for us, and that our religion is better than that of the Turks; and if a sign is not given at once, we must expostulate with him, continuing to demand it, yea, must blame and reproach him for not doing it. But why travel so remotely? Where is the unrenewed man who ever attempted to pray, and, finding his petitions unanswered, did not cherish a secret resentment; did not feel that he was wronged by the withholding of the desired good; did not imagine that by asking he had laid God under obligation to bestow? "Wherefore have we fasted," say they, "and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our souls, and thou takest no knowledge?"

On the other hand, how often do the truly devout express fears lest they may not be heard on account of their shortcomings, want of humility, of faith, and of everything pleasing to God. But is any one heard on account of his holiness? There has never been but one being in this world who could offer a prayer that was accepted for his own sake or its own sake, and that was the Lord Jesus, in whose name alone prayer becomes availing. Our imperfections then need not deter us. God is not a rigorous Judge, exacting high personal excellence as the condition of acceptable worship. He is reconciled through the Mediator; he looks at Christ, and what we need is to do the same. Though our sanctity fall far below that of Elias, who was a man of like passions with ourselves, we need not despond. But for our Intercessor, we could have no hope; through him we have all hope.

II. RIGHT MOTIVE.

“Do all to the glory of God.” This generic law binds of course in prayer. Is not the absence of that motive inconsistent with the true spirit of supplication? His own glory being the aim of God in all that he does, can acceptance with him be expected if our aims do not harmonize with his? Selfishness, the seeking of something else than what he has in view, refuses to sing, “Glory to God in the highest.” Its sole maxim is, Charity begins at home. It clutches and appropriates, never once asking with what feelings the bounties of God should be received and employed.

What saith the Scripture? We open the history of the Jews. Jerusalem is besieged; the insulting and blasphemous Sennacherib is urging a surrender. To all appearance, inevitable destruction threatens the city of David. Hezekiah receives a letter from the insolent Assyrian; he goes to the sanctuary, and there spreads it out before the Lord. His great plea for interposition is not that fearful sufferings and degradation would be averted, but “that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord, even thou only.” That very night the angel of the Lord smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred fourscore and five thousand. Thus, too, the Psalmist prays repeatedly, “Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercy’s sake;” “Do thou for me, O God the Lord, for thy name’s sake.”

We turn to the early history of the Israelites. We

find the people encamped around Sinai. We see them bowing to a golden calf, in the very light of that burning mountain. The anger of the Lord waxes hot against them. With what argument can Moses intercede in their behalf? With an appeal to the honor and faithfulness of God. "Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did he bring them out to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it forever." View them again as they approach the southern border of Canaan, and as they give themselves up to despondency and mutiny upon the exaggerated report brought back by spies. The pestilence is threatened as a punishment; but their leader is at no loss for a plea that will prevail with Jehovah. "And Moses said unto the Lord, Then the Egyptians shall hear it (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them), and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. And now, I beseech thee, let the power of the Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken." He received an immediate assurance that his prayer was heard; and this is added: "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." Centuries later, in a time of sore famine, we hear Jeremiah pleading, "Do not abhor us; for thy name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory; remember, break not thy covenant with us."

And is any other the true motive in pleading for spiritual benefits? When supplicating for these higher favors, however indispensable to our well-being, may we for a moment forget there is One whose interests are infinitely more important? When asking forgiveness, what plea does the Psalmist urge? "For thy name's sake, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great!" Not because perdition is before me; not that I may be happy; but "for thy name's sake." Will not thy mercy be thus signalized? Will not the angels rejoice over it and praise thee? Will not thy saints bless thee? For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." With like argument does he intercede for the house of Israel: "Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name; and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake." So, too, when desirous of spiritual comfort and revival: "Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake; for thy righteousness' sake, bring my soul out of trouble."

We open to the prophecy of Daniel. That man of God finds the captivity drawing to a close. He gives himself to fasting, humiliation, and supplication; and while the topic of petition partakes of a mixed character, partly temporal and partly spiritual, the inspiring motive is still the same: "Now, therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake."

We find the same argument employed by holy men in cases where a miracle was contemplated. Take the instance of Elijah calling down fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice, in order that the relative claims of

Jehovah and of Baal might be convincingly settled. The prophet came near and said, "Hear me, O Lord hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again." At the grave of Lazarus, Christ prays, "Because of the people which stood by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me."

The same desire finds appropriate expression in devotional praise; as, for example, amidst thanksgivings offered by King David when Nathan brought a message relating to the temple: "Let thy name be magnified forever, saying, The Lord of hosts is God over Israel." We listen to ascriptions by the four-and-twenty elders whom John saw fall down before him that sat on the throne: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." Thou art worthy to receive the acknowledgment of glory, and honor, and power; thou art worthy of honor from all creatures in view of the manifestations of thy glorious attributes; for all things in existence were made by thee; they illustrate thy perfections, and it is alone for this, thine all-wise design, they exist.

The filial spirit, as in heaven so on earth, is characterized by this motive. With no selfish or servile disposition does the true believer kneel at the footstool. Self-forgetful and affectionate, his soul looks upward into the face of infinite tenderness. With confiding familiarity does it speak to Him who is plenteous in mercy. When the Comforter comes with this assurance of sonship, formality is at an end. There is no

more confession without penitence, or thanksgiving without gratitude ; no longer does the suppliant seem to be taking God's name in vain by a heartless repetition of divine titles ; nor does he now seem like an automaton performing lip-labor from the impulse of some mechanical force. He does not say his prayers ; he prays.

Is it strange that no more petitions are answered ? Busy in traffic, husbandry, mechanical occupations, professional life, or political schemes, men suffer the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches to choke the spirit of prayer, if not wholly to suspend its performance. One has a cargo just in ; one has bought five yoke of oxen ; one is an industrious son of Tubal-Cain, an artificer in iron and brass ; and but little time is found for communion with God. Domestic cares are urgent. How many, Martha-like, are careful and troubled about much serving, far more so than about converse with the heavenly Guest. With Daniel and Nehemiah and Mary it was not so. Would that the spirit of prayer might follow us into the world, as selfish cares of the world follow us to the place of prayer !

How would many be surprised if their requests were answered ! If God were to make bare his arm, were to do for others all that is asked of him, were to grant converting grace in every family, to change the whole aspect of society, giving truth and practical godliness a complete triumph, would not Christians be startled ? If the Holy Spirit were to come to our hearts and households by such a decisive visitation as would constrain us to change our style of living, to modify plans

of business, to deny ourselves many things previously deemed innocent and suitable, and to do many things previously neglected, — in short, to make religion most evidently the business of life, — should we not be astonished at such a development? Is there a present shrinking in thought from such a result? Then has selfishness gendered insincerity, and there is a mocking of God in our petitions. "People," says Robert Adam, "never tell more lies than in their prayers."

III. EARNESTNESS.

Did Paul ever sink into quietistic relaxation? With him prayer was heart-work. He greatly longed after the spiritual welfare of the young churches gathered by him; he prayed exceedingly. Was he an enthusiast? Did he not address a Being who could do exceeding abundantly above all that is thought or asked, and who has given promises exceeding great and precious? Intense religious affections are more than authorized; and if authorized in any exercise, it is that of devotion. Only such prayer as costs something is worth anything. It is in the sweat of our face that we are to get manna from heaven. Will petitions that do not move the heart of the suppliant, move the heart of Omnipotence? Earnestness to the point of agony is not inappropriate.

"I will not let thee go;" bruise thou mayest, but bless thou must. To the human eye, Jacob's condition was indeed deplorable. He was fleeing from an unscrupulous father-in-law, and was about to meet an enraged

brother. His finesse and self-reliance may well make him fear lest the divine covenant, if not broken, has been at least disturbed. How can he meet the one whom he wronged, and who these many years has been cherishing a deep resentment? What can he do? He can pray. In such an emergency he may well struggle all night. Wrestling requires energy and determination; and in that exercise, most significant under the circumstances, does the angel engage with him. Jacob insists on a blessing, and he prevails. He wins the order of spiritual knighthood upon the field; yea, as a prince he has power with God and with men, and prevails; and his name thereafter becomes a memorial of the power of prayer. The God of Israel encourages and is pleased with wrestling earnestness. The mere curiosity of a suppliant he will not gratify, but a devout wish he will. Crippled I may be, but I cannot be denied. "Never," said Bernard,—"never will I come away from thee without thee!"

They who bear the paralytic should be deterred by no obstacle; let them break up the roof and lower the patient into the presence of the Great Physician. Blind Bartimeus cries, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me;" and while many charge him that he should hold his peace, "the more a great deal" does he cry, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." That which annoys men under such circumstances is pleasing to God. A decorous, holy violence will carry the point.

Here and there may be found a mighty wrestler who strains every nerve and sinew of the soul, and with groanings unutterable perseveres till daybreak.

Augustine speaks of one who prayed as if he would *expirare orando*,—breathe out his very life in the exercise. Nazianzen says of his sister Gorgonia that she was modestly impudent with God; there was no putting her off with a denial. Have you ever wondered how the great German Reformer, in the midst of toil and conflict, the assaults of enemies, and the indiscretions of friends, was sustained? An acquaintance, writing to Melancthon, solves the mystery: “No day passes in which he does not devote at least three hours to prayer and meditation. I once succeeded in hearing him pray. What energy, what faith, in his words! He prays earnestly, as a man communing with God, and with such trust and faith as a man conversing with his father.” The famous philosopher of Syracuse was not the only one who has been so intent upon a mighty problem as to be insensible to the approach of enemies till hands were laid upon him. A martyr at Brussels, Telleman, was so rapt in his devotions that noisy soldiers were unobserved by him till they seized his person.

To pray with listlessness is to pray as if expecting a denial; it invites a refusal. We must not only knock and seek, but strive to enter in. It is related of Augustus Cæsar, that, when a petition was presented in a timorous manner, he showed marked displeasure, as if it were an impeachment of his benignity; and shall not the King of kings be offended by the hesitating and distrustful manner in which petitions are laid before him?

Fervency is the antidote for wandering thoughts. These may result from an imperfect mental discipline,

and from other causes not directly involving moral delinquency. More often, however, they are owing to the want of due preparation, to the absence of that spirituality of mind, that ardor of soul, which characterizes a truly devout Christian. Worldliness must necessarily cause distractions in prayer, for the heart that is preoccupied and engrossed with the affairs of this life will of course plead, "I pray thee have me excused," and, if dragged to the mercy-seat, will inevitably disturb the repose of that place. The attempt is like trying to hold an ungoverned and restive child at the family altar.

The mind may, however, be collected in this exercise, and yet to no better purpose than if distracted. Self-righteousness is capable of as great intensity as genuine devotion. The Hindoo is not perhaps so often harassed by disturbing thoughts as the true worshipper. The Romanist may school himself into great fixedness in repeating his Ave Marias and Pater Nosters. Said the Rev. Wm. Romaine, "I once uttered the Lord's Prayer without a wandering thought, and it was the worst prayer I ever offered. I was on that account as proud as the Devil."

In regard to vagrancy of mind and other hindrances, it cannot be doubted that the "Accuser of the brethren" has much to do with them. "Prayer," says Augustine, "is to God a sacrifice, to the Devil a scourge." It is with reason that the Great Adversary employs much busy malignity upon the believer in his moments of communion with Heaven. In no other attitude than that of prostration before the footstool can the Christian look this roaring lion in the face.

Prayer is the key that opens the door to our armory. But, though tempted, we are not forced. Come what may, we should go directly, constantly, boldly, to the mercy-seat.

IV. CONSTANCY.

Constant prayer is prayer so habitually frequent as to characterize a person, and to seem the occupation of his inner life. It implies the existence of a devotional frame, a readiness to enter upon the duty whenever appropriate seasons occur. We say of one who often repeats any act that he is constantly doing it; the musician is always at his favorite instrument. Other religious observances are spoken of in the same way. After Christ's ascension, it is said the disciples were "continually in the temple, praising and blessing God;" and later, "Continuing daily with one accord in the temple." It was habitual with them, and they devoted so much time to those duties that they were said to be continually occupied in them. Paul assured the Thessalonians, "We give thanks to God always for you all." Perhaps in many prayers they were not remembered at all; yet was his remembrance of them so frequent that he could truthfully affirm what he did. President Edwards says, "My mind was greatly fixed on divine things, — almost perpetually in the contemplation of them. I spent most of my time in thinking of divine things year after year; often walking alone in the woods and solitary places for meditation, soliloquy and prayer, and converse with God." He prayed without ceasing; it was an established,

holy habit with him. The soul of such a man is like the golden censer, always ready with its incense of sweet savor, though that incense be not always lighted. Genuine devotion is not a spark from the flint, obtained with violence and quickly gone ; it warms at all times, though it give forth only an occasional flame.

This devotional habit should intermingle with all secular concerns. The practice of pious Icelanders will illustrate. On waking in the morning they do not salute any one in the house till, after hastening to the door, they have lifted up their eyes in silent prayer. Returning into the house, they greet every one with, "God grant you a good day!" Before crossing and after having crossed a river, the devout Icelander will raise his hat in token of the sense he entertains of dependence on the Supreme Being. Fishermen, too, when they put out to sea, after rowing into quiet water a short distance from the shore, take off their hats and send up a prayer, committing themselves to the protection of God and soliciting his blessing on their labor.

There needs to be an abiding appetency of the soul after God ; the whole life should be, as Origen says, "one great, connected prayer." Many seem to be devout only by paroxysms or periodically, and at periods disastrously remote from one another. On the great day of expiation, occurring once a year, the Jews continue at their prayers from morning till night, for upwards of twelve hours, without intermission. The main feature of all formalism is that it undertakes by something external and extraordinary to atone for an inward and ordinary defect. It pays its vows

as men pay an annual tax, — only because they must and when they must. But such grudging in religion, such irreligious parsimony, is a robbery of God, and is heaven-provoking. As well may a man set apart a few hours monthly for taking food; as well may a child set a parent dayooft the three hundred and sixty-five for growing, as that a person should look for spiritual health and strength with such irregular and irreverent habits. Daily bread must be asked. Has God no claims upon us except in seasons of anxiety and distress? Is he an almighty servant in our employ, whose aid we need only in trying emergencies, once or twice a year, it may be? Is he a physician to be called in only when our case grows threatening? — merely the proprietor of a life-boat, to come when the signal of distress is hung out? Pray without ceasing; pray not merely on some great day of expiation, when one long prayer may be deemed tantamount to many short ones, but often; not on the Sabbath alone, but on secular days; not in the morning merely, but at evening; nor at those seasons merely, but many times between them.

May we not say that he who does not pray always, never prays? The spirit of prayer is the spirit of dependence, humility, love, and faith. Is that man a Christian who does not find delight in these exercises, and whose strongest desire is not that he may possess them more fully, that he may grow therein day by day, till the day of his death, and to all eternity? Not till that period has arrived when daily bread is no longer needed; not till God's promises fail; not till one has raised himself beyond the reach of the arrows of

death and the fiery darts of Satan, and has no sins remaining to be pardoned, will it be safe to cease praying.

Often is it found, in regard particularly to secret and domestic prayer, that fatigue, the pressure of business, or bodily indisposition, is made an apology for omitting at the regular hour to address the throne of grace. But the Christian constancy now insisted upon will arrest and overcome such disinclination, and in spite of hurry or lassitude will insist upon the devotional season.

Praying always is not inconsistent with extraordinary seasons of prayer, — praying more at one time than another. Special occasions are ordered by God, and require a special recognition of his providence. Unusual duties and trials demand unusual aid of the Spirit; corresponding supplication must be made. Samson called unto the Lord, and said, “O Lord God, remember me and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God.” “Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray.”

Simple prayerfulness, however, should not be regarded as a substitute for stated seasons of devotion. Life is desultory. Every one's history is a course of varying and miscellaneous events. In no department of business, in no concerns, sacred or secular, will anything of high value be accomplished where there are not system and punctuality. He who has appointed prayer is the God of order. A uniform and stated observance of duty harmonizes with the economy of his government, and must be acceptable to him. It certainly is indispensable to our highest good.

Hence, for every branch of worship, secret, domestic, or public, there should be fixed seasons.

The Friends are in error here. They believe in a present, immediate revelation, and it is their well-known practice to wait for the supposed sudden impulse of divine influences before engaging audibly in religious exercises. Those impulses being uncertain and irregular, they often remain a long time together with no united prayer. But may there not be regularity without formality? Are not stated, spontaneous attempts to worship God consistent with his special and gracious presence? To rely upon that presence independently of such efforts is enthusiasm.

Here and there only can a person be found who is true to his purposes. Many men are mere creatures of schemes. Forming resolutions never carried into effect is the common biography. As in other duties, so in this there is a sad instability. It cannot fail to be observed that no particular relating to this duty is more insisted upon in the sacred Scriptures than that it should be constant: "Continue in prayer;" "praying always;" "pray without ceasing." Literally uninterrupted prayer is not, of course, intended. That is impracticable; nature could not sustain it. Variation and repose are indispensable to mental and spiritual health, no less than to health of body. It is only a disordered mind, or one laboring under peculiar weakness and ignorance, that, disregarding the claims of active employment, can think of maintaining prayer to the exclusion of other duties. In the fourth century there arose a sect called Euchites, who neglected all business, and gave themselves to prayer, as the sum

and substance of religion, and the exclusive means of salvation. But the sect embraced only enthusiasts, and their system was a self-righteous mysticism.

In the later periods of one's life, however, when active occupation diminishes, there may be a more literal compliance with the precept to pray always. What spectacle is more delightful than that of a venerable servant of God who waits continually in the temple? Bishop Andrews, of the sixteenth century, was accustomed to spend the greater part of five hours daily in prayer. After the death of his brother Nicholas he spent all his time thus. During his last sickness, being full threescore and ten, he continued while awake to pray audibly till his strength failed, and then, lifting up his eyes and hands, showed that he prayed still.

Constancy in prayer implies the habit of ejaculation. And what is ejaculatory prayer? A short, sudden, reverent address to God; a devotional parenthesis. It is the prayer of emergencies, the prayer for vacant moments in hourly occupations, the prayer for all times and all events. It differs from the praying of stated seasons in its brevity, and in being very much unpremeditated. It is that instant darting of the soul upward to the mercy-seat which indicates what its tendency is. When Joseph lifted up his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, he said, "God be gracious unto thee, my son." Jacob, in the midst of predictions relating to his sons and of his benedictions upon them, paused an instant to exclaim, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!" In the recapitulation of his labors, Nehemiah breaks forth at every

paragraph, and winds up the whole with, "Remember me, O God, for good." In the midst of dying agonies, the penitent thief cried, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Discoursing to Timothy on ministerial qualifications and duties, Paul ejaculates, "The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus."

It is by such means that the daily events and secular concerns of life are to be sanctified, brief petitions being frequently mingled with them. Among primitive Christians this was quite common. "On receiving any personal or domestic token of the divine goodness, when engaged in any important undertaking, such as sowing their seed or reaping their harvest, laying the foundation of a house or taking possession of it, placing the web in the loom or putting on a new suit of clothes, entering on a journey or going into a bath, forming a new relation or parting with a friend, mingling in company, at the beginning or closing of a letter, they indulged in the aspirations of prayer; and so much did they familiarize themselves with its spirit and its sentiments that they seem to have cultivated the habit of constant mental converse with their heavenly Father.¹

It is a question upon which philosophers have expended considerable discussion, whether the mind be able to attend simultaneously to two different things. This, at least, is certain, that it can pass from one object to another with such rapidity as to be unable to recall its own volitions. No appreciable time being consumed in the process, and the mind being scarcely

¹ Coleman's Antiquities.

conscious of its distinct movements, it is all one as if it could direct attention to two or more objects at the same time. Manual expertness, rapid musical performance, and the like, illustrate the point. There is then an intellectual possibility of constant prayer without any prejudicial interruption to secular engagements. If the organist can perform simultaneously two or more parts, can attend to expression and to the accompanying performances of others, and at the same time give vent to his own pious emotions; if at one time Cæsar could dictate letters to three amanuenses and not be exclusively occupied, then in the midst of hourly occupations may there not be perpetual sallies of the soul heavenward? President Edwards, speaking of one period of his life, says, "I was almost constantly in ejaculatory prayer, wherever I was. Prayer seemed to be natural to me, as the breath by which the inward burnings of my heart had vent." Yet he was an indefatigable student at the time referred to, and neglected none of the common duties of life. No interference with such duties need be apprehended from this quarter; the plough, the plane, the needle, need not stop for it. The salesman's success will not be hindered, the accountant's accuracy will not suffer. That principle of thrift, small gain and speedy return, will be fully realized. The harvest-men of Boaz did not reap any the less for saying, "The Lord bless thee," nor the sword and trowel of Nehemiah's workmen move any the slower for the prayers they were sending up. The door to the palace of the Great King is hard by and ever open; it does not take even a moment to step into his presence. These quick em-

bassies to heaven meet with no delay. In his picture of a true Christian, Clement of Alexandria remarks, "In every place will he pray, though not openly to be seen of men. Even when he is walking for pleasure, even when he is in converse with other men, in stillness, in reading, and when he is engaged in reasonable business, he prays by all means. And even also if he only think on God in the chamber of the soul, and with silent sighing calls upon his Father, he will be near him and with him, for he is still speaking to him."

How does the drowning man struggle to raise his head above the water into that element which alone can support life! So, in the midst of surrounding cares and trials, should the Christian strive evermore to lift his soul into the region of peace, the atmosphere of heaven. The price of his breath is constant effort. Yet he finds the everlasting arm is beneath him; he hears a promise which infuses strength: "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." The heart so in communion with God will find a holy quietude and wonderful strength.

Such believers, a few at least, have there been along the course of centuries. And have they not been the spiritual giants of their times, the men of might, who, through faith, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained the promises, stopped the mouths of lions, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens? They were not noisy Christians. Their feet were shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. One of this class,¹ when asked

¹ Professor Francke.

by a friend how he maintained such a constant peace of mind, replied, "By stirring up my mind a hundred times a day. Wherever I am, whatever I do, I say, Blessed Jesus, have I truly a share in thy redemption? Are my sins forgiven? Am I guided by thy Spirit? Thine I am; wash me again and again! By this constant converse with Jesus I have enjoyed serenity of mind and a settled peace in my soul."

This species of prayer must not supplant the regular seasons of more protracted devotion. So far from that, it can hardly be maintained without those seasons, and it will give to them a zest not otherwise to be secured. These transient communications with heaven serve to kindle a more imperative desire for the hours of longer fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. After having been thus upon the mount, does not the believer find that his eye turns wistfully back to the sacred summit, and that his most fervent aspirations are sometimes those he breathes as he turns his footsteps again toward the level of customary worldly cares? Such postscripts of the heart are the most pithy and earnest of all.

Nothing but ignorance and unbelief will suggest the inquiry whether these brief and silent aspirations have efficacy. It is truly wonderful in how short a space of time one may go to heaven and be back again; but not less wonderful is the amount of influence which so transient a visit may have. A sigh, a groan, an emotion of penitence embodied in a tear, may affect the well-being of souls through eternity.¹ Does the elec-

¹ *Ac sæpenumero, plus impetrant tacita suspiria lachrymæque, quam magni clamores.* ERASMUS, — *Modus orandi Deum.*

tric current perform its work any the less effectually for doing it rapidly? No one is heard for his much speaking, neither may any one despond for his little speaking. It was not a long prayer that Hezekiah offered for the people; but "the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people." It would seem to be in few words that Isaiah cried unto the Lord, "and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz."

V. PERSEVERANCE.

Persevering effort is the universal price of success. In the results of life far less is owing to any difference of mental endowment or external circumstances than to firmness or caprice of purpose. No quality of the will commands such deep respect as a resolute constancy. With profound regard do we contemplate a man in the midst of clamor, derision, ingratitude, and partial failures, calmly holding on his way. "I was once," says Tamerlane, "forced to take shelter from my enemies in a ruined building, where I sat alone for many hours. To divert my mind from my hopeless condition, I fixed my observation upon an ant, that was carrying a grain of corn larger than itself up a high wall. I numbered the efforts it made to accomplish this object. The grain fell sixty-nine times to the ground; but the insect persevered, and the seventieth time it reached the top of the wall. The sight gave me courage at the moment, and I never forgot the lesson it conveyed." In the hidden

and the active life of a believer, perseverance is no less desirable than in the outer world; but its importance in prayer is perhaps less appreciated than in regard to other duties.

Persevering prayer is to be distinguished from fervent and from constant prayer. Fervency or importunity marks the strength of devotional feeling; it denotes intensity of emotion and desire, whether uniform or occasional. Constant prayer implies an habitual and decidedly devout spirit. Fervent or otherwise, it suffers no material interruptions. Whether actually in exercise or not, it exists; and it will seek frequent opportunity for utterance. Persevering prayer is more specific, having reference to a definite object; it is continued supplication for some particular blessing. A man may be importunate at times without being constant; he may be constant without prosecuting any one item of desire so uninterruptedly as to be pronounced persevering. He may indeed be said to persevere in the general habit of prayer, though not in the devout pursuit of some specified object. Devotional fervor is opposed to coldness and languor; constancy to remissness; perseverance to fickleness. The perfection of prayer is a union of these qualities in their highest degree,—fervor in the constant prosecution of persevering prayer.

The chief element of such supplication is a stable belief in the promises of God. Without that it would be mere presumptuous obstinacy. There is also implied a firm purpose to pursue the object of petition until it be granted, or else until it appear evidently not to be in accordance with the divine will.

Is such prayer required or authorized? — a question to be answered from the Bible. We read, “Continue in prayer, and watch in the same;” “continuing instant in prayer.” The word persevering might be better employed here. Mere continuance is not the idea. A person may thus go on from habit simply, and his prayers be all the while undevoutly mechanical. The perseverance required is the result of reflection, based upon enlightened conviction. In Ephesians vi. 18, of our version, we have the word: “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”

We ask for illustrative instances, showing in what manner, with what limitations, and with what success persevering prayer may be prosecuted.

Look at the great lawgiver and general of Israel. His forty years of command were a continued intercession for them. A score of times did they rebel against God, and against him; yet they were his beloved people, God’s chosen people, and intercede for them he would. Not for Miriam and Aaron alone did he pray, but for the whole. When he saw the molten calf, he looked up to the mount and cried, “Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.” On the morrow he was still pleading, “Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin; if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.” So, too, at the waters of Meribah, and when a fire had been kindled at Taberah; when the spies brought their exaggerated re-

port; at the insurrection of Korah and his company; when the fiery serpents were devastating the camp, his persevering supplication went up in behalf of the erring, afflicted host. No sooner is his death announced to him than he beseeches God to appoint a successor for that cherished flock, which will otherwise soon be without a shepherd. At last he takes leave of the twelve tribes in an extended benediction, ascends Mount Nebo, and dies. He persevered in prayer.

We open the New Testament. We follow our Lord into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon; and "Behold, a woman of Canaan cries after him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil; but he answered her not a word." How unfeeling apparently, and really how disheartening! "His disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away, for she crieth after us." Her importunities had continued, and to be rid of them the disciples favored her suit. Surely the compassionate Messiah cannot resist this united appeal. "He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." These Syrophenicians have no title, and can have no share in my regards. Is there a perseverance that will longer hold out? "Then she came and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me." "He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." The Jews, who are children, may not be wronged to supply you Canaanites, who are but dogs. Is there pertinacity in the mother's love that will stand that? "And she said, Truth, Lord; yet the

dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." "Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." Persevering prayer wrought the achievement.

Follow Christ as he leaves Jericho. Hear Bartimeus crying out, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." He is bidden by many to hold his peace; but he only cries the more a great deal, "Thou Son of David have mercy on me!" till Jesus saith unto him, "Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole." The blind beggar would persevere in his petition.

Sit down and listen to Christ's plain instructions on this point. "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge which feared not God nor regarded man." A rare instance of recklessness and hardihood. "And there was a widow in that city." The peculiarly lonely and trying situation of the widow in Eastern countries is well known. "And she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary;" do me justice with respect to mine adversary,—protect me against mine adversary. A more reasonable and moving appeal could hardly have been made. "And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God nor regard man, yet, because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me." Selfish, hard-hearted man! He has neither piety nor pity. As a public functionary he is unjust; as a man he is cruel.

No compassion does he show to one in peculiar distress, and who has a reasonable claim upon him, but takes pity on himself, and out of regard merely to his own comfort does what his office and what common humanity should have prompted him to do. Nothing but the woman's perseverance wearied him into compliance. "The Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily." Mark how all the circumstances of the parable go to encourage perseverance in prayer. A woman not related to the judge, apparently unknown to him, urges upon his attention a case for which he cares nothing. She addresses an unprincipled, merciless man, and asks personal redress. Yet she succeeds; her importunity wins the favor. Much more, then, shall not the merciful God hear his own chosen people when they plead for that which he is predisposed to give, that in which his own honor and glory are concerned? In the person of our Judge we have infinite advantages.

The point is fairly established by precept, by parable, and by examples from the word of God, that in persevering entreaties there is peculiar efficacy. To deny this is to deny that Paul was inspired to urge us to continue in prayer; it is to deny that in the lives of Jacob and Moses there was anything commendable; it is to affirm that in the Syrophenician woman and blind Bartimeus Christ encouraged undevout impudence, and that in the parable of the importunate widow he burlesques all prayer.

No one maintains that in every instance persevering prayer will be crowned by the bestowment of that which is sought. The object of petition must be agreeable to the divine will. Wherever there is contingency and reasonable uncertainty, absolute success may not, of course, be expected. We remember Abraham's intercession for Sodom, six times in succession pleading for the devoted city; yet he soon saw the shower of fire and brimstone descend. We remember how David continued seven days in fasting and supplication for his sick child, and that when death ensued he told his servants, "While the child was yet alive I fasted and wept; for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again?"

We remember that Christ himself, who had said, "I know that thou hearest me always," in Gethsemane prayed, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" that the second and third time even he went away using the same words; and yet the cup did not pass from him.

Let it not be said, as is sometimes done with more of point than of truth, that Abraham ceased praying before God ceased answering. He stopped none too soon. Let it not be said that David ever prayed more acceptably than for the life of his child, which, however, died in the midst of his intercession. It was not the whole of his desire that the child might recover. The stronger wish with him was that God would do what in his wisdom he saw best. All of Christ's prayer that could be answered was answered; for his

petition was not unconditionally that the cup might pass from him ; in deep and holy earnestness he cried, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." That was a part of his persevering entreaty.

In all cases where the answer is delayed or denied, God has an ulterior object in view, more important than the one which the petitioner directly desires. Whenever God apparently does not hear, he tries the faith and patience of the believer ; he designs to deepen the impression that favors from heaven are not lightly to be won. Prayer is not a thing of humor or caprice, a duty that binds and a privilege to be sought only at our convenience. The slave of whims loses both his petition and the benefits of refusal ; but he who devotes himself to an untiring importunity of devout effort will obtain all that can be obtained, and in its least amount it will prove a large blessing.

Never does a Christian rise to the due appreciation of his privileges and responsibilities unless he attains to that sanctified energy of will which presses a suit before the throne till God bid him cease to pray. It is an abominable pride which can brook no repulse or delay. Guilty unbelief palsies the tongue of the suppliant. It ought to be one of our most firmly-settled convictions, not only that God hears prayer, but that perseverance in the same is indispensable, and has peculiar power. He delights to have his palace-door thronged by petitioners. No music, not the deep bass of the cataract, not the joyful concert of winged tribes, not the choir and organ of our sanctuaries, not the loudest, longest hallelujahs of earth, are so grateful to the ear of the God of Sabaoth as the untiring suppli-

cations of his children. Nothing is there within the range of legitimate petition but what may thus be reverently extorted.

Who would be disheartened by delays? God has his postponements as well as appointments.¹ He is as kind, as wise, in the one as in the other. Rebuffs should only foster heroism of faith. Out of discouragements the believer should gather hope, and be stimulated to an invincible constancy of faith, to an unyielding, holy inflexibility of soul, which is most pleasing to Heaven.

¹ *Habet Deus suas horas et moras.*

VII.

AUXILIARIES TO PRAYER.

I. DEVOTIONAL CULTURE REQUIRED.



LABOR is the lot of man. Those who feel neither the necessity nor disposition to work are objects of commiseration. Is it not one of the severest visitations of God when he takes away the power of adding, by personal effort, to the general stock of public good? The only capital on which any community can rely is its industry. Labor is the ultimate standard of valuation for everything exchangeable in the great mart of the world. The sweat of man's face is the original coin which has purchased all we possess, real or personal.

This familiar law of political economy holds also in that kingdom of which the people of God are spiritually citizens. Though a kingdom of grace, it is a kingdom of effort. Its industrial system is more uniform, simple, and certain, than is ever found in those kingdoms which are of this world. More true is it here that "he becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand; but the hand of the diligent maketh rich." In this holy commonwealth are no hereditary estates, no treasures for the idler to light upon. Whoever would

become rich in faith, or any other Christian excellence, must cultivate the grace of devotion.

John Newton confesses, "I find, in my own case, the principal cause of my leanness and unfruitfulness is owing to an unaccountable backwardness to pray. I can write, or read, or converse, or hear, with a ready will; but prayer is more spiritual and inward than any of these; and the more spiritual any duty is, the more my carnal heart is apt to start from it." Does not every Christian find that his hidden life is a paradox? Does it not seem unaccountable to him that an exercise so easy and delightful should be so slighted by him; that it should sometimes, when performed, appear tedious; that it should be crowded with vagrant thoughts; that sinful desires should obtrude in the very midst of penitent confession? This is only an exhibition of the living inconsistency which pervades the heart of every believer, one form of the contest between the law in the members and the implanted principle of grace.

Consciousness of guilt, so far as unaccompanied by penitence, disposes the offender, like our first parents, to hide himself, instead of promptly seeking the face of his heavenly Father. When prayer is actually offered, some ebullition of the unsanctified nature not unfrequently mars the whole. "How often," exclaims Thomas Goodwin, "when God had even granted a petition, and the decree was coming forth, and the grant newly written, and the seal setting to it, but an act of treason, coming between, stops it in the seal, and defers it, blots and blurs all, both prayer and grant when newly written, and leaves a guilt in the mind,

which quells our hopes, and then we look no more after our prayers."

Everything inconsistent with a genuine spirit of piety is at variance with prayer. Specifications might be made as numerous as the manifold defects of every heart not yet wholly cleansed. Sacred Scripture makes particular mention of an unforgiving temper: "For if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you." While the feeling of forgiveness on the part of an injured person is not the ground of God's forgiveness of him, it is a condition, as much as repentance and faith. The person who cannot exercise this evangelical temper toward even his worst enemies lacks an essential evidence of being in a justified state. There is particular fitness in this grace when an individual applies to the Father of mercies for any favor. God has far more to overlook and forbear in us than we can ever have occasion to do in others. Much as any may injure us, they cannot be guilty of such high-handed offences against us as we have been guilty of against God. For the unforgiving to ask remission is then altogether unreasonable and arrogant. Their state of mind is inconsistent with any gracious exercise, is unsuited to every blessing, and of course quite sufficient to vitiate the whole of prayer. The same may be said, and for the same reason, in regard to any other form of ill-will.

It becomes a question of no small moment, What is one's real place on the scale of devoutness? That position is to be determined not by theoretical views so much as by one's habit of heart. Religiously a man is what his heart is before the mercy-seat. If love to

God and faith in Christ draw him there, and hold him there, he is a child of the Highest, an heir of heaven. If seldom or never there, or if, when he is there, his heart is somewhere else, has he a right to regard himself as anything but an alien? Piety without prayer is a paradox; prayer without faith is impious.

The scale is a long one which marks all the degrees from positive, devout belief in God, through a questioning of his existence, strongly doubting his existence, to atheism and anti-theism. Answering to this gradation of speculative unbelief, there are modes of religious affection, from the purest worship to the fiercest and most impudent refusal to acknowledge God's government. There is a depth of wickedness, and there can be none lower, from which comes up the hideous, defiant inquiry, "What is the Almighty that we should serve him? And what profit should we have if we pray unto him?"

Painstaking in devotional culture is clearly needful. It might at the first thought seem sufficient to throw out general hints in regard to cherishing those graces specially needful in the performance of acceptable prayer. It is true that growth in humility, penitence, and faith, severally, is indispensable to progress herein; but a more specific aim and effort are required. This privilege of reverent converse with God is loved by no one as it ought to be; it is only a few who resort to it with such frequency as they should. There seems to be a strange and perverse reluctance to reap the full benefit of so wonderful a medium of communication between heaven and earth. This waywardness shows itself in part by a content-

ment with the mere form of prayer, or with a very low degree of its spirit. Hence the need of distinct and resolute purpose, and of specific effort. Faint desires lead only to feeble purposes and inefficient action. Comfort and profit are reserved as a reward for those who with decision and perseverance seek a worthy object.

No remarkably wicked acts are recorded of Jero-boam; but this is laid against him as a grievous charge, that he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord. It is for a lamentation when believers do not stir up themselves to take hold on God,—to take hold like wrestling Jacob, and to keep hold in a resolute perseverance. Men never seek God unawares. Dozing is no auxiliary to devotion. “Wake up, my glory,” says the royal Psalmist. He chides and challenges himself, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul?”

Pains, and a great deal of pains, are needful. Passing providences should be improved, and occasion taken from everything read, heard, and witnessed to stir up the soul. If we look for a visit from him, we must prepare the way of the Lord. If we expect him to tarry with us, there must be solicitous effort to conciliate and please him in everything.

How should his special visits be prized! Without incurring any reasonable suspicion of enthusiasm, we may ascribe to an unusual divine influence those hours of more elevated converse with Heaven to which no Christian is wholly a stranger. In the stillness of midnight, in the lonely walk, in the assembly of saints, in meditation upon God’s Word, there are moments when the soul seems to be caught up to the third

heaven. It enjoys an enlargement of view quite unwonted. The unseen Jehovah makes his presence felt; he vouchsafes to the humble and adoring believer an enrapturing familiarity. When, therefore, a feeling of peculiar reverence and devout aspiration comes over the soul, obey the heavenly impulse. It is a divine whisper to the heart, a hint from the King of kings that now is a favorable season for conference in the royal chamber.

II. READING OF SCRIPTURE.

The two Testaments form a progressive text-book for the study of this inexhaustible subject. In no other way can the spirit of prayer be so effectually promoted as by the careful reading of sacred Scripture with a view to this end. Here is our authoritative standard of faith and practice. Here are we taught our character, wants, and destiny. Here is made known the truth, paramount to all others, that if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. Here the efficacy of prayer is affirmed and illustrated. Here are specimens of the devout exercises of holy men in Bible times. Here, in the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets, in the instructions of Christ and the apostles, are the spirit and language for a universal liturgy. This scroll, bearing his own countersign, has God sent from on high, that with it we may gain admittance to his audience-chamber; and here alone is found in its purity the dialect spoken at the court of the Great King.

Thrice happy they who submit themselves to such tuition! Shall it be a boast that one was born in Tarsus, no mean city for its literary advantages; that one walked in the groves of Academus; that one has taken lessons of the best masters, and graduated at the oldest university; and shall it not be a matter of rejoicing that we may sit at the feet of the Great Teacher, who is wisdom itself; that we may drink at the fountain of perennial truth, and learn the rudiments of that heavenly science which is to ennoble sanctified intellects through everlasting ages?

“Give me,” said Herder, in the exhaustion of sickness,—“Give me a noble thought to refresh me withal!” Does not the Holy Ghost fill our feverish and debilitated souls with noble thoughts to refresh them withal?—the thought of God and the Lamb; the thought of glory unspeakable; the thought of angelic society and heavenly music; all the blessedness of New Jerusalem, the way of securing it hereafter, and of anticipating it now; the way of present, constant approach to the mercy-seat?

Concerning prayer, its scope and privilege, may God never abandon us to the teachings merely of the best of parents and best of preachers, but may the Holy Spirit come and guide into all truth.

With the martyr Ridley we cry, “O Heavenly Father, the author and fountain of all truth, the bottomless sea of all understanding, send down, we beseech thee, thy Holy Spirit into our hearts, and lighten our understandings with the beams of thy heavenly grace. We ask this, O merciful Father, not in respect

of our deserts, but for thy dear Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

One of the main uses to be made of Holy Writ as a devotional auxiliary is to study the promises, so exceeding great and precious. To the man of business, to the student of history, to any one conversant with human affairs, the very word promise suggests disappointment. It calls up sad instances of unfaithfulness and perfidy. Want of promptness, want of uprightness, through all gradations, from the slightest failure in meeting engagements to the grossest frauds, rise painfully to view. The very staple of social intercourse and historic record is largely made up of violated marriage vows, pecuniary obligations, official and international pledges. In worldly associations the phrase "great promises" either awakens distrust or a smile.

With peculiar joy do we turn from secular to sacred associations, from man to God. Bible promises are given by One who knows what he is able and will be called upon to do; One who never speaks hastily or insincerely.

Those suffering from the excited, deranged, crippled monetary world, must regard with particular interest a class of promissory notes that are never protested. Here are bills of exchange drawn by Him in whose right is all the real estate of the universe, on Him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and in favor of all who are in want and will accept of them.

Look at the promises with respect to their tenor. Some of them are absolute and universal, suspended

upon no condition, restricted to no class. Here is a specimen: "The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace." Such are of the most general character, pertaining to the whole body of believers; by their universality and the absence of all conditions they approach the line which divides promises from predictions.

Most Scripture promises, however, have a limiting element. Their performance is conditioned upon qualities or doings on the part of those addressed. This is a characteristic of vital importance. It is failure in regard to the required conditions which makes so many pervert the promises, or wonder why they are not fulfilled. How much, for instance, is made to depend upon humility, faith, and Christian affection! Thus, through nearly the whole range of promises, few of them are absolute; nearly all are addressed to character and conduct; and hence they harmonize so well with the great designs of probation, serving as healthful incitements to holy obedience and to all the Christian virtues.

Look at the scope of the promises. Many were given to individuals. Of these, some are intentionally limited to the parties receiving them. Such was the pledge of a child to Sarah, to Manoah, and to Hannah; such the pledge of continued life to Gideon; also to the king of Judah; and Christ's to the centurion. Of the same nature was the stipulation of a peaceful death to Josiah. "The Lord said to Gideon, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Gibeonites;" and to David, "Pursue, for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all."

Instances also occur of pledges to individuals, which were designed to be generalized and appropriated by any under similar circumstances. Such was the one to Moses: "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." Such the promise to the Philipian jailer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Some were given to particular classes, churches, or communities, yet with the design of a lasting application. Here may be instanced Christ's parting assurance to his ministering servants: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world;" and by the mouth of an apostle this: "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." Was it only for the church at Corinth that Paul wrote, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it"? or only for that at Philippi, "My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches of glory by Christ Jesus"?

Some are of a mixed character, and some, though made to the Jews, for instance, as a body, or to individuals, contain assurances widely and perpetually applicable: "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." To many a one in later times has that proved exceeding great and precious. Many a one, also, in periods of financial distress, or amidst

wars and rumors of war, has been enabled to maintain quietness of soul by the power of some such declaration. If we open the New Testament, similar gracious guarantees — and how abundant! — are at hand: “The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus.”

In regard to fulfilment, if there is no specification of time there is of course latitude. The pledge, for example, to each believer of final blessedness is made good only at the time appointed, though unknown till then to the one departing. So, too, the blessings secured to children of believing parents may be long delayed, yet are sure to come. Many years did Abraham wait before the promised son was born to him, and David before he sat upon the throne pledged to him, and Simeon before he took the infant Jesus in his arms, according as it had been “revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.” Four hundred years elapsed between the announcement by Malachi and the appearance of John the Baptist, and more than four hundred from the promise of Canaan to the descendants of Abraham and its fulfilment under Joshua; while four thousand years rolled away between the great evangelic pledge to our first parents and the personal coming of Him who has bruised the serpent’s head. With God a thousand years are as one day.

The chief liberty, so to speak, which God takes in regard to any promise, is often to do more than he appears to have stipulated. Many a believer finds him seemingly better than his word; no one ever found

him worse. Frequently does he bestow beyond the request as well as beyond the promise. To Zacharias, stricken dumb, he engaged to restore speech, but added the gift of prophecy. The country of Canaan alone was in the bond, but he gave to the children of Israel a kingdom beside. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

These pledges become the property of those only who accept them; and it is by faith alone that they are appropriated. This is the faith which primarily takes hold of the atoning righteousness of Christ, whereby comes "the knowledge of him" and a living union with him. It is a distinctive, decisive, intelligent act of the soul, through the special grace of God; no random matter, a result of education, of circumstances, an opinion taken on credit; a notion picked up by the way, which, borne about by rumor, happened to be found only because the country is a Christian one; it is trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the sacrificed Lamb of God, bearing the sins of many, made sin for us, expiating the guilt of men, and propitiating the favor of God, so that he can consistently give and fulfil promises to them. "For all the promises of God in him are yea and in him amen." Only by taking Christ can any one receive and hold to a promise of God. Is it not presumption for any one rejecting the Great Mediator of the covenant to think of appropriating to himself any provision of the covenant? "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath

made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son."

All hesitating souls may be assured that the promises are designed for every one who believes, for one as truly as for another. The differences of race, rank, and age, are disregarded: "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." It is a great mistake, and goes to rob Christ's household of an inheritance, to say that no individual has a right to apply a promise specifically to himself, because he is not mentioned by name. With equal propriety might it be objected that a given commandment is not binding upon all, or upon any, because not addressed to every one personally by name. All in the class contemplated are as truly and particularly embraced as if they were called out singly one by one. Do those in open day need an individual warrant for drinking in the light and air of heaven?

While every believer is an "heir of promise," he is heir to all promises. Rightly to apprehend one is to indicate a right in the whole. Each is an integral part of the great provision available to every one so far as there is need. The believer's title to a part is a title to all, as the owner of a field has secured to him not only the surface, but all beneath it, to the centre of the earth.

How ample is the encouragement thus afforded! We are supplied with the stipulations of unchanging love. They are an exhaustless treasury, on which we may draw to the largest amount of faith and hope. He who cannot lie speaks in the clearest manner by

way of assurance ; and prayer should be an echo from the sanctified soul to his voice. How comprehensive are his guarantees, indorsed to us by the faithful and true Witness ! “ Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.” Where is the passage that would repress our highest reasonable aspirations ? Where do we find ourselves restricted as to the amount of any species of good authorized to be sought ? “ If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.” Here is both an object of desire and the efficient cause of all truly devout and enlarged desires. The child of God needs to keep in mind that while the unaided wings of faith and love can never bear him to the throne that is high and lifted up ; while the aid of fellow-worshippers, and of ministering angels, even, would be unavailing, the Holy Spirit, yes, the adorable Trinity, are graciously engaged in his behalf.

One sweet pledge, firmly grasped, is enough to feed and fortify the soul anywhere. “ I had rather,” exclaimed a saint of former times, — “ I had rather be at the bottom of the sea with a promise than in paradise without one.” Amidst the decrepitude of advanced years, the promise is found true, “ Even to your old age I am he ; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you.” “ I must say,” remarked John Brown of Haddington, with holy cheerfulness, “ that I never yet found God to break his word in this, no, notwithstanding all the provocations which I have given him.”

When the day of death comes, when flesh and heart

fail, do the promises fail? They are sealed to us by the oath of the Father, the blood of the Son, the witness of the Spirit. All manner of distresses, deaths, yea, and spirits of darkness, may we look calmly in the face, with the scroll of God's promises in our hand. In our troublous voyage, whatever storms are encountered, let us hold bravely on, and we shall round the Cape of Good Hope on our way to more than golden Indies. There is a broad galaxy, a whole firmament studded with constellations, overhead, any one of which is enough to fill the mind with wonder and joy for the whole life. From mid-heaven hath God spoken, "Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him."

III. RETIREMENT AND MEDITATION.

Seldom does a fruit-tree by the wayside flourish, and seldom is its fruit suffered to ripen. The soil of such an exposed situation is too hard; there is too much lawless scarring and rude treatment of all kinds. So with the person who is always in the midst of the hurrying to and fro of ordinary life. He needs to be transplanted to a more genial soil and situation. If there be no moisture at the root, there will be none in the branches. It is in sacred meditation, alternating suitably with seasons of active effort, that the soul attains most of holy vigor.

A mere glance at spiritual objects will not suffice; fixed contemplation is needed. It is not in its flight over flowers that the bee gathers honey; nor is it while in a flutter that the mind extracts what is pre-

scious ; it must have quiet opportunity to supply itself with nutriment and sweetness. This is true in regard to any object of thought, but preëminently in regard to those which are spiritual. We are so encompassed with things of sense that a special endeavor is needed to close the inlets of sensation, to withdraw the mind from its absorbing occupancy in things seen, and engage it in things not seen. Strenuous effort may be required, but it must be made, or there will be sterility in the soul. Must not the earth be dug if we expect fruits? and is not the same true in spiritual husbandry? Without prayerful meditation upon divine things the soul will become a turbid, stagnant pool ; with it, a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

Devout meditation on appropriate themes is now suggested, not a critical inspection or logical analysis of them. For this purpose retirement is desirable. In speaking of withdrawment from the usual place or routine of labor, we speak, of course, as Protestants, and do not mean a permanent seclusion. Mysticism and monasticism are as ineffectual as they are unscriptural. There has been in all ages a limited class of minds predisposed to tranquillity and contemplation, and to a more or less pantheistic way of thinking ; to the belief that the human soul is an emanation from the divine nature, and that this celestial spark, being smothered, needs to be kindled by subjugating the body, by disengaging the attention from outward things, and by deep, calm, inward meditation, as it is called. In unrenewed minds this tendency develops itself under forms thoroughly antagonistic to evangel-

ical Christianity, as may be seen in a few popular writers and lecturers. In minds not skeptically disposed it may take the form of Quakerism or perfectionism.

In early times, this element led some to a hermit life; and in the Romish Church it has peopled monasteries and convents. Pure Christianity must be much more widely and powerfully diffused before there shall be a complete want of disappointed and visionary persons, some younger, some older, who will sing, —

“How happy is the lonely vestal’s lot,
The world forgetting, by the world forgot;”

and who by one rash act will go into irrecoverable self-banishment. To such civil or social death there pertains scarcely less of guilt than to literal suicide.

“For solitude, however some may rave,
Seeming a sanctuary, proves a grave,
A sepulchre in which the living lie,
Where all good qualities grow sick and die.”

While none may lead the life of a recluse, withdrawing permanently from required labors, there is a danger on the other hand, too. Our lawful avocations are liable to exact an unlawful interest. They often absorb and secularize the soul. This will always be the case, unless there are suitable intervals for a serious survey of life. Only in such a survey will time and eternity, earth and heaven, assume their relative positions. As from a lofty eminence the slighter inequalities of the vale beneath, and all its objects, seem reduced to insignificance, so is it on the Olivet of prayer and meditation. The storehouse, workshop, and drawing-room are left behind, and are scarcely visible from

that holy mountain. The nearer we get to heaven, the smaller does earth seem.

While we were not placed in the world with a view to get out of the world; while we have not enlisted in the service of the great Captain of our salvation in order to a perpetual furlough; yet each faithful soldier and laborer needs habitual and at times special rest,—not a season of indolence, but of holy quiet. We are not speaking of a pastime, but of a Christian duty. A German author, a physician of some distinction, wrote a work on solitude, treating it as if that were a cure for almost all evils; but in his whole four volumes there is scarcely a trace of religious sentiment, much less of Christianity. He might as well have prescribed four jars of sweetmeats for a patient far gone with dyspepsia. The poor diseased soul, never in this life more than barely convalescent, needs other treatment,—needs to come immediately into the hands of the Great Physician.

The leading advantage of devout retirement is a realization of God to the soul. To be thus alone is anything but solitude. Then as at no other time is the still small voice heard, and it is found how little man is needed when God is enjoyed.

In contact with the world, we become more or less penetrated by its spirit; but in religious retirement the Holy Spirit dispossesses the soul of this malign influence, and it becomes healthfully invigorated, re-acquiring its tone and devout equipoise. We must leave the land of Egypt if we would find manna.

The calm meditation enjoyed in such retirement is most favorable to a symmetrical development of Chris-

tian character. It is not when ships are under way that they can be thoroughly inspected and repaired, but in port and in the dock. The agitated fountain must have a little time of quiet before it will reflect an image truthfully; so must the perturbed soul have periodical rest if it is to become clear. When one withdraws from the world, how do inordinate and vain desires abate; how is it found that in the rapid and bustling movements of life nothing has been seen distinctly, but all is a confused mass of houses, hills, fields, and men as trees walking!

How mindful was Christ of the comfort of those about him! he is not a hard master. He felt himself the need of temporary retirement, and knew well how much it was needed by the twelve, who were in circumstances quite unfavorable for repose. "He said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile; for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat."

Occasional seasons will present themselves when devout meditation may be protracted to greater length and in a more thorough manner than ordinarily. Isaac Ambrose, a non-conformist minister of the seventeenth century, was accustomed once a year to retire for a whole month to a little hut in a wood, and, avoiding human converse, devote himself chiefly to contemplation.

In regard to the place, let it usually be the same with that of private prayer; of course a retired one. Angels do not let down their ladder amidst a crowd. The celestial dove flies from all noise. It is not fitting that Jehovah hold his court where the din of earthly

tumult is heard. Isaac went out into the field at evening to meditate.

Let not such as are unaccustomed to religious retirement be disheartened by first failures to reap anticipated fruits. There is a holy skill to be acquired in the use of this privilege. The great Adversary will be on the alert to spoil the hour of retreat. However earnest your desires for spiritual benefits in an excursion to some place of repose, Satan will get there before you do; and a whole party of temptations will take the same train with you. It is specially true of the people of this country that they do not know how to enjoy themselves, do not understand the art of secular recreation; and perhaps they are equally unskilled in spiritual recreations, in quiet, holy diversions of soul. It is much easier to get up a monster gathering, and contribute materially to a great excitement, than to sit down for an equal period in rational meditation. It is quite possible that some, anticipating too much, or perhaps rushing with unintelligent vehemence into retirement, will find themselves disappointed, and resolve never to go away again privately into a desert place. Now and then one may grow sullen or moody, and contract a distaste for the active duties of life; but shall we blame the clear-flowing stream because some one has drowned himself in it?

Make a business of getting away from business for devotional purposes. Go to the mountain, go to the sea-shore; or, if a longer journey is impracticable, still go regularly to your chamber; not for idly discursive musings, not for a paradise of ecstasies, but for serious

self-survey, for calm communion with Him who seeth in secret.

Excitement is now inaugurated as the order of the day. Many seem to think they are not living at all if not getting through life at the rate of thirty or forty miles an hour. Many seem to regard the whirlwind and earthquake not only as productive of incidental benefits, but as preferable to the uniform course of nature. By common consent our country exhibits an eminent illustration of activity and restlessness, of precocious and extreme adventure, of a general and somewhat unhealthy intensiveness of impulse and effort. Our usual excitement is periodically enhanced by the recurrence of those political floods which come at each Olympiad, threatening in every instance to prevail above the highest hills fifteen cubits upward.

Now, it is not every one's business to become exceedingly nervous and anxious, and to keep so all the while, even though there is a great deal of outrage and iniquity in the land. In behalf of Christ's disciples, at least, and in the name of a holy, quiet heaven, we protest against the madness of public agitators, against the combustion of a perpetual crisis, against installing uproar as the only legitimate condition of human existence. Neither head nor heart can stand it. Iron even will disintegrate under constant jarring. The roar of public conveyances, the rush and whirl of the business world, are anything but favorable to calm converse with God. All this renders the forming of proper devotional habits doubly important. While schemers and demagogues of all sorts are busy in fomenting public turmoils; while everything, impor-

tant and unimportant, of public and private interest, is daily obtruded upon general attention by the press, there is danger lest the ornament of a meek, quiet, and devout spirit vanish from the earth. The dust and din of our bustling age serve to make seasons of devotional retirement and of earnest supplication all the more imperatively necessary.

Get away, then, occasionally, and breathe a little; rest awhile. Let the fluttering nerves be quieted. Commune with your own heart and be still. Go with a resolute purpose to gather spiritual fruits; only be sure that in going you have Christ's invitation and Christ's company.

Fixed attention is important, and there should be something definitely before the mind; otherwise, constant digressions and idle vagaries will occupy and spoil the season. As an intellectual habit, nothing is more important than the power of intense and continued attention. This is one characteristic of genius. When complimented on his force of mind as displayed in mathematics and natural philosophy, Sir Isaac Newton replied that if he had made any improvement in those sciences it was owing more to patient attention than to any other talent. If there were such a thing as religious genius, it would show itself mainly in the power of devout meditation. Whatever their habits in other respects, those who have been distinguished for piety have excelled in fixing the mind on spiritual objects.

Why is it that we offer and that we hear so many paralytic prayers? Is it not because the topics and encouragements of prayer are so little pondered? In

serious, earnest contemplation, the affections will kindle. Baxter, in his sermon at the funeral of Henry Ashurst, says of that eminent Christian, that, rising at four or five o'clock in the morning, he was accustomed to spend two hours in private reading and meditation, followed by prayer. What experienced Christian would not prefer a short prayer after long meditation to a long prayer without meditation? "While I mused, the fire burned." Would you, like Enoch, be translated? Would you fain go to heaven in Elijah's chariot of fire? Then give yourself to sacred musings till your soul cannot help taking wing. The harp must certainly be attuned before it will discourse sweet music.

IV. DEVOUT FASTING.

No one can fail to notice that the desire for food, and the requisite quantity, depend much on the state of the mind. Strong emotions of any kind usually suspend hunger and thirst for the time. Deep grief produces this effect oftener, perhaps, than any other feeling. In seasons of great sorrow, the cravings of hunger are always in a measure abated, and nature refuses the customary amount of nourishment. Vibrating as man does between joy and sorrow, it is natural that he should alternately amplify and abridge his enjoyments at the table; and as there is nothing in view of which we ought to be so deeply grieved as our sins, there is an obvious demand for abstinence from food in connection with special humiliation before God.

This constitutional peculiarity of our nature, and certain positive institutions of the Jewish economy, together with apostolic example, substantiate the principle that individuals, churches, and civil communities are called upon to observe seasons of fasting whenever in their own hearts or in the providence of God there is evident occasion for so doing. In the Mosaic institute, the great day of atonement was set apart as one of fasting, and the only one in the year, in which food was forbidden from evening to evening. Besides this stated season, there were in earlier times occasionally others of a similar character, upon the occurrence of events specially adverse. Thus, after the Israelites had been defeated by the men of Ai, Joshua and the elders of Israel remained prostrate before the ark from morning till evening, without taking food. The same was done by the eleven tribes which took up arms against that of Benjamin; and still later the Israelites resorted to this at Mizpeh, when hard pressed by the Philistines. David in one instance observed a protracted fast; Daniel, also, when he understood that the end of the captivity was approaching. None of these seasons, however, excepting the day of expiation, became anniversary till the time of the captivity.

In regard to the manner of observance, we may notice it was with every mark of grief. The people clad themselves with sackcloth, placed ashes on their heads, rent their garments, and on public occasions wept and prayed aloud. On the great day of expiation more than usual rigor was practised. They continued fasting, it is said, not only from evening to

evening, but twenty-eight hours. Men were obliged to conform to this from the age of full thirteen years, and women from the age of full eleven; while children from the age of seven years fasted in proportion to their strength. Occasional fasting, though not required in the New Testament, was evidently practised by the apostles. Such was the case when they ordained Barnabas and Saul, and by these two when, in their journey through Asia Minor, they ordained elders in the several churches.

In the ages immediately succeeding the apostolic times, it does not appear that the same importance was attached to this practice as afterward. It is noticeable that almost nothing is to be found upon this subject in the extant writings of the first two centuries. Even so voluminous a writer as Origen, in the third century, speaks of it but once. Still, it is well known that periodical fasts were gradually introduced, first by custom, and afterward they were enforced by law.

Among our Pilgrim fathers religious fasting was a frequent and welcome practice. Who need be told that the Puritans while in Holland observed occasional fasts, or that the portion of John Robinson's flock which resolved upon emigration to this country had several such seasons preparatory to their undertaking, within a few months before they embarked? Through our colonial history occasions of this kind were frequent, in times of special danger, disaster, or drought; in connection with important meetings of legislative and ecclesiastical bodies, as well as at periods of marked religious declension.

The practice of private fasting appears to have been more common formerly than at present. Cotton Mather remarks, "Our private meetings of good people to pray and praise God, and sometimes to spend whole days in fasting and prayer, especially when any of the neighborhood are in affliction, or when the communion of the Lord's table is approaching, do still abound among us." As illustrative of the practice among the early preachers of New England, a few instances may well be cited. In regard to the first three ministers of the oldest church in Boston, and especially of Cotton and Norton, it is recorded that they would often spend whole days in the study, engaged in fasting, humiliation, and prayer. Of John Eliot it is said, "He not only made it his daily practice to enter into his closet and shut the door and pray to his Father in secret, but he would not rarely set apart whole days for prayer with fasting in secret places before the God of heaven. Prayer solemnized with fasting was indeed so agreeable unto him, that I have sometimes thought he might justly inherit the name of *Johannes Jejunator*, or John the Faster, which for the like reason was put upon one of the renowned ancients. Especially when there was any remarkable difficulty before him, he took this way to encounter and overcome it. He could say, as the pious Robertson did upon his death-bed, 'I thank God I have loved fasting and prayer with all my heart!'" Thomas Hooker, the most celebrated of the early ministers of Connecticut, devoted one day every month to private prayer with fasting, in addition to the public fasts, which occurred not unfrequently.

Opening the biography of David Brainerd, a name which will never cease to be associated with deep religious experience, we find in the published extracts from his journal there are recorded ten instances as observed by him within a period of little more than two years. Here is a specimen:—

“*January 6, 1744.* Feeling my extreme weakness and want of grace, the pollution of my soul, and danger of temptations on every side, I set apart this day for fasting and prayer, neither eating nor drinking from evening to evening, beseeching God to have mercy upon me. My soul intensely longed that the dreadful spots and stains of sin might be washed away from it. Saw something of the power and all-sufficiency of God. My soul seemed to rest on his power and grace; longed for resignation to his will, and mortification to all things here below. My mind was greatly fixed on divine things; my resolutions for a life of mortification, continual watchfulness, self-denial, seriousness and devotion, were strong and fixed; my desires ardent and intense; my conscience tender, and afraid of every appearance of evil. My soul grieved with reflection on past duty and want of resolution for God. I solemnly renewed my dedication of myself to God, and longed for grace to enable me always to keep covenant with him. Time appeared very short, eternity near, and a great name, either in or after life, together with all earthly pleasures and profits, but an empty bubble, a deluding dream.”

Evidently it is expedient to observe such seasons, public or private, whenever anything sufficiently peculiar in the providence of God or in our own spiritual

condition demands it. Has the storm, the flood, drought, or pestilence, produced local or general sufferings, then let there be a local or general fast. Does war or any other calamity threaten, let there be a fast. Whenever in any way human wickedness and folly, or a visitation from God, whether impending or actually arrived, makes it desirable, let there be a season of fasting.

When, too, a church is called upon to act in reference to a pastoral head, or to take any step particularly important; when it is in circumstances of peculiar declension or trial, and when unitedly seeking some special favor, then let a fast be observed.

While seasons for humiliation, fasting, and prayer, whether by civil or ecclesiastical appointment, have more commonly been resorted to in view of emergencies which call for unusual measures, the annual recurrence of such a day in the season of spring had its origin in a recognition of the providence of God, as God of nature and of nations. Fast-day is the correlate to Thanksgiving; the one asks, the other acknowledges, temporal blessings. Ample reason and encouragement is there, at that period in the year, for a united acknowledgment of the all-wise, superintending Providence. It is fitting that we should look devoutly to him to continue the manifold operations of nature, so adjusting his agencies as to secure those productive results without which the occupants of earth must perish. It is never amiss to pray that pestilence may be averted; that civil commotions may not alarm us; that the means and desire for intellectual culture may become yet more abundant; that the blessings of free-

dom, personal security, and social enjoyment, may continue unimpaired, and may be yet farther enlarged.

Why do we hear of so few seasons of fasting in the family, that oldest institution in our world? Are there no family difficulties, family disgraces, family reverses, family bereavements, that call for special family humiliation, fasting, and prayer? How is it, too, with private individual practice in these days? To what extent does it exist? If generally, or at all, it is well that nothing is known of the matter in public. "Thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

To what extent abstinence from food is important, I do not undertake to say. The age, constitution, health, and habits of each individual should, no doubt, be consulted; yet abstinence, and that, too, which is not farcical, may well be deemed a desideratum. Jerome tells us that in his time there were persons who trifled with God in this way; to avoid the customary use of oil, they procured the most delicate kinds of food from different countries; and who to do violence to nature, abstained from drinking water, but procured delicious liquors, which they drank, not from a cup, but from a shell. Such insult to heaven is not unfrequent among papists, nor wholly unknown among Protestants.

Who has not found that a full meal, much more a surfeit, clogs devotion, and that occasional moderate abstinence is an auxiliary to religious exercises? Of course ostentation and outward disfigurement should be avoided. The Pharisees in their fastings clad them-

selves in sackcloth, walked in a solemn pace, and by various methods would fain attract attention to their sanctimonious observance. Christ forbids facial dissimulation. He does not discountenance fasting, nor an appropriate outward demeanor; but personal neglect he does disapprove. "Wash thy face, and anoint thy head," that is, take usual care of the person; beware of mere external performance; aim at a secret, sincere humiliation of soul. One design of fasting is "to afflict the soul," as laid down for the children of Israel by statute in Leviticus. Paul "was in fastings oft;" and thus was it in part that "he kept his body under." Thus may we curb and mortify the flesh, and that, too, with little danger of running into Romish extremes, and without the error of practising it as a penance.

Rightly performed it is no repulsive duty. Is there anything painful in drawing near to God, anything sad in the fellowship of the Comforter? Is there aught of distress in having the charm of the world broken; in being strengthened to say, "Get thee behind me, Satan"? Is it a gloomy thing to realize anew, and more intimately, the Saviour's presence? What valley is there so pleasant as that of humility? Is not such a day one for digging deeper our wells, with a view to more abundant and lasting supplies?

V. DEVOUT LIVING.

Man is an anomaly; a creature of inconsistencies. So far as appears, this sad characteristic belongs to him alone among all the various orders of beings. What irrational creature fails to fulfil the purpose for which it was made, or is capable in itself of becoming and doing aught besides what the Creator designed? Are not holy angels self-collected, and ever in perfect harmony with their place and their work? Are not fallen angels so thoroughly bad as to be consistently intent upon their dark plans and proceedings?

The peculiar province of enigmas is religion,—man's religion, and man's conduct under the only system of faith and practice which has come from heaven. No other vagaries in poetry, speculation, science, or outward activity, can be compared with those relating to men's beliefs and duties. Nothing so visionary, so monstrous, and appalling, could arise elsewhere than in this department of human forthputting.

Singularity culminates in prayer. It is reserved for the most solemn and sublime exercise in which a created being can engage,—that of immediate personal address to God,—to reveal the acme of strangeness. The most startling of facts is, not that men are wicked, nor that they are wicked in spite of their prayers, but wicked in and on account of their very supplications. This is Satan's masterpiece, thus to abuse so great a privilege. Out of this comes the most glaring conflict between religion and morals; between professed piety and actual life.

Why is it that men who can hardly fail to see that disobedience must vitiate prayer, that there is gross incongruity in coming before God to ask a favor, while their lives are at war with him, should run such risks of insult? The solution is to be sought amidst our deeper wants and fears. Men must have, or persuade themselves that they have God on their side. By fair means or foul they must secure conscience as an ally. The worse the undertaking or motive, the greater the need of this; otherwise remorse will make them cowards. So clearly did this come out amidst the French revolution, that the monster Robespierre avowed, if there were no God, it would be necessary to invent one. So anxious are men, unconsciously, sometimes, to obtain the sanctions of religion, that by perverse reasoning, or through the blinding influence of passion, they will come to believe anything and do anything absurd or abhorrent, in the name of all that is sacred. There is no conceivable lie they will not credit in order to flatter themselves with the hope of getting God to help them do their works of darkness.

The buccaneers who used to infest the Gulf of Mexico, calling themselves by the pleasant name, Brothers of the Coast, began their nefarious career by professing it a duty to avenge on the Spaniards wrongs heaped by them on the inoffensive aborigines of Central America and the West India Islands. They never thought of embarking on a piratical expedition without publicly invoking Heaven for success; nor did they come back laden with the spoils of rapine and murder without solemnly returning thanks to God. Whatever the difference in degree, there is small dif-

ference in character between this and the daily talk of men thanking Heaven and blessing their stars over the fruits of low cunning and petty fraud. This implies that God is as easily beguiled as men beguile themselves and others.

What coarser perversity can there be than such a view of the office of prayer? Is supplication a mere artifice, an ambush for compassing God? one of the pious devices to be used as speculators may bring an influence to bear on the stock-market? The idea seems to be well-nigh ineradicable that simple formalities of worship have potency like a charm; that devotional attitude and language alone are meritorious; that whatever the subject or intent of a petitioner, God is bound by virtue of the act itself to lend his aid. Homage is held to have a kind of mechanical power, a certain commercial value; something which inherently qualifies or fortifies a person for anything. There are all gradations of this, from the minute grain of self-righteousness, which only the keenest analysis will detect, up to that bold effrontery of the gypsy mother, who tells her child, "You have said your prayers; now you may go and steal."

Among Roman Catholics, prayers are often imposed as penances; they are held to have efficacy and value for satisfying divine justice. Hence much of the punctiliousness in saying prayers; and often, the more unprincipled men are, the more scrupulous are they herein. There is all the greater urgency for squaring accounts as they go on. Look at Don Alonzo de Ojeda, one of Columbus' followers. He carried with him in city, camp, and field, a small painting of the

Virgin Mary, which Bishop Fonseca gave him; and to which he was almost constantly addressing invocations. In battle or brawl, in his wholesale slave-dealing or any other wickedness, he would swear by the Virgin and pray to the Virgin most indefatigably. Look into one of the gambling hells of a thoroughly Catholic country. The game may be at the hottest; the table strewn with gold and notes; flushed countenances around betokening intensest excitement; but if a tinkling bell is heard, announcing the consecrated wafer in the street, instantly is the game suspended; the gamblers kneel, cross themselves, mumble a prayer as the host passes on to some dying man's bed-side; then they seat themselves, as eager as before, at rouge-et-noir.

It requires nothing more than the natural reaction from such monstrous inconsistencies to account for the character of false deities and the false character imputed to the true God. The tendency is always for man to become as his God is; and reciprocally, in imagination, his God to become as he is.

“The Ethiop gods have Ethiop lips,
Bronze cheeks, and woolly hair;
The Grecian gods are like the Greeks,
As keen-eyed, cold, and fair.”

There will never long be wanted a divinity suited to the wishes of individuals or a people. Let them renounce Jehovah, and he will give them over judicially to believe just such a lie as they please. In the different species of heathenism there may be found a patron for theft, murder, impurity, and every vice or crime that can be named; and such demons will be

sure to have more of homage than those less exceptionable in character.

It would be quite superfluous to dwell on the reason why "he that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." The spirit of disobedience is in every point at war with the true spirit of devotion, the very opposite of that humble, grateful, confiding temper which is the soul of acceptable worship. Though the theme of petition be allowable, the absence of that quality proves fatal. How much worse than nugatory is a request for anything wrong in itself, or a request offered with a wicked intention! The law requires holy love; requires that we do all to the glory of God. Is it not an abomination for one trampling on that law to come before him asking a favor? Is it not the consummation of impudence? Is it not the same as asking him if he will not leave the throne, or else repeal his law, and change the whole character of his government, arrayed as it is against all wrong-doing? What is it for such persons to send up entreaties to God, but an attempt to make him an ally against himself, an accomplice in wicked designs? What shall we pronounce it but a gratuitous experiment to see if there is an unalterable difference between God and evil; if God really means what he says in declaring that "The way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is his delight"?

Do we pray for holiness? How much will it avail if at the same time we turn away our ears from hearing God's law; to repeat the words, Lead us not into temptation, and then watch for a temptation into which

we are wont to run; to ask for a revival, and yet dread the sacrifice of time and pleasure-seeking it may cost us? Augustine confesses that in praying, before conversion, against his besetting sin, he feared lest God would answer him.

Do we ask the remission of our sins? That request is an abomination to God, provided we cherish an unforgiving spirit toward others, in face of what our Lord says, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you." A certain New Zealand chief was accustomed to say, "Forgive us our trespasses, though we do not forgive those who trespass against us." Is it our cry, Thy kingdom come? What do we mean by that kingdom? one that is of this world; one that is to secure our advancement and gratification? Then do we ask for the coming of Satan's kingdom. When was there ever a more unprovoked, unauthorized invasion than that of Mexico by Cortez? Yet he and his men deemed it a holy crusade; they passionately entreated God for success; thinking that they did him service by the slaughter of infidels, as they termed the natives. The bigoted, merciless general could write thus to Charles V.: "As we fought under the standard of the cross, for the true faith, and the service of your Highness, Heaven crowned our arms with such success, that, while multitudes of the infidels were slain, little loss was suffered by the Castilians." The Spanish conquerors, to judge from their writings, unconscious of any worldly motive lurking in their hearts, regarded themselves as soldiers of the church, fighting the great battle of Christianity. What were the petitions

and thanksgivings of such men, on such an enterprise, but abomination?

We are wont to ask for daily bread; for a blessing upon our avocation as a means of livelihood; but if our business be an immoral one, as traffic in ardent spirits, traffic in human beings, or traffic on the Lord's day; if we are cheating customers and cheating the government, we ought to change either our ways or our prayers. There is no limit to which inconsistency under the hardening influence of wilful blindness may not go. Until within recent times supplication for a "blessed stranding" was habitually offered on the island of Rugen in churches that were frequented by wreckers.

It is impossible to lead an undevout life and yet have power in prayer. Worldly-minded persons often maintain more or less of regularity in the outward habit of supplication, and yet wonder they have no more of its spirit. For business, for social intercourse, for amusements, for many things which, either in kind or degree, are hostile to practical piety, they have a zest; but in fellowship with God they have little or no enjoyment. Others there are, or, perhaps, the same, who, notwithstanding their worldliness, have great vocal fluency or a devout tone in prayer. They flatter themselves, and sometimes deceive listeners, with a mere devotional rhetoric. They pray as they talk, with great ease, but their volubility or their solemn cadence indicates not so much a devotional frame as an elocutionary gift. Can any one be uniformly devoted to the world, and yet be truly devout upon his knees? Is religion something for the closet, and not

for the parlor; for the conference-room, and not for 'change; for sacred time, and not for secular time? God has not only enjoined the duty of prayer, but he requires undivided service. No man can retire from the broad road to the narrow way merely to say his prayers; praying to God, and yet serving Mammon. The Mohammedan, and some, too, bearing the Christian name, in the midst of a quarrel or a debauch, pause at the appointed signal to repeat their forms. Is the tongue reeking in licentiousness or profaneness the one, with a sudden transition, to address the God of infinite purity and majesty? Numa, the second Roman king, heathen though he was, ordered that before all solemn prayers the people should be warned to attend, to lay aside secular thoughts, and mind the business they were to engage in.

It is in vain to look for the emoluments of both piety and sin. The garment of righteousness is not chameleon-like, receiving its hue from surrounding objects; its unchanging character is well known. In the wardrobe, and everywhere else, it is to be kept unspotted from the world. The heart-searching God, who abhors all hypocrisy, speaks from his throne, "Bring no more vain oblations; when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear. Wash you; make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well."

During our contest with the Southern Rebellion there has been a conflict of prayers. Strife on the field seems to have been reproduced amidst that holy

quiet which surrounds the mercy-seat. Many loyal persons at the North have had a secret misgiving, an apprehension, lest Southern supplication might avail, when Southern troops would otherwise suffer defeat; lest intervention, if it do not come from abroad, might come from above.

The question, stripped of all needless accessories, stands thus: Is prayer for the triumph of this conspiracy pleasing to God? The question is not whether there are proportionally as many Christians at the South as at the North; nor whether they are as good Christians; nor whether they are all in favor of secession; nor whether secessionists are on the whole greater sinners than citizens of the loyal States; nor whether their prayers for appropriate objects be acceptable to God. Who has made us judges? Which of us has not sins enough to mourn over, without spending time in a general adjustment of demerits?

Nor, again, is the question whether secessionists are sincere and earnest. Hypocrisy is not charged upon them; but is sincerity the test of right? Is anything more common than for men to be most sincerely wrong? Saul of Tarsus was as sincere in opposing Christianity as afterward in preaching it. He thought verily that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus. As for earnestness, does not history show that the worse a man is the fiercer he is, and that the poorer his piety the more he is apt to have of it? What true worshippers of Jehovah were ever so terribly in earnest as the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel, leaping upon the altar, crying aloud hour after hour, cutting themselves with knives and lan-

cets, till the blood gushed out upon them? Elijah calmly offered one short, effectual prayer. What true penitent ever called on God more earnestly than did Thomas Paine, the infidel, when in peril of shipwreck? Luther's wife once asked him, "How is it that in the Romish church there is so much and such fervent prayer, while we are very cold and careless in our praying?" He answered, "The Devil drives them to pray."

The simple question is, Does the secessionist turn away his ear from hearing the law, — the law of God, and that constitutional law which he is bound to obey? If so, his prayer for the triumph of treason and armed rebellion is an outrage, and is powerless except for mischief on himself. Whatever the man's excellences, whatever his piety, he cannot in the matter of sedition prevail with God. Turning away his own ear from hearing the law, can he get the ear of Jehovah? Is not one Being both lawgiver and prayer-hearer? Can he be insulted and propitiated by the same breath? "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."

It would be a work of supererogation at this late day to show that the outbreak was completely unprincipled and inexcusable. Its originators and abettors give no reason, or even fair pretext. All that need be said is, a most flagitious conspiracy of long standing ripened. The conspirators, defeated in a constitutional election, took up arms. Rule or ruin is their principle. It is attempted to justify this armed revolt on the alleged abstract right of secession, on the basis of sovereignty in the individual States. Of all political

heresies, red republicanism not excepted, this is the most radically subversive of government; for there is no point in the descending scale of authority where it can logically stop till the family itself is dissolved, and each person, old or young, black or white, stands by himself a universal, independent, impudent sovereign. Concede such a right of secession, and you grant the most sweeping and stupendous wrong; you absolve from that to which God binds irrevocably; you deny that a people is a people; you renounce the prerogative of aggregate sovereignty; you legalize national and municipal suicide. When in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-one, on April thirteenth, at half-past four o'clock in the afternoon, the first gun was fired in Charleston harbor, there was deliberate aim at a nation's heart; it was the opening of a rebellion, the violent consummation of a crime, more inexcusable than any since Satan struck the first blow in heaven.

Had the motive — were such a thing possible — been a good one, the fact of most unjustifiable conspiracy, ripening into a wicked, armed revolt, would remain the same. But it gives to the movement the very blackest shade of infamy that it proceeded in the name and in behalf of slavery; and that it proposed to make such an odious institution the cornerstone and top-stone of a new political edifice on this our soil, and past the meridian of this our century. It is the boldest specimen of Satanic effrontery.

Is there, then, occasion to fear rebel prayers? Was the conspiracy born in prayer? Did the Holy Ghost move men to plot, to forswear themselves, to organize

and arm themselves against an unoffending government, and one in which they had ever had disproportionate influence? Did Heaven move them to seize forts, steal arsenals, demolish lighthouses, and bring on the most gigantic and destructive civil war that the world has ever seen? We have no dread of rebel supplications. One may be a worshipper of the true God, and not a true worshipper of God. Nadab and Abihu's strange fire and strange incense were effective only in bringing ruin on themselves. So long as God is saying, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers," "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well," we are quiet in regard to any successfully conflicting influence that may meet us before the footstool on high. "Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven."

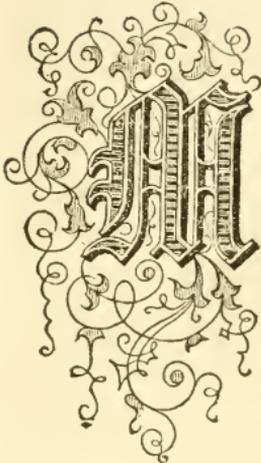
Let loyal citizens keep to their true position, and rebel days proclaimed for humiliation, fasting, and prayer, will awaken anything but apprehension on our part. May God deliver us from all self-righteousness; we would beware of arrogance; but can we mistake the voice of Jehovah? "When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination to me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your

new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth ; they are a trouble unto me ; I am weary to bear them.”

It is no unusual thing for a bad cause to have good advocates ; but the prayers of even good men cannot sanctify a bad cause. Nor is the success of any cause proof of its justice, or that supplication in its behalf has been heard. Was it the Amalekites' own prayer that gave them success, or Moses' ceasing to pray ? Have we not unspeakably less reason to fear from the whole volume of Southern intercession than from Northern ungodliness, Northern lying, cheating, extravagance, Northern profaneness, intemperance, and Sabbath desecration ?

VIII.

ADJUNCTS TO PRAYER.



ANY seem to attach more importance to the spot than to the duty, as if prayer were an exercise restricted to particular places. Local attachment and reverence for antiquity are easily mistaken for certain characteristics of piety. "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain." The Samaritan woman gave utterance to a feeling almost universal. The Greeks had their Delphi and Dodona. Every people, not intelligently Christian, has some eminence, grove, fountain, or other spot peculiarly sacred, and to be present there is the same thing as to worship.

The temple at Jerusalem was indeed erected by the special appointment of God. Its location, materials, form, and furniture were all expressly indicated by him. When the ark was removed to its resting-place there, and sacrifices were offered, the visible glory of the Lord filled the house. That building had a character as peculiar as the dispensation under which it was erected. There has never been another like it. Christ pronounces, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the

Father in spirit and in truth." Paul appreciated the enlarged privileges of the new dispensation: "I will, therefore, that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath or doubting." Justin Martyr, when asked by the prefect, "Where do you assemble?" replied, "Where each one can and will. You believe, no doubt, that we all meet together in one place; but it is not so; the God of the Christians is not shut up in a room, but being invisible he fills both heaven and earth, and is honored everywhere by the faithful."

Every true worshipper is his own temple. Abraham, wherever he went, built an altar to the Lord. Even when Solomon set apart the temple as a special place for the public worship of Jehovah, he exclaimed, "Will God indeed dwell on the earth?" But ever since the pagan ploughshare was driven over that only site of God's special residence on earth, his house has been called "a house of prayer for all his people." It is to be found wherever true believers are to be found, those lively stones built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. If a thief on the cross, if Peter on the housetop and on the water, if Daniel in the lions' den, if Jeremiah in the clay-pit, and Jonah from "the bottoms of the mountains," were heard, shall any one hesitate, wherever he may be, to call upon the Lord?

Christianity will yet convert our world universally into a Bethel. The minds of men will become emancipated from needless and unauthorized local and ceremonial bondage. The spirit that we would repress is the spirit that erected churches over the graves of mar-

tyrs, the spirit that sends men on religious pilgrimages, and that can neglect customary devotions, because away from the customary place. The spirit and truth in which we are to worship the Father know nothing of local limits. Their home is the universe. Commensurate with the ubiquity of God's presence and providence is the duty of prayer.

Mere posture, too, is comparatively unimportant. "Bow before him" we should; but bowing is not praying; kneeling is not devotion. Otherwise, the statue and painting might be devout. It is well uniformly to take such an attitude as usage pronounces reverent; yet stationary or in motion, on the knees or on the face, erect or sitting, the suppliant may equally commune with his ever-present Father, Saviour, and Sanctifier.

Among the Mohammedans there are five sorts of prayers to be said daily: In the morning with two inclinations of the body; at noon with four; in the afternoon with four also; in the evening with three; and in the night with four again. Similar punctiliousness may often be found where pure spiritual worship has become extinct, or never existed. Whatever convenient posture usage has made the symbol of modesty, humility, and reverence, may be adopted, but always with the clear recollection that while man looketh on the outward appearance, the Lord looketh on the heart.

"Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?" Not with voice alone. Whether low or loud, articulation is no essential part of devotion. It is an envelope, a machine, a messenger only. The precious contents,

the moving power, the animating inner self, is that which makes the prayer. God hears as well as sees in secret.

There are two extremes. One is the idea, so general among Jews, that prayer is of no avail unless uttered aloud. The mere audible repetition of a form is all that many know about praying. The other extreme is that of the quietists. Even among the children of Israel there is a modern sect who reject all external forms, and abandon their minds to abstraction and contemplation. They never engage in oral prayer, but only in mental ejaculation and silent worship. Similar though less extreme is the practice of a well-known sect of Christians. The belief in sudden impulses, as well as immediate verbal suggestions, and the necessary waiting for their irregular and uncertain presence, render social worship often nugatory. Hence not unfrequently do they remain together for a whole service in silence. Joint worship must be audible. The tongue was given us to glorify God. "Oh come let us sing unto the Lord; let us make a joyful noise unto the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms." Effusions of the heart demand expression by the tongue. Still it remains true that devout desires without words are prayers, and words, however devout, if unaccompanied by appropriate feelings, are a vain oblation. The heart may beat though the tongue be silent; and never was it from the lips that God first learned a believer's wish.

In employing language for devout purposes, it is

well to draw largely from the Bible. Many of the recorded prayers in the New Testament suggest this. Later ones in the Old Testament do the same. The prophet Jonah, for instance, borrows chiefly from the words of David. In the seven verses of his devotional exercise, there are apparently seven distinct quotations from the Psalms. He was familiar with those inspired lyrics, infinitely the best aids to devotion ever supplied to man. The Word of God was the only Prayer Book he had; the only one we need. Can any language be so appropriate in addressing our praises and requests to God, as that which the Holy Spirit moved sacred penmen to employ in their devout psalms, and partly no doubt for this very purpose?

Surely it was not only for the "service of song," but for the service of prayer in the house of the Lord, in the place of habitual retirement, and, if occasion require, in the depths of the sea, that they were led to write as they did.

"God is in heaven and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few." Such is Solomon's rubric. Devotion usually ends where fatigue begins. Unduly protracted, this exercise becomes mere toil of the tongue. In social worship a very long prayer will certainly be fatiguing to some; and not unfrequently is the patience of devout souls most unreasonably taxed. The longest prayer on record in the Bible is that of Solomon at the dedication, which, however, did not exceed eight minutes. In Sparta long prayers were prohibited by law. It was not till vital piety had declined, and gross errors begun to creep into the church, that Christians entertained the idea that pro-

tracted and often-repeated prayers possess peculiar efficacy. The moment one's tongue outruns the heart, and an effort commences to compensate by length for the lack of true devotion, that moment does man cease to be profited, and God begin to be offended. It will perhaps be found true in all ages that where there is least of spirituality, there is most of prolixity. A broken spirit utters broken prayers, and they are brief too. The penitent publican's was long enough: "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" So was that of the repenting thief: "Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom."

But did not Christ continue all night in prayer? Yes, and he retired to a mountain to do so; it was private prayer in which he engaged. Even for him it was extraordinary. Paul once preached till midnight; does it follow that others are to do the same, except under like remarkable circumstances? So in regard to protracted devotional exercises; unusual junctures and states of mind alone authorizing them. Such cases are liable to occur in the life of every individual or community, and then let a believing soul wrestle till the day breaketh. It was not so much prolixity as hypocrisy in the Pharisees, which our Lord condemned.

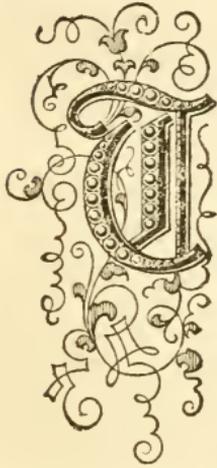
It is specially true in the present age, when the habits of men extensively have undergone a change, that undue length is a great drawback upon devout enjoyment and profit. Whitfield once said to a brother, "You prayed me into a good frame, and you prayed me out of it." A similar admonition is often needed, a kind, personal admonition; and the reason is that

individuals are seldom aware of their error in this respect. Indeed, no one can be suitably engaged in prayer, and at the same time be fully conscious of the flight of time. There is no dial-plate on the throne of grace.

IX.

PRAYER INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL.

I. SECRET PRAYER.



HERE is a tendency in all minds to shift responsibility. Men are all the while sinking individuality in the mass, and shrinking from the urgencies of divine claims upon each one's own self in immediate accountableness to the heart-searching Sovereign. A person once asked Daniel Webster, "What is the most important thought that ever occupied your mind?" He replied, "The most important thought that ever occupied my mind was the thought of my individual responsibility to God." Can any mind, however capacious, well-stored, or powerful, entertain any subject so momentous as its own accountability?

It is noteworthy that the religion of the Bible deals chiefly with individuals. It addresses each by himself. While "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ," it is "that every one may receive the things done in his body, whether it be good or bad." Its most general laws are in the form, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me;" "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." To every

offender the Bible comes, saying, "Thou art the man." To every convicted sinner it proclaims, "Thou art in the gall of bitterness;" it teaches him to cry, "Have mercy upon me, O God;" and to every one it says, "Enter into thy closet."

Men are not created in a mass, nor dealt with only in masses; we do not die in a mass, nor are we to be judged in a mass, but individually, and with all the distinctness that there would be if only one were living at a time, or if there had never been but one inhabitant of earth.

Secret prayer is the test of all prayer. An undevout mind shuns retirement, while a heavenly mind courts it. One is never less alone than when alone. What more befriends communion with God, other things equal, than privacy? Not only do we talk too much about other things, and too little of such as are heavenly and divine, but we talk too much about God, and too little with him. Is not the true Christian's highest delight found in immediate converse with the Saviour? To get quite out of the world is heaven to the saint; so getting away from the world for devout converse is as nearly heaven as can be.

Spiritual retirement, however, is a busy season, and a season of earnestness. Was it not while alone that the patriarch Jacob achieved his memorable victory? Were not David's couch prayers the most fervent and prevalent that he offered? Is there not more positive evidence of our Saviour's habit of retired prayer than of his praying much with his disciples or others? and shall we not love and cultivate the same all the more because he hallowed the practice?

The habit of attending devotional convocations is not necessarily a devout habit. As is a man alone between himself and God, so is he; as he prays in private, such is his character for communion with the all-seeing One.

There is a great deal more peculiar in the wants of each one than what is common to any company however small. All requests appropriate in social prayer are no less so in private. We may tell our Father all our secrets. It is neither wise nor safe to do so between man and man; but he never betrays confidence.

Only in the closet can a person know with comparative certainty whether he ever has the true spirit of prayer. In social exercises there is a strong temptation to display one's gifts. Thousands of prayers are addressed to human ears. The presence of our fellow-creatures is liable to stimulate the mind into a mere natural animation, easily mistaken for devotional fervor; but in the closet there is no audience. Social feelings do not beguile there; the individual is thrown upon his own personal acquaintance with Him who seeth in secret. Hence it is a decisive moment when the door is shut; adventitious aids are all withdrawn.

"Enter into thy closet;" resort to a retired place. Seclusion is important. Literal conformity to the precept was not of course intended universally. Christ himself illustrated his own command when he betook himself not only to the mountain, but to the desert and to the garden for purposes of prayer. Peter, on the housetop, was acting in compliance with the same. The grove, the chamber, the workshop, the counting-

room, any place where suitable privacy can be enjoyed, meets the requirement.

Circumstances are often such that the only practicable retirement is within the recesses of one's own soul itself, not local, but mental. Hezekiah, on his sick-bed, could only turn toward the wall; Jonah, after he had been swallowed up, cried unto the Lord; Paul prayed in prison. In the public conveyance, and sometimes elsewhere, it is impossible to retreat from the company and observation of others. Ordinarily, however, every person is so situated that he can find a place where, without interruption, he may pour out his soul in prayer. It is desirable that this place be uniformly the same. Habit has great influence upon devotion as upon everything else. The simple circumstance of revisiting the familiar spot for communion with God, tends to awaken the feelings which have been previously experienced there.

Some measure of secrecy is important. Many individuals are so situated that they cannot easily avoid having the place and times of their devotional retirement known. Enter into thy closet,—not a closet,—but thy closet; some particular customary place for the purpose. Such a spot may be found, and should be had by every one. A sailor, who had returned from a long voyage, spoke of his enjoyment in prayer while at sea. “But,” inquired a friend, “in the midst of the confusion on shipboard, where could you find a place to pray?” “Oh,” said he, “I always went to the mast-head.” That was his closet. Who cannot find one? The genuine, unostentatious spirit of secret prayer shuns all publicity. It shrinks instinctively

from the gaze of every one except the all-seeing God. It closes the door upon itself that its communion with him may be uninterrupted. The thought that any human being may be aware of what is passing, interferes with the exercise.

Spurious piety is always showy. It courts the gaze of men, and has far more regard to the praise of men than to the praise of God. Formalism characterizes all false religions, and it is to some extent the garb with which hypocrisy clothes itself among the professed followers of Christ; but it is a practical denial of God's omniscience, and of his infinite right to spiritual homage. Many will recollect what perverted use was made of this sacred privilege, a few years since, in our land. It was no unusual thing for an individual to station himself with sole reference to being overheard by another. "Aga Baba," says Henry Martyn, "was for many years a zealous Mohammedan, often passing whole nights in prayer. His father, who had at first encouraged his religious propensities, found them at last so troublesome, that he was obliged to leave the house, not being able to get sleep for the noise his son made in prayer. Finding that after many years he was growing more and more proud and contemptuous, he could ascribe it to nothing but his prayers, and therefore from purely conscientious motives he left them off."

The writer has heard such persons boast with a good deal of hilarity, that their prayers under certain circumstances must have troubled one and another whom they named. That is not praying to God, but at men. It is an insult to the providence of God, and

to the Holy Ghost; it is only indirect preaching; it is making the mercy-seat a sounding-board to alarm or persuade a fellow-sinner, or to advertise the operator's sanctity and zeal. Many an unsuspected listener has been blessed; but did God ever bless such mockery?

There should be special endeavor to realize the divine presence. With whom have I now to do? To whom am I now about to speak? The Lord of heaven and earth, whose eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. "Search me, O God, and know my heart." Mrs. Elizabeth Bury, a lady of eminent piety, had in her closet for many years this motto in Hebrew, "Thou, God, seest me!"

The distinctive value of secret prayer consists in the freedom and particularity of address which it allows. The feelings and wants of every one are as peculiar as his own individuality, and his peculiar circumstances. Who is there that has not petitions to offer for which no one else can possibly furnish the language? "The heart knoweth its own bitterness."

Is it expedient, in this exercise, to pray audibly? If there is no one within hearing, it is unobjectionable, and even desirable. Otherwise, silence is expedient or at most a whisper. When Abraham's servant stood at the well, he said, "O Lord God of my master Abraham, send me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham," but afterward, in narrating the circumstances, he said, "Before I had done speaking in mine heart." It was a silent prayer. When the mother of Samuel prayed and wept sore, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Prayer is the ascent of the mind to

God. When vocal it is supposed to have reference usually to others uniting in the same act; and then it is social, not private. The voice is only a handmaid of prayer. Our Father who seeth in secret knows what the heart says, before its message finds utterance at the mouth. An advantage, however, may be found, in employing audible sounds as an auxiliary to fixed attention, and a preventive to wandering thoughts.

One thing worthy of special attention is regularity. Very few have such a relish for communion with God as will lead them to the place of retirement with due frequency, and at proper intervals, unless there be fixed hours. System in human action is indispensable to the highest results, and this holds good in religious as well as secular life. If there are no established seasons for private converse with the Father of spirits, the probability is that fatigue or the pressure of worldly cares will interfere with its performance. The quantity of food taken into the system would often be inadequate, were it not for the regular recurrence of hours appointed for the purpose. How few there are who so hunger and thirst after righteousness, that an inward craving compels them, three or more times every twenty-four hours, to cry, "Give us this day our daily bread"! Who has not found a determined purpose with respect to certain seasons indispensable to keep up the habit regularly?

During absence from home, or any unusual circumstances, special thoughtfulness is required. Peter when away from Jerusalem would still at one of his accustomed seasons, about midday, retire to the house-

top for devotion. Every one needs the fortifying influence of regularity; and ordinarily the law of association of ideas as seen in the recurrence of stated periods needs to be regarded.

When temptation so far prevails as to lead to omission, who does not experience disastrous consequences? Philip Henry often gave his children and friends this advice: "Be sure you look to your secret duty; keep that up whatever you do. The soul cannot prosper in the neglect of it." He observed that apostasy generally begins at the closet-door. Secret prayer is first carelessly performed, then frequently omitted, and after a while wholly cast off; and then farewell God and Christ and all religion.

The morning is eminently an appropriate season. We read of our Saviour that "in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." How fit that the first waking moments should be given to Him who has once more afforded protection during defenceless hours; who has turned aside the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and opened our eyes in this world! How fit that the thoughts when calm and collected should ascend to the Father of spirits! Before the bustle of a world waking up to its daily turmoil assail our ear; before the pressure of private cares come with its full burden on the soul, let it commune awhile with God and the Saviour. It is wise to get the start of a busy adversary and a roving heart, and let the journey of each day take its direction at the mercy-seat. Do your business engagements press hard? Are your very dreams toilsome? Have the first rays

of morning scarce heralded the approaching sun, before you prepare for the work of the day? Go to your closet. In the solemn stillness of early dawn, direct your prayer to God, that he will not suffer the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches to drown your soul in destruction and perdition. Are you a traveller; are you an invalid; have you some secret and untold trial; or has the day for some unusual and particularly responsible work or situation come? Betimes, then, to your closet. Think not of a lost friend, a present malady, or an anticipated perplexity, till you have thought of God and spread out your case before him. Deem not the day begun till the light of heaven, shining into your secret chamber, has made morning in your soul. "In the days of our fathers," says Bishop Burnet, "when a person came early to the door of his neighbor, and desired to speak with the master of the house, it was as common a thing for the servants to tell him with freedom, 'My master is at prayer,' as it is now to say, 'My master is not up.'"

Another division of time appropriate for this duty is evening. The close of the day, or the hour for retiring to rest, naturally brings to mind the final winding-up of life. Sleep is too nearly an image of death not to be noticed as such by the most thoughtless. "Grave-clothes are but night-clothes." And if the hour of death is a solemn one; if, in view of a whole past life, the soul trembles, and betakes itself in earnest prayer to the throne of grace, shall it not obey the order of nature, and carefully review so considerable a portion of time as a day, this little life, this minia-

ture of one's terrestrial history? Before drowsiness renders it torpid, shall it not, in retirement, calmly survey and confess its faults, thankfully acknowledge God's mercies, affectionately remember all who may have particular claim to remembrance, and then, in peaceful reliance upon Christ, give itself up, whether sleeping or waking, living or dying, to be the Lord's? In regard to a serious retrospect of each day, there were certain heathen sages who might put us to blush. Pythagoras enjoined upon his disciples a daily season of private contemplation, and every evening a faithful review of their feelings and deportment.

There are extraordinary as well as stated seasons when this privilege is particularly valuable. Sudden emergencies, perplexities, and trials, often occur, in which, if the time will allow more than an ejaculatory prayer, special direction and support should be sought. There are events, which, if not occurring suddenly, come but once, or but seldom, to the same individual, and in view of which an express season should be set apart for secret prayer.

Morning and evening prayer in the closet does not exhaust the believer's privilege. David says, "Evening and morning and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud, and he shall hear my voice;" and in another place, "Seven times a day do I praise thee." "Daniel kneeled upon his knees three times a day." Three meals a day are not ordinarily deemed too much; and will any one maintain that our spiritual necessities occur with any less frequency or urgency than those of the body?

If an examination were made, it would perhaps be

found that stated seasons for private prayer are not now generally as numerous as they once were. The practice, for instance, of Chauncey, one of the early Presidents of Harvard College, was not altogether unusual in those times. It was his custom to rise at four o'clock throughout the year, and before attending to anything else, spend nearly an hour in secret prayer. At eleven o'clock in the forenoon, he retired about three quarters of an hour for a similar purpose. The same was repeated at four in the afternoon; and at nine in the evening, another hour was devoted to the closet. Who was ever in the habit of pausing thus amidst his daily occupations, without deriving an argument for the practice from his own experience?

What Christian can be fully and soberly himself, who is not often alone for devotional purposes? Without that he will labor under a measure of spiritual insanity, intoxication, or apathy. His independence, his individuality, will suffer invasion; he will become a creature of circumstances, will become earthly, will come proportionately under the power of the god of this world, and fail to maintain that erect, firm, consciously responsible character required of every believer. This hour of habitual retirement is the day-star arising in the heart; a longer special season is the calm Indian summer of the soul.

The demand for such private observance is only enhanced by eminence of station and pressure of cares. These are often made an apology for omitting the duty. It is by no means strange that a man overwhelmed with duties should be covetous of time, and not able to see how one of his waking hours can be

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ven to anything which does not directly further secular business. But that is a mistake. This is a time-saving arrangement. The hallowed hour speeds everything. If any one can afford to do without it, the man of high standing and many cares cannot; nor does he need to. Did not David have a full share of the burdens of state upon him? Yet was he not a devout man? and did he not meditate on God's law all the day? When Joshua was called to succeed Moses as general and judge of Israel, the Lord said to him, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night." Was not Daniel prime-minister of the greatest kingdom then on earth? and did he not need, and could he not find leisure for his devotions as regularly as for his meals? The Emperor Constantine every day, at stated times, shut himself up for private converse with God. Similar was the habit of Gustavus Adolphus, of Sweden. At such seasons, none of his attendants ventured to interrupt him. In one instance, while encamped before Werben, he had been several hours alone in his pavilion. At length a favorite, having an important matter to communicate, came softly to the door, and, looking in, saw the king engaged devoutly upon his knees. Fearing to molest him in that sacred exercise, he was about to withdraw, when the king, bidding him come in, said, "Thou wonderest to see me in this posture, since I have so many thousands of subjects to pray for me; but I tell thee no man has more need to pray for himself than he who, having to render an account of his actions to none but God, is for that reason more closely assaulted by the Devil than all other men beside."

Alfred the Great devoted full one-third of his time to religious exercises and studies; and the laborious Welsh, son-in-law of John Knox, often gave one-third of his hours to prayer. Who, from the apostles downward, ever had such a burden of disheartening and perplexing labors as Martin Luther? Yet, in the midst of all, he could devote three hours daily to devout study and to prayer; and but for those three hours he never would have found time for his overwhelming duties.

Universally, the necessity in the case is proportionate to the amount of responsibilities and the pressure of secular concerns. Mothers with their many cares, merchants with their many schemes, mechanics with their busy toils, the politician, the physician, the teacher, the preacher, as they value their souls, should betake themselves unremittingly to the closet.

II. FAMILY PRAYER.

The family is the oldest institution on earth. It crowned the work of creation. Home is another tabernacle, a domestic sanctuary. The parent is installed as pastor, and this is a settlement for life. Tempting offers may not bribe, nor disaffection drive him away. The elders of the family, those who have been made overseers of the domestic flock, unite in themselves much that belongs to civil magistracy and to the pastoral office. For the maintenance of due sobriety, for the discountenancing of error and all irregularities, and for the observance of daily worship, they are held

responsible. With regard to instruction and other appropriate means of household training, they, too, are to be instant in season and out of season.

If there are no children, there are usually domestics, more or less under the same regimen. Why is it that Providence brings these individuals within the sphere of our influence, but that, first of all, we may benefit their souls? Numerous enough are the faults of parents, guardians, and masters, but no neglect of theirs is more general and more glaring than this. Would that master of a family be accounted a generous provider who should furnish a meal only once a week? He would be accounted worse than an infidel, worse than a pagan, if he made no provision at all. Are spiritual necessities less urgent than those of the body?

With what fulness and plainness should the parent pray for and instruct the child and the whole parlor auditory! How often, when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up, is there a happy moment for setting home the all-important lessons of heavenly wisdom! Favorable junctures there are every week, which the parent alone can seize upon, as genial seasons for sowing the good seed, and for watering the same with intercessory tears. Where else, in social prayer, can there be such familiarity, such particularity, as at the domestic altar? Who, then, singly or socially, at the head of a family, can refrain from earnest pleading in behalf of the household?

A Christian home! What urgency of obligation, what untold volumes of sacred meaning are in that

word! A home of prayer! What associations does it call up! It is the vestibule of heaven. Above all, a Sabbath evening at home — do you not remember its hours of hallowed joy; how its sun sank so cheerfully to the sound of household praise; how its sweet twilight faded away amidst the songs of that domestic Zion? Did you not sometimes forget that it is only an antepast of everlasting blessedness, and not its full fruition? Be that my home, and I envy not the Cæsars.

The Bible does not expressly enjoin family worship. The same is true of a large class of duties which are generally admitted. Many of the social obligations, many things pertaining to public worship, not to speak of the Christian Sabbath, female communion, and the like, are of this description. Where the fundamental doctrines of Christianity are loved, the essential duties appreciated, and an enlightened spirit of obedience exists, there will be but little difficulty in regard to the application of general principles, or in regard to those observances for which there is no positive precept. If there be willingness to comply with an authorized practice, no reasoning is usually needed; if there be a determined disinclination, no reasoning will remove it.

As an auxiliary in promoting domestic order, authority, and affection, family worship is important beyond all estimate. Without it, there can be little hope of early piety, and little appropriate training for civil society, and for the church. Who that has been reared under such hallowed influence does not acknowledge its benign power? How do the thoughts of the young

man, whose paternal home is among the distant hills, linger around the scene of his childhood! How does his heart glow at the recollection of glad hours in that happy group, and under that beloved roof! It was his home,—a word meaning more than tongue can tell. Never will he forget the parting words of his father as he stood at the door, and, still pressing the soft, youthful hand, said, “My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not!” He heeds those words, for he knows that, morning and evening, he is remembered at the family altar.

How does every old man’s eye moisten at the thought of early scenes! His parents have ceased to pray; it was years ago that they went to their everlasting reward; but the influence of their prayers is upon him at this hour, and will be to all eternity.

Who ever raised an objection against family worship? Who ever questioned its utility? Still, it may be asked, on what considerations is this practice grounded? It might be argued from the general obligation of religious worship at all suitable times. Considered simply as a rational creature, man is evidently bound to recognize the authority of Heaven. This is the fundamental truth of all religions. It commends itself to every one, and is admitted by all except the miserable few who have said in their hearts there is no God. This universal obligation being granted, it only remains to inquire on what occasions and in what manner shall divine honors be paid to the author and supporter of our being? At what times, in what capacities, shall dependence be acknowledged, and gratitude expressed? No answer, satisfactory even to

natural religion, can be given, which does not specify the family circle, with its daily recurring wants and enjoyments.

The duty of social prayer in general being granted, we infer that this particular form is obligatory. Nearly all the reasons which go to show the importance of united devotion under any circumstances may be urged with peculiar force here. In the patriarchal times, for aught that appears to the contrary, domestic worship was the only kind of social worship. Nowhere else is the social principle developed with so much force and sacredness as in the family. Most of those who have not the written, revealed law, who are a law unto themselves, have practically illustrated this in their religious notions and observances. Who does not call to mind the Teraphim which Rachel carried away from her homestead? Household gods have generally occupied a considerable place in the Pantheon of idolatry. Among the Romans, particularly, these supposed tutelar divinities were held in high estimation. To the Lares and Penates were attributed the power of banishing evil spirits from the house, and of maintaining guardianship over its inmates. Oblations, with other tokens of regard, were offered to them. Is it not melancholy that some in Christian lands should fall below the heathen in their reasoning and practice respecting domestic religion? Will not the men of Nineveh and Rome rise up and condemn many of this generation?

The obligation of family worship might be urged from the nature of the family constitution. Not less than the church was it ordained by God. And what was the grand design of this first ordinance of Jeho-

vah? It was to establish a school of piety where, by wise and holy discipline, immortal minds may be nurtured in the fear and service of God. The purpose of this primary society was in part to serve as a model and prelude for civil society; but first of all to provide an early and daily religious training. The great end of the domestic covenant is domestic piety; but can there be piety without prayer? Can there be religious discipline in the household, without habitual household prayer?

The head of the family is, to a great extent, answerable for its spiritual interests. In some respects his charge is more sacred than that of the public minister of God. Can the responsibilities of this private pastorate be suitably discharged where the divine goodness and divine claims are not recognized? And can this be done duly where there is not stated household prayer? Herds go to sleep and wake without directing their eyes to heaven; but are the inmates of our families, are our children, like our cattle, to be left to the teachings of mere instinct?

Among the duties growing out of the family constitution one is, by example and precept to afford instruction in all that is essential to holiness and happiness. The purpose and effort to that effect must exist, or there is a flagrant omission. Now, has it ever been found that religious instruction availed anything of importance apart from a devotional spirit? Does God bless the dispensation of his word in public or in private, where there is no direct and reverential acknowledgment of his name? Concerning the father of the faithful God declared, "I know him that he will com-

mand his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment." How often, in the history of that patriarch and of his sons, do we find mention of an altar built unto the Lord! Can we suppose that, a few instances excepted, the worship performed at those altars was other than family worship? The patriarch was not only prince, but priest, of his family. It was to him they looked for instruction and for the offering of atonement.

It clearly devolves on the father of the household to officiate in domestic worship. The reasons for this are substantially the same as those which make it proper for men to lead in public worship. Where, however, sickness, absence, or death, leaves only a female at the head of a family, then, if no point of Christian delicacy be violated, it belongs to her to offer the morning and evening incense. A son, or other inmate, or the stranger within thy gates, may, if qualified, perform the delightful duty. The Rev. John Bailey, an eminent divine of the seventeenth century, had a mother who was distinguished for her piety, and a father equally distinguished for his wickedness. While yet a boy, he became hopefully pious, and, having an unusual gift in prayer, his mother set him to conduct that exercise. The father, overhearing him, was so struck with remorse and shame at finding his child, not above twelve years of age, in the performance of this duty, that he was brought under a deep conviction of his own wretched state, and afterwards became a man of prayer. The incident is one of thousands showing that family worship may be maintained, and

with the assurance of a blessing, under circumstances that seem exceedingly unfavorable.

Private, united prayer should be maintained by those who together constitute the head of a household. What earthly relation is regarded by God as more sacred than that of husband and wife? Where there are two so intimately united by reciprocal attachments, vows, and indissoluble interests, can anything be more suitable than that they often present themselves at the footstool of Him who has joined them together under a bond which no man may sever? The biography of that eminent Christian and minister, Philip Henry, gives the following: "In addition to their family prayers, strictly so called, he and his wife constantly prayed together morning and evening; and never, if they were together, at home or abroad, was it intermitted; and from his own experience of the benefit of this practice, he would take all opportunities to recommend it to those in that relation, as conducing very much to the comfort of it, and to their furtherance in that which, he would often say, is the greatest duty of yoke-fellows, and that is to do all they can to help one another to heaven. He would say that this duty of husbands and wives praying together is intimated in that of the apostle, in 1 Peter iii. 7, where they are exhorted to live as heirs together of the grace of life, that their prayers, especially their prayers together, be not hindered; that nothing may be done to hinder them from praying together, nor to hinder them in it, nor to spoil the success of those prayers. This sanctifies the relation, and fetcheth in a blessing upon it, makes the comforts of it more sweet, and the cares

and crosses of it the more easy, and is an excellent means of preserving and increasing love in the relation. Many to whom he hath recommended the practice of this duty have blessed God for him, and for his advice concerning it."

At what times should this duty be performed? Certainly oftener than once a week, as is the practice of some; and more than once a day, as is the practice of others. Twice a day is the obvious rule. "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up. Let my prayer be set before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice." In addition to the two stated seasons of family worship, it was a practice among the early Christians to rise at midnight to engage in prayer and the singing of psalms; the custom having originated, probably, in times of persecution, when the fear of enemies prevented their uniting in religious exercises during the day.

Punctuality should be maintained. For every stated duty there needs to be a stated season, and, under all ordinary circumstances, that season should be faithfully observed. What is thus generally true, is particularly true in this practice. How largely would the enjoyment and profit of public Sabbath services be abridged, and how soon would the largest congregation be scattered, if the hour of assembling were variable, and depended upon the caprice of preacher or people! Scarcely less important is it that there should be a stated time for worship in the domestic community.

The value of a fixed season lies partly in its tendency to secure a constant observance. Sickness, pressure of business, and other circumstances, often tempt to a postponement or entire omission. Homely as the adage is, it may be repeated: Prayer and provender hinder no man's journey. Sometimes the failure occurs at a juncture when the divine presence should be specially invoked. The hurry of departure on a journey, or the lateness of the hour of return from a social party, and a multitude of other cases, not seldom seem a sufficient apology for crowding out the morning or evening sacrifice. The firmly-fixed rule should be to perform the duty. The day when the ark of God came from its temporary lodgement in the house of Obed-Edom to the place prepared on Mount Sion, was a memorable one. Never had there been such a scene of public, religious rejoicing. "David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet." Burnt-offerings and peace-offerings in unwonted abundance were presented before the Lord. Provisions were distributed amply among the people. "And, as soon as David had made an end of offering burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord. So all the people departed every one to his own house. Then David returned to bless his household." The head of the nation was also the head of a family. Having discharged an important public duty, he did not neglect one that is more private. The man after God's own heart was accustomed, we infer, to engage regularly in domestic worship.

Now and then a stranger or a relative known to be

irreligious, and who is possessed of intellectual, official or other superiority, by his presence so intimidates the head of a household, that he slights God rather than run the risk of not pleasing a fellow-man. Christians sometimes appear to be ashamed of their religion. All the family, however, should be at service. The presence of guests should not be suffered to interfere with ordinary arrangements. May I look upon that person as my friend, or as deserving the hospitality of my house, who is unwilling to kneel at my domestic altar?

What shall be done with recusant domestics, particularly Roman Catholics? Exercise great forbearance. Be not over-anxious or over-earnest. Use only the kindest language, still aiming with decision to secure conformity to proper devotional regulations. If much inconvenience be experienced from this quarter, then make an express stipulation at the outset.

It is needless to suggest that ordinarily the reading of the Bible should form a part in household worship, and for the same reason as in the public Bethel. There are many passages which should be frequently read. One of these is the hundred and first Psalm: "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight." Bishop Ridley, the martyr, was accustomed to read this chapter often in his family, as containing a system of by-laws for the household.

In regard to the subject-matter of household prayer, variety should be consulted. It is hardly consistent with the true spirit of this exercise that any one go through the same form of words so uniformly that a

member of the family may soon repeat it by rote. One expedient for preventing monotony is to consider in anticipation the probable character peculiar to each day as it comes, and at evening to dwell in review upon its actual history, so far as is proper, in a solemn address to God. Frequently, there is something unusual to which reference may be suitably made. The arrival and departure of friends, sickness and recovery, birthday, disasters by fire and storm, the arrival of heavy or joyful tidings, may be referred to.

It is exceedingly desirable that singing form a branch in these services. The early Christians held this gift in high esteem as an auxiliary. The same was true, it would appear, at a still earlier date. "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High; to show forth thy loving-kindness every morning, and thy faithfulness every night." If there were no other occasion when this accomplishment could be of service, it would be a sufficient reason why all children and youth should be trained in it, with a view to their uniting around the family altar. The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous.

Seasons of special family prayer, with fasting, may be profitably resorted to at times. Philip Henry often observed such. Dr. Twisse, the learned chairman of the Assembly of Divines which met at Westminster, was accustomed to hold a fast in his family every month, which he kept up through life. Jonathan Burr, colleague with Richard Mather, in Dorchester, maintained a similar custom, observing a day of fasting and prayer in private with his consort, before the sacra-

ment of the Lord's Supper, in order not only to prepare themselves for that ordinance, but also to supplicate blessings for their family and neighborhood. Many others might be mentioned. If such occasions are desirable in civil and ecclesiastical communities, is not their observance in households, also? When cases of sickness, bereavement, reverses, filial waywardness, occur, or any important step is to be taken, or when any special blessing is to be sought, may not a season of family fasting and prayer with great propriety and profit be observed? When Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up and went unto the place which God had told him, is it probable that he forgot or omitted family worship on that morning? Has any parent, neglecting this duty, a right to expect that in his case man's necessity will be God's opportunity? Talk not of a want of concurrence on the part of your family; when David returned to bless his household, his wife met him with a reproach in her mouth. Talk not of want of time; is not God entitled to one half-hour in the day? Talk not of a failure of language; does scandal want words at your mouth? Urge not that your prayers would be those of the wicked, and therefore an abomination; that is making sin apologize for itself.

You and your dear children are not safe in the neglect of household worship. Have you ever read the imprecation of the prophet Jeremiah? "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name." The prayerless family is not safe, nor are the members who absent

themselves from the domestic altar safe. While Job's sons and daughters were engaged in feasting, he rose up early in the morning and offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all; for he said, It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually; but the Sabians and the Chaldeans, the fire and the tornado, overwhelmed them. They were away from the family altar. Why did God spare Noah? He was a just man, and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. God now spares and signally blesses the praying family. It is a maxim of English law that every man's house is his castle. Hence even the officer of government may not forcibly enter it to execute a civil process. Mere family occupancy renders it thus inviolable; but if uniform and acceptable prayer be superadded, the home becomes more than a castle; the very elements and all destructive agencies respect it. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." A Swiss village, consisting of nearly a hundred houses, was once entirely destroyed by an avalanche, except one house, in which lived a pious family who were at the time engaged in prayer. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

III. SOCIAL PRAYER.

A large part of religious duties are relative. If there were no such organization as the Christian church, certain common ties and reciprocal dependencies between man and man would be a sufficient reason why joint prayer should be offered. The social principle is of utmost importance to the spiritual well-being of a community, and when sanctified, it naturally seeks the enjoyment of devout conference.

“Take a ladder and climb to heaven by thyself alone,” said Constantine to a selfish Pharisee of his day. True piety is always genial and generous, going forth in quest of others with whom to share the favors sought from Heaven.

What a power is prayer as a social exercise in the family and in the church-gathering! What more potent engine is there of educational influence and of mutual sway! Nothing is really great or benignly effective except as related to God, and no human being is ever in so exalted a position as when addressing the high and lofty One. Rank and learning are for the moment awed in the presence of even an illiterate person when speaking to God. Such an one is felt to be an august personage, and for the time he wields a social influence which monarchs might envy. He is invested with somewhat of the dignity and sanctity of the court of heaven.

How delightful the place of social solemnities! “For my brethren and companions’ sake, I will now say Peace be within thee!” Men associate for trade and

commerce, for aggression and defence, for literary and other purposes; shall they not do the same in a religious capacity? This social element is a force of untold value. How largely did it enter into the affection of the Jews for their temple, whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord! It was a matter of exultation to the Psalmist, and all Israel, because there was little Benjamin with their ruler, the princes of Judah and their council, the princes of Zebulon, and the princes of Naphtali. Strong, indeed, must have been the motive which would take the princes of Zebulon and Naphtali such a distance, three times a year to Jerusalem, making an annual amount of travel for this purpose exceeding twelve hundred miles.

The rabbis have a proverb, "The prayers of many are better than the prayers of one." We assent to it. We say, indeed, How amiable is the place of secret prayer! Yet I will give thanks in the great congregation, I will praise thee among much people. Not when alone, but when together, are the flock the safest and happiest. Scattered drops of water soon evaporate. It is by caravans that we go safest through the desert, and with most of joy up to Jerusalem. "We come," says Tertullian, "by troops to make our prayers to God; that, being banded, as it were, together, we may with strong hand sue to Him for his favor. This violence is grateful unto God."

With regard to church prayer-meetings, and similar convocations, the testimony of earnest Christians has been uniform. A distinguished non-conformist minister, who labored two hundred years ago in England, gives the following as the result of his observation:

“First. Hereby knowledge was wonderfully increased, so that I was never acquainted with more understanding Christians in all my life, though the best of them went but in russet coats, and followed husbandry. Secondly. Holy affections by this mutual whetting of them in each were wonderfully kindled and kept alive in them. Thirdly. Love, by frequent society, was nourished and increased, so that all the professors, though living ten or twelve miles asunder, were as intimate and familiar as if they had all been of one household. Fourthly. The weak were strengthened, the mourning comforted, the erring reclaimed, the dejected raised up, and all of them mutually edified in the most holy faith.” One of the eminent early sons of New England says, with respect to gatherings of this kind, “It is very certain that where such private meetings, under a good conduct, are kept alive, the Christians which have composed them have, like so many ‘coals of the altar,’ kept one another alive, and kept up a lively Christianity in the neighborhood. Such societies have been tried and strong energies, to uphold the power of godliness. The throwing up of such societies has been accompanied with a visible decay of godliness; the less love to them, the less use of them there has been in a place, the less has godliness flourished there, the less there has been of the kingdom of God.” “The prayers of such well-disposed societies may fetch down marvellous favors from heaven on their pastors, whose lives may be prolonged, and gifts augmented, and graces brightened, and labors prospered in answer to the supplications of such associated families; and the interests of religion

may be mightily preserved and promoted in the whole flock by their fervent supplications, and the Spirit of grace poured out upon the rising generation. Yea, all the land may fare the better for them." Thomas Cobbett, two hundred years ago pastor of the church in Lynn, Massachusetts, writes, "Public prayer is a public engaging and compacting of the hearts and spirits of God's faithful ones. 'They continued steadfastly in prayers; and all that believed were together, and had all things in common;' that they may all call upon him, with one consent, as if the latter were for the sake of the former. The joint exercises of mutual graces in the common work breed and feed love and mutual respect. As it is with any two or three ministers, or other godly persons used to pray most together, they love and cleave most together; as musicians that used to play often in concert together, they used to be most friendly to each other. So it is in an assembly of persons earnestly exercised in public prayer." The Rev. John Newton writes: "I look upon prayer-meetings as the most profitable exercises, excepting the public preaching, in which Christians can engage; they have a distinct tendency to kill a worldly, trifling spirit, to draw down a divine blessing upon all our concerns, compose differences, and enkindle, at least to maintain, the flame of divine love among brethren." "I am confirmed in the opinion," says that observing and godly man, Felix Neff, "that whosoever, even were he an angel, should neglect such meetings, under any pretext whatever, is very little to be depended upon, and cannot be reckoned among the sheep of Christ's fold."

It is not ministerial experience alone which thus

expresses itself. A pious cartman, who was always found in his place at the prayer-meeting, when told that he ought to stay at home, after the fatigues and exposures of the day, would reply, "I find I can rest all the better by going to meeting; I forget all my pains and anxieties and labors,—feel stronger and better prepared for the next day's labor." Another laboring man once declared, "I love the church, I love preaching; but dearer than all, I love the prayer-meeting. I always feel as if I were going into my Father's house when I enter the room where we meet for prayer."

Peculiar mutual responsibilities lie upon those who have entered into church covenant with one another. They stand pledged to seek the peace, purity, and unity of the whole brotherhood. Can these pledges be redeemed to a proper extent without such stated seasons of devout conference, or something equivalent to them? Not that the whole duty of watch and fellowship can be discharged there; but will it be performed with an equal degree of ease and completeness, if such meetings are neglected? What person habitually and voluntarily absent, will undertake to say that he has not been guilty of a special delinquency in regard to church engagements?

"Exhort one another daily." Habitual exhortation implies social prayer. "And let us consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another." A weekly church prayer-meeting is not indeed specified, but will any one say it is not included? or that, if not

frequented, this requirement will, with any likelihood, be complied with? "Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord." By this mutual admonition and other exercises, ordinary pulpit instructions are not meant, but social meetings.

Who doubts that our Lord frequently united thus with his disciples? Certain noteworthy instances are recorded. On one occasion, he took Peter, James, and John, and went up into a mountain to pray. "It is good for us to be here," said Peter. Rough as that mountain might be, cheerless and inhospitable in itself, yet was it good for the disciples to be there, because Christ was with them. They witnessed such glory, heard such a testimony, and experienced such elevated emotions as were before unknown to them. Say not we the same respecting the place of prayer, "It is good for us to be here"? Our joys and benefits are social. "The purest produce of the olive," writes Montgomery, "is the oil which distils freely from the gentlest pressure of its fruit; the most precious juice of the grape is that which flows from the thick clusters heaped abundantly together, without any other compulsion than their own ripe weight and bursting fulness."

In another instance yet more memorable, Christ went "unto a place called Gethsemane, where was a garden, into which Jesus and his disciples entered." If, on that night of anguish, he chose to withdraw from them for secret prayer, it was with the expectation that, as the smallest expression of sympathy which

could be looked for, they would at the same time intercede for him. It is worthy of notice, that in the hour of this extreme mental suffering and known danger, he did not go elsewhere than to the place ordinarily frequented by him and his disciples for devout conference. "Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place." Are we not thus taught that even personal insecurity is not always a sufficient excuse for absence from the prayer-meeting? Does not an agonized Saviour say to us, "Can ye not watch with me one hour?"

We look in upon the first-mentioned prayer-meeting after our Saviour's resurrection. The last time he had seen them together, Peter denied him with an oath, and they all forsook him and fled; yet now when he comes, it is not with a reproachful look or word to Simon, the son of Jonas, or to any of them; but, "Peace be unto you!" It was a seasonable visit. How singular that the disciples should have been affrighted. Did they not know their Lord? Did they not believe what he had said touching his death and resurrection? No; they did not fully believe; they were not expecting him. Do we look for his promised appearing? Are we, at our weekly assemblages, disappointed if we do not hear his kind salutation?

We turn to the first prayer-meeting after Christ's ascension. It was a full meeting; all the apostles being there, as well as Christian women of Jerusalem, and the brethren of our Lord generally. It was a long meeting, a ten days' prayer-meeting. Christ had given the command, Go, teach all nations; but he had also bidden them wait for that which was indispensable to

their success as Christian witnesses. It was particularly desirable that they should learn new lessons concerning the power of prayer and perseverance in it; indeed, that they should begin their great work with the conviction deeply inwrought, that there is nothing more important to them than prayer. It was not improbably in the same room where the sacramental supper had been prepared, and where Christ's memorable discourse with them was held.

Thus opens the new dispensation; the history of the Christian church commences with a prayer-meeting. Prayer is not more truly the individual's vital breath than prayer-meetings are the church's vital atmosphere. There are two elements in man which need to be consulted; two necessities growing out of his nature and relations; one is met by devout meditation and retirement, the other by devout sympathy and social worship.

As a direct agency, as a means of obtaining that which comes from above, prayer is a necessity; and it is the appointed exercise in which to expect great favors. When did God ever bestow upon the church any signal favor, without preparing the way for it by stirring up the hearts of his people to earnest and persevering supplications? The first chapter of ecclesiastical history shows that the munificence of a new order of things was to come in connection with the most remarkable assemblage for prayer ever held. "These all continued in prayer and supplication" from the day of Christ's ascension to the day of pentecost; and what the chief subject of petition was, hardly admits of a doubt. In bidding the apostles not depart

from Jerusalem, it was that they might wait till the promise of the Father was fulfilled, their baptism with the Holy Ghost. They had heard from him that he would pray to the Father, who would send them another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth, who should teach them all things. Hence the meeting and the supplication. During Peter's imprisonment, "prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him." Just out of Philippi, by the river's side, was a place where believers were wont to meet.

At a later period, as we learn from uninspired history, a daily service in the church, both morning and evening, was introduced. By or before daybreak, they would assemble for prayer and praise. The evening service, which also continued an hour, was similar. "Nor was it only the more devout and zealous of them that pursued this daily routine of religious observances. The place of worship was thronged with all ranks of the faithful, as much during the morning and evening service, as during that of the Sabbath, and they would have afforded good reason to suspect the sincerity of their religious profession, who should in those days of Christian simplicity and devotedness, have confined themselves to the hebdomadal ordinance of the sanctuary."¹

What is a church prayer-meeting? It differs from public Sabbath services. The design of the latter is for a congregation promiscuously to worship God, and to listen to the exposition and enforcement of his Word. Edification by means of Scripture truth

¹ Coleman's Antiquities.

is one leading object ; the ingathering of souls by the same means is another.

It differs from a sacramental season. The design of the sacred supper is expressly, in the use of appointed symbols, to remember Christ, his dying love, his covenant righteousness, and the cleansing power of his blood.

The weekly meeting of a church is a family gathering,—the coming together of a particular household of faith in the name of Him who is head over all things to the church. Fellowship with the Elder Brother should evermore be sought, a new appreciation of his love to us, and his claims upon us. Such a domestic Christian assemblage is for the free expression and increase of fraternal love, and of a common faith, comfort, and joy ; for the manifestation and culture of family feeling.

Opportunity is thus afforded for cultivating Christian acquaintance. How can the duties of fraternal fellowship be performed, if, as is sometimes the case, nothing more be known than the mere names of some with whom they stand in covenant relation ? No one should complain of being unknown or neglected who neglects this privilege. “Divide and conquer,” is Satan’s watchword ; but how many alienations and strifes have been prevented or healed by the hallowed influence of a social meeting ! How many more would be if none were delinquent in this duty ! A call to the mercy-seat is a truce to contention.

Diffidence not unfrequently detains persons from the place of prayer. Unaccustomed to take an active part in devotional exercises in the presence of others,

except, perhaps, at the family altar, they shrink from the thought, and rather than incur the exposure, they remain at home. "Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came." It may be, he feared he should be called upon to pray. How much did he lose! The repeated salutation of the risen Saviour, "Peace be unto you!" he did not hear; that early communication of the Holy Ghost, when Christ breathed on the assembled disciples, he did not experience; and when, after eight days, the unbelieving man came to the prayer-meeting, he received a public rebuke from his crucified Lord.

Well would it be if those who render unsatisfactory excuses for absence would remember certain chapters in the history of primitive prayer-meetings, as also in more recent times. The Emperor Diocletian, who waged the tenth general persecution against the church, would gladly have broken up all Christian meetings, which, indeed, he prohibited; while he ordered places of worship to be torn down. Fain would the Philistines of every age stop the wells of salvation and cut off all supplies of the water of life.

What oppressive acts of Parliament were passed under the reign of Charles II.! Without the verdict of a jury, on the mere oath of an informer, every justice of the peace was armed with the power of fining and imprisoning Dissenters who should persist in the exercise of this most obvious religious privilege. The scourge thus put into the hands of persons comparatively irresponsible and irreligious, was wielded unmercifully. Houses were broken open, meetings broken up, goods seized, and the jails filled

with some of the most conscientious and peaceable citizens in the realm. A vile race of informers fattened upon their unrighteous spoils, while the utmost distress was brought upon thousands of families and individuals because they feared God more than man. How would the present generation of their descendants in Old England and New England stand a test of that kind? What would be the effect of such stringent measures upon the attendance at meetings for prayer?

There is a promise to "two or three," and the promise is as good for two as for two hundred. The ancient rule of the synagogue was, that unless ten persons, and they persons of age, were present, there was not an assembly, and prayer might not be offered; but our Lord does not so stint the privileges of his people. Whoever else may or may not be there, we have the countenance and assistance of those whose presence is of far more moment to us, — God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Christ has prayed the Father in our behalf; has bespoken his regards for us. Especially has he asked the Comforter, "even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you." Each of the adorable Trinity is present, and infinitely more interested in the gathering than church-members are.

X.

SEASONS OF PRAYER.

I. PRAYER AMIDST TRIALS.



THE great want of the human heart is a companion who may safely be intrusted with all bosom secrets. Can he be found? There is needed some one wise, strong, tender-hearted, and true; one always at hand, and always at liberty; who will listen and aid as husband, wife, brother, sister, neighbor cannot.

It was a vainglorious boast of an ancient philosopher, Antisthenes, when asked what he got by his learning, That he could talk to himself, could live alone, and did not need to go abroad and be beholden to others for enjoyment. We do need to go out of ourselves. No man is a complement to himself. An essential property must be taken from our nature, and numberless occurrences from our lives, before contentment in solitary independence is achieved. Give me a friend, is the soul's impassioned demand; give me some one to whom I may go when I will, and tell him all I please.

We have personal solicitudes, we have domestic and business solicitudes. How much do we need the coun-

sel of a wise friend, then ! There is One whose very name is Wonderful, Counsellor. He will have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way. He knows not only the history thus far, but the issue of every case. He sees the end as readily as the beginning. Was his guiding hand or word ever at fault ? Has any disciple of his ever had occasion to regret his influence in a matter committed to him ?

My earthly master may be skilful, but not as He ; my father and mother may be wise, but not like Him. He only can look over the whole field of circumstances and see how I am situated. He looks through my whole life, and onward through the eternity of my career with all its relations and results. Who else is competent to give advice ?

The tenderest love characterized him when on earth, and equally characterizes him still. He is no more now than then ashamed to call his disciples brethren ; nor more ashamed to call those on earth such than those in heaven. Is his eye any more intently on the Abrahams, Isaiahs, and Johns, around the throne, than upon us still inhabiting this lower world ? If either portion of his great family receives special attention, it is that one from whose eyes the tears are still to be wiped away.

We would go to him in bodily sufferings. He has to do with this discipline, has a purpose in it ; one that will be accomplished only in a submissive recognition of his hand. Will anything check murmurs or impatience more effectually than reverently to tell Jesus the whole story of distress ; to make mention of his unsoled anguish in the garden and on the cross ?

Let the blind man cry, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me, and he will receive sympathy, at least, if not relief. One who had been for thirty-seven years as gold tried in the fire,¹ said, "I experience so much of the Saviour's love in supporting me under pain, that I cannot fear its increase."

Are we persecuted? He has pronounced a benediction. Has a storm arisen, and is it very tempestuous? Go to that wonderful fellow-passenger who with one word can quiet the elements, and quiet your hearts. Does Satan cast us into prison and make our feet fast in the stocks? Our Lord's presence will cause us to sing at midnight. When, a few years since, the Inquisition at Rome was opened, these words were found on the dungeon walls, where some unknown martyr had pined: "Blessed Jesus, they may separate me from thy church, but they cannot separate me from thee." The Roman Herod anathematized and incarcerated him; but he went and told Jesus, and was comforted. "Call upon me in the day of trouble." How often does the Psalmist avail himself of the privilege! Job cried thus in the dust, and Jeremiah in the dungeon. They were heard. So was Jonah; and so have thousands of others been amidst less remarkable perils in the deep. The universal biography of God's children is only a record of trials, prayers, and deliverances. Whoever has faith to ask, and an eye to see, the interposing goodness of God, shall not want for occasions of grateful acknowledgment. During a period of less than two years, when civil war was raging in France, Beza recorded six hundred de-

¹ Harriet Stoneman.

liverances from danger, for which he solemnly gave thanks in his last testament.

The eighty-eighth Psalm stands by itself in one respect, unique and impressive. It is the only one of the whole hundred and fifty characterized by dejection throughout. In all the others joy either pervades or at least enlivens the strains of King David; but here there is not a tone of cheerfulness; not one ray of light pierces the gloom. Yet, thanks that the psalm stands where it does, with its solitary and solemn lesson. Who has not seasons for the eighty-eighth Psalm? All God's waves and billows sometimes go over us.

There is another feature of that psalm no less noticeable. It is the persistency of David's prayers. "I have cried day and night before thee." He never once thinks of remitting supplication. So should it be with every one in similar seasons. Trial is designed to be the great school of prayer. Afflictions of whatever form fail of their immediate design if they do not awaken special earnestness in cries to God.

The way to heap affliction upon affliction is to murmur, and do nothing but weep, instead of importuning the Mercy-seat. When God shivers our idols, it is that he may become enthroned in our hearts. He takes away unsatisfying and dangerous comforts, to put himself fully in place of them. The question is not how long the period of disciplinary darkness may last, but whether the soul is brought more closely and trustfully to the footstool; whether she is resorting with new confidence to the great storehouse of promises; whether she is girding on the whole armor of God in

the unswerving purpose to fight manfully the good fight of faith.

Sufferings do not sanctify of themselves. They become blessings if rightly used. Pain and reproaches are hard to be borne; but how much harder is it to get along without them. Are they not a part of Christ's legacy; and can anything unkind come from those hands that were nailed to the cross for us? Are not we, like our great Captain, to be made perfect through sufferings? Ay, and yet only through prayer. Come what may, cloud, night, storm, let us pray. Our rowing will of itself amount to but little; we would hasten at once to Him who commands the winds and waves, crying, "Save, Master, or we perish!" We would turn every care into prayer. This is a holy charm to drive away trouble.

No one who really prays can be wholly wretched. The poor, distressed believer may be hardly able to keep above water long enough for a single breath, still let him cry, "Lord, help me!" It would seem as if there was not much real earnestness of supplication except under the pressure of God's hand. Isaiah says of the children of Israel, "Lord, in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them." They poured out their prayers; they did not merely say them. Jonah could sleep quietly in the ship, but in the whale's belly he cried to God. "I have no dull hours," said a daughter of the celebrated Baron Cuvier, as she lay sinking with true Christian cheerfulness and patience in a decline,—"I have no dull hours." She was in habitual communion with her Lord.

If, in present circumstances, there is nothing besides tribulation, the Lord himself remains an unchanging occasion for rejoicing. The memory of his past mercies should be enough to make us praise as well as pray. Paul and Silas had prison-songs; their prison was a paradise.

True believers are not so often heard lamenting what they have endured as what they have failed to do. Seasons of sanctified suffering are often the most joyful of all in a Christian's remembrance. The greatest victory, the highest and purest rapture of Faith, is when she looks out upon the withered vine and fig-tree, the failing olive and fields all blasted; upon the ashes of a once happy dwelling, and the graves of a whole household, and then with a strong, clear voice, sings of mercy and of judgment. A little girl had been taught to pray, "O God, bless my dear mother; bless my dear father." The father was taken to his rest. She kneeled as usual and prayed, "O God, bless my dear mother; bless my——," then opened her eyes imploringly to know what she should do; but soon, with a trembling voice, added, "Oh, mother, I cannot leave him all out. Let me say, Thank God that I had a dear father once, so I can still go on and keep him in my prayers." Do not the most beautiful tints in our firmament come from the sun that has set?

II. PRAYER UNDER BEREAVEMENT.

There is said to have been an ancient people in Thrace, who were accustomed to celebrate the birth of any one with tears, and a funeral with rejoicings. They may have been a very weak or very wise people. In their rude simplicity, they may have had a deeper philosophy than neighboring and more polished nations.

We will not quarrel with the exclamation often heard, What a beautiful world this is! Considered with respect to physical adaptations, it is beautiful beyond what the mere sentimentalist or man of science has yet learned. But while it is just the world to live in, man, in his present moral state, is not just the creature to live in it. Spoiled himself, he spoils that. We meet too many whose eyes are red with weeping; we sit down beside too many with palpitating hearts, and we see too many passing into the midst of deep waters, or over the Bridge of Sighs, to allow of our complimenting it very highly.

The world is not more full of troubles than of nostrums. Is any afflicted among you? It will soon be over, suggests a sympathizing friend. How does he know that? How does he know that the affliction may not weigh for many a month upon the heart; that the same or similar griefs may not be repeated? Days of darkness are long. Hours freighted with sorrow and anxiety move heavily. One's whole life in review seems not so long as many a brief period of anguish does in passing.

Is any afflicted among you? let him think of heaven, says another. Blessed be God that his stricken children may think of heaven, where there shall be no more death. Praise to the kind severity of Him who makes the trial of our faith to be much more precious than of gold that perisheth. There is, however, the previous point, Am I an heir to that blessedness? How shall present troubles be made to promote preparation for that better world? How do I know that they are not earnest of interminable grief?

Is any afflicted among you? Let him seek amusement, says the worldling. Is it, then, the great thing to be diverted? Is forgetfulness the sovereign remedy for mental sufferings? Try that anodyne. Stupefy sensibility; drive away grief; hand the last novel; bring the flowing bowl; pass along the dice; let the orchestra sound; let not the image of your buried friend pass the threshold. But can you shut out your own immortality and your God?

Is any afflicted among you? let him bear it bravely, says the philosopher. What cannot be cured must be endured. Be courageous. When you happen to be bereaved, bear up; do not yield; breast the wave; be a man. There, my philosophical friend, is the great difficulty, to be a man. These afflictions unman a person, and we wish to know, not so much what is desirable as how to obtain it; how shall fortitude and calmness be secured?

The Stoic, that stubborn, sullen disciple of fate, tells us, that if we will have it so that pain is an evil, if we cannot philosophize ourselves into composure amidst

the troubles of life, we may end what we cannot endure.¹ Atrocious insult to an accountable being! The ultimatum of foolhardy wickedness is suicide.

Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Such is the divine prescription. God does not say to us, Seek the sympathy of your fellow-men. He knows how uncertain that is; how insufficient for the higher necessities and ends of affliction. Welcome indeed is sympathy. Not so refreshing to parched lips is the cup of cold water as the flow of tenderness to a fainting spirit. Many a fountain of that kind springs up in the wilderness, and weary pilgrims are reanimated. We need, however, to use caution in asking condolence from earthly sources. The distribution of trials is not so unequal as to authorize any one to bring a claim very frequently upon another.

God never grows weary. Repetition does not offend him. For ages have his children been offering the same supplications, under similar afflictions, over and over again, yet during all this period not one feeling of aversion on that account has arisen in the divine mind. Is any among you afflicted? let him pray; let him repeat the same prayer, time and again, about the same affliction; only let him cry unto God.

“Casting all your care upon him;” not Ananias and Sapphira-like, keeping back a part, but casting all your care upon him. “He careth for you;” he makes no professions for effect. His is not the fluctuating inter-

¹ “If thy mind be melancholy and in misery, thou mayest put a period to this wretched condition. Wherever thou lookest, there is an end to it. See that precipice; there thou mayest have liberty. Seest thou that sea, that river, that well? Liberty is at the bottom of it. That little tree? Freedom hangs upon it. Thy own neck, thy own throat may be a refuge to thee from such servitude; yea, any vein in thy body.” — *Seneca*.

est of a mortal, nor the fruitless sympathy of one who can only feel for you ; it is the regard of unchanging benevolence and power. What cheerful resignation then should we feel. We would always ask less for alleviation than for sanctification ; then will bereavements prove disguised blessings.

The greater the trial, the greater the need of prayer. It should operate only as hydrostatic pressure, to raise one all the higher, and with the more force. When was it that our Lord, in the days of his flesh, offered up prayers and supplications with such strong crying and tears as under that dreadful burden in the garden and on the cross ?

Christ, who from the first had known what was before him, who with a full understanding of the fearful issue had cheerfully given himself up to it, prayed that the cup might pass from him ; but that was not all his prayer. " Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Soon as the child was dead, David ceased fasting and weeping, and said to his surprised servants, " While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live ?" His crowning petition doubtless was, " Thy will be done !" Though upon its decease he took bread, and resumed his cheerfulness, we do not read that he gave over praying.

How are the soul's still depths stirred when death wrests away our treasures ! To look at the wreck that remains after the spirit has once departed, — to see only the shattered tenement of our dear one, — it seems as if we were ourselves rent in twain. But looking through

our tears, we descry the Master at Lazarus' grave; we hear him discourse of the resurrection; and our minds are filled with sublime, living, beautiful images of the future; our grief is assuaged. We bury the body of our friend; we go and tell Jesus; and find that he has tears to shed as well as we. Alas that mourners spend no more time in rehearsing their trials to him, and spend so much in detailing them to neighbors.

XI.

SUBJECTS OF PRAYER.

I. TEMPORAL BLESSINGS.



N ancient allegory runs thus: There was a peasant distinguished for piety, whom Jupiter wished to reward. Accordingly he promised to give the man whatever he should ask. He requested control of the weather so far as concerned his own estate. The request being granted, he at once set about distributing dew and rain, snow and sunshine, upon the fields, as he thought the soils and seasons required. At the end of the year he looked for an overflowing harvest, but was surprised to find the crops of his neighbors far more abundant than his own. Whereupon, he desired Jupiter to resume the control of the weather, lest he should completely ruin himself.

The moral lies on the surface. If God were not so merciful as to deny many of our requests, we should be speedily undone. The highest wisdom in prayer is to desire that his will may be done.

We are, however, permitted submissively to ask for temporal favors. The propriety of such prayer is found in the fact of God's universal and particular

providence. The Scriptures teach us that his preserving and superintending agency is unlimited and uninterrupted. They teach that his oversight is, to the farthest degree, individual, extending to every particular sparrow, and to every hair of the head; that whatever general laws of procedure he has established, he presides over each event occurring conformably to those laws; and that this particularity and constancy of control pertain no less to the material and irrational world than to the spiritual and rational.

No metaphysical difficulties arise with regard to prayer for temporal blessings which do not hold equally against the efficacy of prayer in general. The God of creation, providence, grace, and Scripture, being one and the same, we need have no embarrassment in reposing implicit confidence in the commands and encouragements which he sets before us. When, therefore, we read, "In everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God;" and, when we find authorized examples of such supplication, we cannot hesitate to pray for food, for health, and similar favors.

God would have the impression of dependence to be as constant as our temporal necessities. "Give us day by day our daily bread;" we know not what a day may bring forth; our wants may terminate with present supplies. "Give me good speed this day;" changes often occur suddenly. The same day saw Job the richest and the poorest of all the men of the East. Present good speed and abundance, when they exist, are of uncertain continuance; but the wants of to-morrow need not be met to-day. The business of

supplication and thanksgiving can no more be done up at one time for a month or a year, than respiration for the same period can be performed at one time. It is for the serpent, and not for man, to gorge himself, and then lie torpid.

Is it said that the prayerless prosper? An outward, transient prosperity they do often enjoy. "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree." But what is prosperity? Is it thrift in trade, in agriculture? Is it promotion in civil or military life? What is plenty? a full barn? God's blessing only makes success anything better than disaster; makes wealth anything but gilded poverty. Take away that blessing, and food becomes a slow poison, promotion the precursor of a fall. Just as the victims destined for sacrifice were crowned with garlands, so now the tokens of mere worldly prosperity are the badges of approaching destruction. Nothing but an habitually devout and grateful acknowledgment of dependence will avert an ultimate curse from all the good things of this life. "If ye will not hear," so witnesses Malachi, "and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings."

Have we no necessities beyond those that are physical and social? Are there no mansions but those we now inhabit; no manna but such as we gather with our hands; no kingdom but what is of this world? Is there no prosperity save that which the ledger or the census may indicate? Louis IX., when the attending priest had prayed for his health, and was beginning to

implore Heaven for his future welfare, cried out, "Hold, hold! you have gone far enough for once. Never be tiresome in your address to Almighty God. Stop now, and pray for my soul another time." How frankly expressive of what many would seem silently to think! Let the good Lord give health and wealth; let the Almighty Steward fill our barns, and then he may go his way for the present! Oh the blasphemy of worldliness, the atheism of selfishness!

Here is the prayer of a miser,¹ found in his own handwriting: "O Lord, thou knowest that I have nine estates in the city of London, and likewise that I have lately purchased an estate in fee-simple in the county of Essex. I beseech thee to preserve the two counties of Middlesex and Essex from fire and earthquake; and, as I have a mortgage in Hertfordshire, I beg of thee to have an eye of compassion on that county; and for the rest of the counties thou mayest deal with them as thou art pleased. O Lord, enable the banks to answer all their bills, and make my debtors good men. Give a prosperous voyage to the Mermaid sloop because I have insured it. Keep my friends from sinking, and preserve me from thieves and house-breakers; and make all my servants so honest and faithful that they may attend to my interests, and never cheat me out of my property night or day."

The prayerless laborer, whatever his business, invites a frown, and though his cup may overflow, he will find it dashed with bitterness. Beautiful was the practice among the early Christians to intermingle prayer with their most common pursuits, invoking the

¹ John Ward, of Hackney, England.

favor of God upon their plowing, sowing, and harvesting, and upon every-day household affairs. Whoever uniformly and devoutly says, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it," finds the benediction in return running thus: "Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field; blessed shall be thy basket and thy store; blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouse, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto."

The acknowledgment of dependence is not to be limited to the particular of daily food; but includes, also, strength to labor, and that multitude of other circumstances which, under the divine blessing, are essential to success in our pursuits. Moses enjoined upon Israel, "Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth." It is often said of one that he lives by his trade; of another that he lives by his pen; of another that he lives on the interest of his money; but in every case there are one or more points of immediate dependence upon God. We hear some pronounced independent, but are they such, really? Are not all equally pensioners upon the bounty of Heaven, though that bounty flows in different channels and different measures?

The continuance of wealth, not less than its acquisition, is due to divine favor, and still more is the power to enjoy it something that comes daily and directly from God. Ecclesiastes taught this long ago: "Every

man, also, to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labor, this is the gift of God." Every Cræsus is poor to a proverb if the blessing of Heaven be not upon him. Without that, our bread becomes husks that the swine do eat. Every bag of unsanctified gold is a monument of atheism. It is ill-gotten, and will not prosper. The thunderbolt will scatter it. No chests are secure against the fire of God's displeasure. Prayer, only, deposits treasures safely in heaven.

Shall not domestic blessings be sought? The family constitution is an appointment of God, and no earthly relation is regarded by him as more sacred than that of husband and wife. A preparatory school of the church, a nursery of heaven, is found there. Domestic bliss is the most perfect relic of paradise. He who instituted this ordinance is jealous of its sanctity, and the selfishness or passion which violates it is doubly offensive to him. But how shall peace, order, and comfort, be maintained? How shall the nameless and numberless occasions of discord be met? How shall sickness, bereavement, and the manifold embarrassments to which they give rise, as well as countless other forms of domestic trial, be patiently endured? Only by a devout maintenance of the domestic altar, and a grateful acknowledgment of those many household mercies which are intermingled largely with the disciplinary dealings.

Eliezer had been charged by his master with the important errand of securing a proper companion in life for Isaac. "And he said, O Lord God of my master

Abraham, I pray thee send me good success this day; and show kindness unto my master Abraham." It indicates the firmest faith in God's particular providence, and his covenant regard for the patriarch. Through the whole transaction there appears just such a spirit as should pervade every similar event, the only spirit which gives rational promise of a blessing upon the conjugal state. Matches are indeed made in heaven; yet often for the mutual and merited chastisement of parties concerned. What but disaster can reasonably be expected from unions entered into, as many are, with no regard to the God of Abraham?

II. MENTAL AID.

The recognition of intellectual dependence upon God is so rare in treatises on moral science and education, and is so unusual in social devotions, as to indicate a widely existing skepticism. How few in the whole circle of living educators are heard recommending, and how few in the process of education, or in the midst of active life, are heard to offer, prayer for well-balanced minds, for skill and energy in the use of all their faculties!

If the instincts of irrational creatures are subject to the control of a watchful Providence, so that the "ant, having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer,"—an example to the human sluggard,—and "the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times," shall not God regard and influence the operations of rational minds? If he teach David's

hands to war and his fingers to fight; if he impart skill, and pledge the most exact superintendence to the builders of the tabernacle and the temple, shall we suppose that he withdraws from the mental mechanism and movements of man generally? "All my springs are in thee." His upholding power is no less indispensable to the human intellect than to the body and to the framework of nature; and his superintending agency no less intimate in the operations of the mental than of the material world. Consistently with the laws established by him in the two respectively, he presides and interposes as he will; and if there is propriety in asking a blessing upon the one, there is upon the other. It is anything but unphilosophical or unscriptural to believe that in ways inscrutable to us, a special divine influence may mould and modify a man's inner constitution and habits, may determine which of multitudinous flitting conceptions and impressions shall become permanent and influential; and so, without anything distinguishable from exercises of perfect spontaneity, may further the whole process of mental culture, the formation of right habits, and the retention of best thoughts. If, then, to pray without study is enthusiasm, to study without prayer is atheism.

Happy would it be if the familiar maxim of Luther, To pray well is to study well, were a universal favorite among scholars. With some of the master minds for subtilty and comprehensiveness, this has been an acknowledged principle. Happy would it be if all the learned and acute of later times would kneel with Thomas Aquinas, and join in his customary prayer

before study: "Ineffably wise and good Creator, illustrious Original, true fountain of light and wisdom, vouchsafe to infuse into my understanding some ray of thy brightness, thereby removing that twofold darkness under which I was born, of sin and ignorance. Thou that makest the tongues of infants eloquent, instruct, I pray thee, my tongue likewise; and pour upon my lips the grace of thy benediction. Give me quickness to comprehend and memory to retain; give me happiness in expounding and a facility in learning, and copious eloquence in speaking. Prepare my entrance on the road of science, direct me in my journey, and bring me safely to the end of it, even happiness and glory, in thine eternal kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." From what aberrations and mischiefs would many a speculative mind and the world at large have been saved, had modern philosophers striven as earnestly to master the student's and author's prayers of Lord Bacon, as his *Novum Organon*!

How desirable is it that every public speaker should cherish a sense of intellectual dependence! To those who are called upon in debate, deliberation, or exhortation, to address others extemporaneously, divine aid is particularly needful. Then is there special liability to rash, heated, inappropriate remarks. Then eminently is the balancing and enlightening presence of the Holy Spirit important. Hence, before the lips are opened, let God be supplicated by the speaker, that "the Spirit of the Lord may rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord."

In the Westminster Assembly of Divines, the youngest member was George Gillespie. On one occasion, when both the Assembly and Parliament were convened, a long-premeditated discourse was delivered in favor of Erastianism. Gillespie, being urged by his colleagues to answer it, repeated the substance of the whole discourse, and refuted it to the admiration of all present. It however excited special admiration that, although the members were accustomed to take notes of what was spoken, to help their memory, and though Gillespie appeared to be busy with his pencil, he wrote down not a word of the speech,—so a person who sat by him, on casting an eye over his note-book, discovered,—but only short prayers, such as “Lord send light; give assistance; Lord, defend thine own cause!”

While as a man the Christian minister stands upon parity of need in this respect with others, in one view his case is peculiar. In no other calling is there reasonably demanded so much of careful and wisely directed self-culture, such painstaking to bring all the faculties under military discipline, and to hold them well appointed and ever ready for concentrated movements. If there is any one on whom rests a religious obligation to make the most of his talents, to carry his improvements to the highest possible degree, it is the one who has constant official occasion to discourse upon the character and government of God, the extent and penalty of his law, the person and mediation of his Son, with a view to save souls. Only through prayer will he receive the requisite incitement and guidance. No other resort will so arouse and impel the mind, supplying a healthful stimulus to the intel-

lectual powers, and inducing a graceful and effective development of the whole inner man. "Since I began," says Payson, "to beg God's blessing on my studies, I have done more in one week, than I have done in a whole year before." It will always be found that, other things equal, the one who carries the best devotional habit to his books, grows intellectually rich the fastest; that imagination makes the loftiest and best sustained flights; and that the whole mind, when soaring toward heaven, takes fire like Acestes' arrow, from its proximity to the great source of heat and light. John Milton found that when he prayed most he wrote best.

This, too, brings recuperative influence to the mind when overworked and jaded. It rests and invigorates, supplies wholesome aliment and exercise, air and light. Who that has tried the same experiment as the celebrated Hayden has not found like results, that the best means for restoring mental energies, when exhausted by long study, is retirement to the closet; that nothing exerts so happy an influence on the mind; that it induces the most benign repose, and reinfuses the most healthful vigor?

Of Vincent Ferrer, a devoted missionary and powerful preacher of the fourteenth century, it is said, His heart was always fixed on God, and he made his studies and labor a continued prayer. In his *Treatise on Spiritual Life*, he writes thus: "Do you desire to study to advantage? Let devotion accompany all your studies. Consult God more than your books, and ask him with humility to make you understand what you read. Study fatigues and drains the mind and

heart. Go, refresh them at the feet of Jesus. Interrupt your application by short but fervent ejaculatory prayers. Never begin or end your study but by prayer. Science is the gift of the Father of lights; therefore, do not consider it merely as a work of your own mind or industry."

Along with devout requests for guidance in the choice of subjects and method of investigation, as well as for a blessing immediately upon the mental faculties themselves, there should be much of grateful acknowledgment to the Father of spirits. Thanks are due to God for every good thought, and for all continued and increased ability to use these gifts of heaven. Shall a heathen philosopher upon the solution of a mathematical problem offer a hecatomb to the gods, and shall Christian students be less conscious of their intellectual dependence, less observant of intimations in their mental experience for praise to Him who has breathed into them the breath of life, and from whom cometh every good and perfect gift? If the husbandman, whose labors are crowned with success, owes a day of annual thanksgiving, how much more the man of intellectual thrift! Was Reginald Heber ever occupied more appropriately than, after the delivery of his Palestine, blessing God on his knees, who had enabled him to write such a performance, a poem that won the prize and applause of Oxford? Thanksgiving hours and thanksgiving days should come oftener than annually for the harvest-home in a successful student's husbandry.

These general considerations have special pertinency to the minister as a student of the Word. The

Bible is his text-book, his Primary Reader and Encyclopedia. Success in the ministry will depend largely upon the extent and character of his acquaintance with the Holy Volume. He is presumed to be a man taught of God,—one whose eyes have been opened to behold wondrous things out of God's law. Otherwise, no amount of learned apparatus and of patient investigation can bring him to the requisite acquaintance with Holy Writ. However eminent as a critic, he will be only an accomplished Athenian, unable to comprehend Paul when he preaches "Jesus and the resurrection;" he will be only a Saul of Tarsus, conversant indeed with the Scriptures, yet really ignorant of them.

Assuming that the veil has been taken from his heart, that the special illumination needed alike by all is enjoyed by him, the minister of the Word needs more. As one required to be a deeper student of the Bible, one studying with a view to public and most responsible teaching from the same, he needs such a grasp of its doctrines, and such familiarity with its whole scope and spirit, as can be had only by habitual and free converse with its Author. Provision has been made for this. Not only was there a promise to the apostles that the Comforter should guide them into all truth, but that the same blessed agent should abide with them as ministers of the Word, and with their successors forever. This particularity of promise may well stimulate the preacher in studying the Bible. In the midst of his library, by the side of his table, he may have the Author of that volume for its interpreter. In all freedom may he propose inquiries and seek aid.

The lively oracles themselves furnish authority to ask what no commentator or living teacher can give, — an enlarged and rightly-guided capacity for apprehending sacred truths: “Thy hands have made me and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn thy commandments;” while they also supply many an appropriate form of ejaculatory request for instruction from on high: “Teach me thy statutes;” “Teach me good judgment and knowledge;” “Lead me in thy truth, and teach me; for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.”

Nothing sooner calls forth the love of the Spirit than a reverent study of his own infallible words; and it is his delight to make docile minds acquainted with the things of the Spirit; but for admission to his sacred seminary and system of hermeneutics, respectful and earnest application must be made. Has it not been amidst devout weeping that a sealed book or a sealed passage has been opened to many a one besides the apostle on Patmos? Was not Zwingli answered when he looked to heaven, desiring no teacher but the Holy Spirit? Does not Luther testify that in a short period of time with prayer he profited more in the Holy Scriptures than by mere study for a much longer space? With great satisfaction do we listen to William Romaine, when speaking of the Bible: “I study to know it, not as a metaphysician, but as a Christian. I seek not so much to comprehend it as to believe it. Nothing appears to me more reasonable than that my reason should submit to God’s reason; and therefore I am kept praying for divine grace, to make his word, like the light of the sun, clear in my head, and fruitful in my

heart." With much satisfaction do we listen to John Wesley, in his devotions: "I sit down alone; only God is here. In his presence, I open, I read his book for this end,—to find the way to heaven. Is there a doubt concerning the meaning of what I read? Does anything appear dark or intricate? I lift my heart to the Father of lights: Lord, is it not thy Word? 'If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God.' Thou 'givest liberally and upbraidest not.'" His compeer, the prince of English preachers, gives us a valuable secret of his own acquaintance with the Word, and his success in proclaiming it: "My mind being now more enlarged, I began to read the Holy Scriptures upon my knees, laying aside all other books, and praying over, if possible, every line and word. This proved meat indeed, and drink indeed, to my soul. I daily received fresh life, light, and power, from above. I got more true knowledge from reading the Book of God in one month than I could ever have acquired from all the writings of men."

The student who desires thus to yield himself up to superior guidance, who inquires, "How can I understand except some man should guide me?" will find help supplied, and along with human helps, a divine illumination that shall send him on his way rejoicing. The linguist may go to the Bible for philological research, and the man of taste for æsthetic recreation, but the devout scholar goes to hear what God the Lord will say, and he gains an inward testimony, an unction from the Holy One most refreshing and satisfying. Whether a profound critic or not, whether he understands all mysteries and all knowledge or not, he

knows whom he has believed. Will such a man "handle the Word of God deceitfully," vaguely, or feebly?

Even the more critical departments of study, the use of rudimental aids, and a resort to ultimate helps, are by no means outside of the appropriate range of prayer. Do we pronounce it a commendable habit on the part of an eminent man of science in one of our colleges, now deceased, that he never commenced his mathematical and other investigations without imploring divine aid; and shall we not deem it an equally fitting custom maintained by one of the most diligent students of God's word the last century, as narrated by himself: "I spread the Hebrew Bible before God, and cry to the Father that, for the sake of his Son, he would by the Spirit shine on it, would give me light, and discover his mind in the Word; that he would give me life, health, strength, time, and inclination, to the study, and a blessing thereon"?

While an undevout man will prove a poor scholar and a worse teacher, the praying student will find himself "enriched in all utterance and all knowledge." Keeping the heart as hard at work as the brain, his soul comes to be all aglow. His thoughts ascending to Heaven in prayer, divine thoughts descend to him in the Word by the Spirit, and he discovers not only the mind, but the very heart, of God. Prayer takes one to the home of all sublime truths and hallowed influences; it takes the student of the Bible to the Holy Land, the better country of the palm and the olive, of Tabor and of Zion. In thy light, the shekinah that beams full and clear at the mercy-seat, do we see light.

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT.

How little of correspondence is there between the assurances of God and the expectations of man! The leading plans of society and of individuals would seem to proceed upon the assumption that what has been promised will not be fulfilled, and that effort and admiration are to be given to things not foretold.

It was never a subject of prediction, nor is it comparatively one for exultation, that in the last times surprising discoveries should be made; that unprecedented movements in science and the arts should take place. Holy men of old said nothing of the recent triumphs of astronomy, or in regard to methods of rapid locomotion and intercommunication. The Holy Ghost gave no hints touching improvements in the healing art, or in the implements and tactics of war. God did not deem the matter one of sufficient importance to give it a place in prophecy, that geology would one day turn the leaves of so vast a volume as our globe, and decipher its long-hidden history. He who brought Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees, never promised to this generation a land far in the west, bordering upon the Great Sea, and flowing with gold and silver. Inspiration was not so occupied. High moral aims, glorious spiritual revelations and reformations, engaged the pens of prophets. O ye adventurers, ye scholars, ye who gather up so eagerly the news of foreign commotions and domestic enterprise, ye who say, "Let us go into this or that city, and buy and sell and get gain;" all ye men and women, immersed in worldli-

ness, give ear; God speaks; three thousand years ago he spoke: "I will pour out water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed and my blessing upon thine offspring."

By this we do not understand anything inferior or purely ministerial on the part of the Holy Spirit. Angels are Jehovah's servants, doing his commands, hearkening unto the voice of his word; but we conceive of the Holy Spirit as acting in his own free and coequal capacity, when his gracious visitations are experienced. Of course we ascribe to him a proper personality. We do not resolve these predicted displays into a special manifestation merely of God's omnipresence.

The last days are prophetically characterized not only as the dispensation of Messiah, but the dispensation of the Spirit. Next in importance to the predictions which announce the coming of Shiloh, are those which relate to the reform and enlargement of his visible kingdom, through the agency of the Spirit. Hence we find the epithet "Spirit of promise." The Mosaic dispensation was local and limited, not adapted to development, nor designed for extension. On a prescribed territory, and under a rigid ritual, the Church was then in its chrysalis state. Its function was preparatory to something better. Life there was, yet held in check; it was entombed. Though glorious, Paul calls it the ministration of death; "how then shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious!"

When Christ was received up out of sight, what did his disciples do? Go at once to preaching? They

went up into an upper room, and engaged in supplication. Ten days did they, one hundred and twenty in all, continue in prayer; and it was while they were thus together with one accord that the wonders of pentecost were witnessed. Then began the dispensation of the Spirit; and what an inaugural! Well indeed might the aged Zacharias previously exult at the presentation of him who was only a prophet of the Highest; well might the wise men bring gold, frankincense and myrrh, and angels sing Glory to God in the highest, at the birth of Immanuel; but fulness of joy for saints and angels did not come till the pentecostal effusion, when three thousand were in one day added to the Lord, as first-fruits of that glorious ingathering which the Holy Ghost will continue to secure till the last conversion has taken place on earth.

Peter refers that display to the ascended Saviour: "Being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." Afterwards, when the same apostle preached at Cæsarea, "the Holy Ghost fell on them which heard the Word." The Jews, even believing Jews, were astonished that on the Gentiles was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. Paul found it necessary to argue the point with them: "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Hitherto the Holy Land had been like Gideon's fleece, which alone was moistened by the dew of heaven. In regard to the measure of that divine

blessing, the people of Israel had been like a garden slowly and partially irrigated by a single hand; in the last times showers are to descend.

It is less easy for us to appreciate than to criminate the peculiar feelings of Jews and Jewish converts. We cannot readily conceive with what a shock it must have come to their ears that "in every place incense shall be offered and a pure offering." What violence to the prejudice which centuries have ripened to find that despised Gentiles are to share equally in degree, and with priority of bestowment, the richest blessings foretold in prophecy! Yet that Jewish incredulity is altogether pardonable compared with ours. Exempt from such a bias of education, enjoying the light which eighteen centuries throw upon the pages of the Old Testament, Christians seem almost equally slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken and our Lord has confirmed.

The great promise for the thirsting, longing Church is, "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem" — the ruling family and the people at large — all classes. As if God had declared, Under Messiah's reign I will give abundant measures of the Spirit's influence to my people, to elders and laity, to high and low. For his own churches, so far as they embrace his true people, does our Advocate pray the Father that he may send "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him." With them, in an important sense, does it rest, whether others shall experience life-giving energies.

Sometimes — we blush and weep in confessing it —

their unbelief induces Christ to refrain from doing many mighty works. To an extent that should make them tremble, are they intrusted with the destinies of the impenitent. All indication of hope for churches and for the world must be looked for from within these sacred fraternities to whom pertain "the covenants, and the service of God, and the promises."

Ordinarily, however, in connection with their prayers and efforts, renovating influences are extended to others. For this there are guarantees the most ample that can be desired,—so ample and so explicit, that most Christians seem to see no alternative but to misinterpret them, or else distrust the faithfulness of God. What, now, is the attitude which authorizes a church to expect this promised blessing? That of prayer, humble, fervent prayer. "I will pour water upon the thirsty;" upon those longing, and feeling deeply their need of it. Spiritual blessings are not conferred and continued irrespective of prayer. Never have we a right to expect them except in connection with believing supplication. When God, by the mouth of Ezekiel, promises, "I will put my spirit within you," and at the same time the most abundant prosperity, it is added, "Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." When God pours his Spirit upon all flesh, his house will be called "the house of prayer for all people."

The devout disposition itself is not less a gift of God. One condition and effect of the promised favor is, "The Spirit of grace and of supplications." Never are the other Christian graces quickened and strength-

ened without an augmented love of prayer. When the Holy Spirit's influence is as "floods upon the dry ground," then are there groanings that cannot be uttered. With frequency, fervor, and boldness, does the believer draw nigh, and an irrepressible ardor is kindled in the soul.

IV. SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY.

Herodotus says the Persians were wont to offer prayers with their sacrifices, but that no one might pray for himself alone. Each must supplicate specially for the king. The custom was beautiful and praiseworthy; but upon a closer view, the charm vanishes. In Persia, the monarch was everything, the subject nothing. Darius or Xerxes was not only king, but the kingdom; while the slaves whom he commanded had no acknowledged individual right or value. This usage was not the result of genuine benevolence or of patriotism, so much as of servile subjection to the national idol. Moreover, such intercession was compulsory.

In vain do we look for the golden rule of devotion, save among the statutes of the King of kings. Our holy religion has nothing merely national in it. Universal adaptation is its glory, and universal prevalence its aim and destiny. It inculcates the worship of one God, who, in the widest sense, is Father of us all. It reveals one Mediator. It enforces the law of equal love to our neighbor, and shows that to our neighborhood there is no limitation by kindred or locality. It

conceives of mankind as a family ; it aims to bring all into a holy brotherhood.

Under the Jewish economy, the existence of a kingdom which is spiritual, in distinction from what is visible and national, was but imperfectly apprehended. The outward and temporary engrossed attention. Faith as strong, prayer as prevailing, as any in the last times existed ; but their objects were different. The revival and diffusion of inward piety were not so frequently the theme of distinctive petitions. More often did those petitions relate to the temporal deliverance and prosperity of Israel as a whole, or of individuals belonging to the nation. In the house of bondage, the cry of an oppressed people came up to God, and he heard it. In their dismay at the Red Sea, they appealed to the Lord, and he delivered them. Subsequently, in answer to their united entreaties, they were rescued from the Philistines, the Assyrians, and other foes.

There was, however, progress in the views and desires of the better part of that nation, and particularly of the prophets ; and of these especially the later prophets. Whatever degeneracy there might be in the mass, individuals there were in the wane of the theocracy who had just conceptions of spiritual religion and of the future reign of Messiah. The glowing profession of Isaiah is heard : " For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." These denote individual exceptions rather than the common sentiment.

The Jewish dispensation in its whole genius and design was limited and national. A universal adaptation, an expansive power, any immediate design or agency that contemplated benevolently those round about, it had not, and could not have. The agrarian and the ceremonial laws, the whole polity of that people, were designed to make and keep them stationary and exclusive.

When that dispensation had waxed old, and was ready to vanish away, the spirit of proselytism did, indeed, spring up, especially among the Pharisees; but the character of their converts accorded with the character of their devotions. In the days of earlier and comparative power, so far as the Jew had dealings with other nations, it was chiefly in the way of subjugation, not of conversion. Alliance with them was prohibited; their instruction and moral amelioration were not enjoined. For four thousand years, probably, an intelligent prayer was not offered or effort put forth with a view to the general spread of spiritual religion.

In the fulness of times a new dispensation opened, contemplating universal conquest. The early preachers and converts were eminently persons of prayer. After the pentecostal effusion, "the disciples continued steadfastly in prayers." The seven deacons were chosen in order that the apostles might give themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. The first thing told of the converted persecutor of Tarsus was, "Behold he prayeth!" In the suburbs of Philippi, on the river's side, was a place where "prayer was wont to be made." Paul and Silas prayed in prison. Stephen went to heaven in prayer.

Pass to the second century, and to the period of the first general persecution. Take Polycarp as the representative of that era. When the officers came to apprehend him, he ordered them all such refreshment as they might wish, asking only the favor of one hour for prayer; but the ardor of his devotions carried him on unconsciously to twice that time. After being condemned and brought to the stake, before the fire was lighted, he prayed thus: "O Lord, Almighty God! the Father of thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, through whom we have received a knowledge of thee! God of angels, and of the whole creation, of the whole human race, and of the saints who live before thy presence! I thank thee that thou hast thought me worthy, this day and this hour, to share the cup of Christ among the number of thy witnesses!"

Advance to the third century. Let Cyprian stand as its representative. When brought before the tribunal of the proconsul and asked, "Who are you?" he replies, "I am a Christian and a bishop; I know no God but the true God, who created the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them. This God we Christians serve; to this God we pray day and night for ourselves, for all mankind, and for the prosperity of the emperor himself."

It is not necessary to multiply examples of the spirit of prayer among early martyrs. The whole church was like that Christian legion in the army of Aurelius, which, from the answer to their prayer, was called *Legio fulminea*. Nor is it necessary to depict the decline of this spirit of reliance upon God, as well as the growing baneful influence of philosophy and

outward prosperity. Gladly do we pass over that dreary night of ignorance and superstition which reigned so widely in Christendom till the period of the Reformation.

From the fifth century onward, the true idea of the church and her mission in this lost world had nearly died out; but prayer has been offered, and that idea has been restored. Grant that a just conception is entertained only to a limited degree; it is entertained more fully and by more individuals; it is spreading more rapidly, and is followed by more encouraging results than at any other period within the last fourteen hundred years. There is at this moment more to swell the Christian's heart, more to fortify his faith, more to animate his petitions into one unceasing, importunate entreaty, than at any other moment since the first prayer ever offered went up to the mercy-seat. In spite of all the unbelief and death still reigning on earth, God, his Son, and his Spirit, holy angels, and glorified martyrs, rejoice over this hour. The whole church-militant ought to arouse. We may bless the God of our fathers that he gave us our being within the cycle of this latter-day's benevolent enterprise. Shall we not give ourselves in singleness and ardor of purpose, and with unfailing supplication, to our appropriate office and instrumentality, — the extension of Christ's kingdom?

United prayer is required. The church has a common and equal interest in it. God never designed that a few only of his people should enjoy the privilege of intercession for their perishing fellow-men. Never is he pleased to have that remain the luxury of a

miser, but social, and hence reduplicated. Through Isaiah, the Spirit foretold, "I will make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt-offering and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called the house of prayer for all people." Through Zechariah it was foretold, "It shall come to pass that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities; and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts; I will go also."

What a relief it is that such times may often occur! Burdened with the thought of a world lying in wickedness, overwhelmed at the spectacle of millions in the broad road to destruction, longing irrepressibly to see Christ crowned Lord of all, how is the individual believer strengthened when his supplications mingle with the cloud of incense that goes up before the throne! Not less here than elsewhere is union strength.

V. LARGE REQUESTS.

All persons of lively imagination have at some period of life day-dreams of semi-omnipotence. Amidst the fancies of childhood, or the vagaries of maturer years; in seasons of nervous disturbance or of half-wakefulness, there will float before the mind a transient phantom of what one would be and do if suddenly possessed of superhuman power. With the ease of oriental creation, splendid palaces and gorgeous fur-

niture rise before the eye; with more than the ease of Midas golden treasures are multiplied; by a simple volition all luxuries, all honors, are attained and revelled in, till at length some rough reality jostles the dreamer into a consciousness of his actual poverty and weakness.

Now there is a way by which more may be realized than we have dreamed of: "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." May not this be a marginal gloss, the extravaganza of some enthusiast, which has been interpolated into the text? Nay, the passage has equal authority with any other in the New Testament; these are the words of truth and soberness; they fell from the lips of One who knew whereof he affirmed. If startling, they are so only because of unbelief; only because the lively oracles have been studied to such little purpose.

It behooves every one to look with care into the great charter of his hopes and privileges; to inquire how much has been placed to his credit by the munificent Lord of all; to inform himself where the lines of assurance and presumption respectively run; and to beware of wronging himself or others, and dishonoring God by scantiness of petitions. While the divine promises, predictions, and providences, are the only safe guide to our prayers, the world, and too often the church, practically give the lie to Jehovah. They seem extensively to act upon the assumption, either that God has not given the assurances which his Word records, or that he is insincere in communicating them.

Never was there an age in which this semi-skep-

tical spirit among the churches of Christ was more flagrantly out of place than the present. The energetic enterprise, the mighty movements of the secular world, bring all unbelief and spiritual inactivity into a more manifest and mortifying conspicuity than ever before. Amidst all the excellences and efforts of God's people, it must still be confessed that in their aims and hearts there remains an unpardonable amount of what is little and low. There are many whose vision and thoughts seem scarcely ever to rise beyond other and higher clouds than those which ascend from their own comfortable hearthstones. Never was there more needed some powerful Scriptural sentiment to fire every sanctified heart, to pervade all minds in Christendom which have fellowship with Christ, overcoming inferior and counter impulses, imparting nerve, eliciting and combining the energies of the whole church-militant. Eminently is there needed a spirit that shall rise to a full appreciation of the promises, a spirit laboring with vast and holy desires, with irrepressible and inexhaustible supplications.

The answering of large requests is peculiarly honorable to God. The more excellent any benefit, the more ready is he to bestow it. To communicate is his delight. There is in him an infinite affluence of love, and it accords with his eternal, cherished purpose to make known riches of grace by Jesus Christ.

The tendency of unbelief is to bring all this into doubt, to throw discredit upon the ability or integrity of God; to allow the soul no enlargement of desires; to imprison it within the straitened and dreary limits of sense; to persuade the suppliant that God is alto-

gether such an one as himself, bringing down the all-wise and bountiful God to the low level of human selfishness. "O thou that art named by the name of Jacob, is the spirit of the Lord straitened?" Does giving impoverish him? Does he fear exhaustion? Not only is he able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, but, as the heavens are high above the earth, so are his ways of giving higher than our ways. The fulness of his benevolence will not be measured by the littleness of man's unbelief. It would be derogatory to his wisdom and goodness, were he to limit his bounties to the skeptical scale of our petitions. Thanks that he is not circumscribed to such an inglorious sphere!

Among men, munificent minds, whether influenced by passion or caprice, or by an habitually lofty sentiment, furnish one point of appropriate analogy. Of such, having large possessions and large hearts, it is not unfrequently easier to obtain by thousands than by hundreds for a charitable object. Ample requests and donations suit their turn of mind. To a friend asking aid, Alexander gave a blank order on his treasurer to be filled with any sum he might choose. The indigent philosopher immediately demanded ten thousand pounds. When the treasurer, who had refused to pay the sum, remonstrated with the king, Alexander replied, "Let the money be instantly paid. I am delighted with this philosopher's way of thinking. He has done me a signal honor; by the largeness of his request, he shows the high idea he has conceived both of my superior wealth, and my royal munificence." Is not the King of kings honored by large requests?

Few seem to be aware how he is dishonored by their not rising to a more comprehensive and vigorous grasp of faith. All need to be placed in a school where they shall go on from one grade to another in learning the proper scope of supplication, and the fulness of God's promises.

What a slight is it upon God, who has exhaustless treasures in store for the church and the world, who throws wide open the door and invites believers to become almoners to the largest amount, for them to look doubtingly on, and take hardly enough each for himself, when thousands might as well be filled! Thus are souls kept starving and Zion languishing. O needless famine! O fraudulent bankruptcy! We would be no longer content with moderate desires and requests. In view of the promises, we would stir up ourselves to a devout enterprise; would strike out upon this broad ocean, and spread all sail. There is as much encouragement to seek great things as to seek at all. Has not past experience sometimes surprised us by the largeness of bestowment, and that too merely as an earnest of what God is ever ready to grant?

O Lord, marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well! Are you in trouble, are you cast down? Go, study the promises. You will find them springs of everlasting consolation. What we need is not so much to find our own fidelity to God as his faithfulness to us. Pillowed on a promise, you may sleep quietly amidst the wreck of health and domestic hopes, all revulsions in business, and all convulsions of the social world.

Do such feeble means as your prayers seem wholly insignificant, and unworthy of being thus honored? Remember that it is not for your doings that God bestows largely. It is for his own name's sake that he does it. In appointing and honoring this humble medium, human prayer, his condescension is as signal as his munificence in granting. Go inquire after the vast sums said to have been placed to your credit, and see if it be not so. Bid unbelief be gone. Confide in Jesus' advocacy. Be strong in the Lord, and for the Lord; there is no mountain which will not at your bidding be removed into the midst of the sea.

In the desert of Northern Africa the oasis of Sidi Rached has of late years become nearly burned up for the want of water; and it seemed likely to disappear altogether. French engineers sunk an Artesian well there; and as soon as a hard stratum at the depth of one hundred and fifty feet had been pierced, water rose and poured forth at the rate of one thousand gallons a minute. There it is flowing still, a magnificent perennial fountain in the midst of a burning waste. No sooner had the jet burst forth than the whole population of the neighboring village rushed to the spot in the wildest glee; women and children throwing themselves into the stream as if they had never before seen that element of life and fertility. The old chief of Sidi Rached could not contain himself; he kneeled down and wept for joy. The day following, the inhabitants of neighboring Arab villages thronged to the spot, thanking the engineer and blessing the fountain. For six days they kept up a joyous festival, and at once set to work opening chan-

nels for conducting streams to the parched portions of the oasis.

Are not we assured from a source more certain than science, that there are supplies of life and wealth fully sufficient for the waste, howling wilderness where we sojourn? Is there not a word more certain than rumor, and needing only experiment for confirmation, "In the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert, and the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water"? Ay, down beneath this arid, unfruitful surface of things, are reservoirs exhaustless and vivifying. There is only needed faith in Him who laid the foundations of the earth, to open up the treasures. "Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee; who, passing through the valley of Baca, maketh it a well." Come, thirsty souls, to the fountain. "Let the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing." Bathe in that flood. Keep a Thanksgiving-day; and make haste to open channels in every direction for the life-giving waters. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."

XII.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER.

I. REASONS AND BENEFITS.



COMMON wants and reciprocal obligations are the ground of intercessory prayer. The benevolence which forbids us to regard any human being as an alien to our hearts, which requires us to seek the highest good of every one, calls for supplication to Him who is God over all.

The usual tenor of unpremeditated prayer is a decisive index to a man's dominant feelings. If that charity which seeketh not her own reigns within, it will manifest itself in frequent intercession. Indeed, no one can pray for himself acceptably, if he do not pray for others.¹ This is one of the great laws governing the bestowment of divine favors. Selfishness is self-defeating. The reference is now mainly to spiritual benefits,—the excellences of religious character, and the comforts of religious life. These constitute true wealth, honor, and happiness; and the measure in which they are sought for one's self and others is the gauge of a man's moral eleva-

¹ Frater, si pro te solum ores, solus pro te oras; si pro omnibus oras, omnes pro te orant. — *Augustine to Ambrose.*

tion, his general advancement on the scale of real dignity and spiritual worth.

The thoroughly selfish man cannot be expected to appreciate this principle of divine procedure, for he has no experience which will interpret the same. To know what the beauties of a landscape are, men must have eyes, and some degree of correct taste also, to see with. An unobserving or egotistical person may range over the globe without improvement. A great traveller was once complaining that he became no better for his travels. "Very true," said Socrates, "because you did not leave yourself behind." To be one's own centre and standard is to renounce all true methods and motives for improvement.

It is in praying as in giving. No man ever finds himself poorer at the year's end for bestowing, in due proportion, of his substance upon charitable objects. So far from that, such persons usually have success in their lawful pursuits, while the opposite course is as often attended by losses, and not unfrequently by great disasters. Only when poured out for another was oil resupplied in the widow's cruse. Living springs are none the less full for pouring forth of their abundance. It is said that just before a rain water always rises in the wells; and is there not a similar phenomenon in the world of grace? Does not that which is in the hearts of Christ's people, as a well of water, spring up more fully just before the descent of showers that supply the springs?

The obligation to do good to others would be imperative if it were attended with no profit or pleasure to ourselves; indeed, if the only result to us were labor

and suffering; but our Lord has been graciously pleased to connect reflex benefits with all benevolent efforts. Whoever, in the cause of Christ, and in obedience to his "Follow me," arises and leaves all, receives an ample return in the present life. While we would not do good for the sake of the reward, it is not wrong to remember the large compensation brought to ourselves. It is more blessed to give than to receive; and that greater blessedness consists partly herein,—that the feelings awakened, and the impulse communicated to the heart in the act of Christian forthputting, are superior to those experienced by the mere recipient. Which was the happier man,—the one who had his wounds bound up and who received such kind gratuitous care at the inn, or the good Samaritan? When, through inactivity, the body becomes feeble, there must be along with wholesome food an increase of exercise. So, too, with the mind and the affections. There is a dyspepsia of the heart. It is sometimes owing to want of exercise, and sometimes to a surfeit in the luxuries of passive enjoyment. The Christian who does little or nothing besides attend religious meetings is in great danger of contracting this disease,—an unsuspected, refined selfishness in spiritual things. At first it will show itself in a febrile excitement; then, very likely, by a longing, listless, hypochondriacal habit. Tonics are required; exercise is indispensable. It is a people "zealous of good works" that Christ has redeemed. To flag in that zeal is a symptom of disease. Other things equal, safety, comfort, and growth will be measured by rightly-directed efforts to do good, and especially to the

sculs of our fellow-men. Job's early and palmy days were not so much in the midst of his flocks and herds, as when he could say, "Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him, the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me."

Two Lapland travellers were journeying in a sledge. They had wrapped themselves warmly in furs, their eyebrows only being visible, and those were encrusted with frost. They saw at length a poor man, who, overcome with cold, had sunk in the snow. "We must stop," said one, "and help him." "By no means," said the other; "we can never think of stopping such a day as this; we are half-frozen ourselves." The more benevolent man insisted on getting out, while his companion remained in the sledge, wrapping up as warm as possible, and taking what he supposed to be the best care of himself. The other used the customary means, rubbing and the like, and was successful. By this means, he got into a delightful glow of warmth himself; while his comrade, who remained in the sledge, came near perishing. So it is in all benevolent effort: there is a healthful reflex influence.

The best alms and the truest kindness that we can bestow on any one is devoutly to pray for him. It brings to him that which he most needs, that which we cannot of ourselves communicate, and which we can in no other way procure for him.

It is said that the ancient Jews looked upon it as their duty, when offering sacrifice, to pray in the first place for the common safety, and then for their own private concerns. The Hebrew Rabbis tell us that

the last thing their High Priest prayed for on the great day of expiation, just before coming out of the holy place, was that God would not hear the prayers of those travelling; that is, prayers offered for men's private benefit against the public interest, such as the petitions of persons on a journey are apt to be, who may desire fair weather while every one else asks for rain.

Nothing is so blind as selfishness; nothing so deadens the moral perceptions; nor are there any limits to the silent fanaticism of avarice and passion: "Let the tornado strike other ships, but not mine; let disaster overtake all my rivals, so it touch me not; let disease smite down all who would injure me, but give me health, wealth, long life, and universal success." Is that any great exaggeration of the inconsistency of every attempt which selfishness makes at being devotional? Such thoughts are only imprecations of judgment upon the suppliant's head; and it is fearful to contemplate the provocation thus given to God by renouncing the Golden Rule, and by attempts to enlist him as an auxiliary to one's private ends. Self-oblivion is the surest method of self-enrichment. It was not while groaning and murmuring over his misfortunes, not while refuting the unsound argument that great sufferings prove great sins, not while repelling the charge of hypocrisy and other imputations, that the patriarch of Uz found relief; but when, after yielding up meekly to the sovereign appointment of Jehovah, he began to intercede for those who had uttered such hard speeches: "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends."

In seeking mercy for others, we most readily find it for ourselves; because the heart is then in a state peculiarly favorable for appreciating divine favors. If we were called to select from the whole range of biography the soul stirred by the highest spiritual aspirations; whose religious character was most marked; the man whose joys were profoundest and most uniform, should we not select the apostle Paul? and could our thoughts fasten upon any man of a more thoroughly disinterested benevolence, who lived less for himself, and more entirely for others? Yet in what particular does his deep Christian love show itself more strikingly than in supplication for others? It would seem as if he prayed comparatively little for himself. In his first Epistle to the Thessalonians there are two distinct prayers: in his second Epistle to the same church, two also; and in one of the chapters to the Romans are found three. Look at express declarations. To the Romans, he says, "God is my witness that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers." To the Corinthians: "I thank my God always in your behalf." To the Ephesians: "I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers." To the Philippians: "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy." To the Colossians: "For this cause we, also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you." And to the Thessalonians, uniting with Sylvanus and Timotheus: "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers." What intensity and constancy of fervor in supplication for Christian friends! Are

we to suppose that he was ever happier or stronger than when thus engaged, or that but for this unwearyed intercession his own soul would have been so replenished?

It is often the case that eminent Christians, on the approach of death, cease for the most part to pray for themselves, and become absorbed in thoughts about the spiritual good of others. Edward VI. supplicated with his dying breath that his kingdom might be delivered from "papisty." Sometimes in such forgetfulness of self there is a sublime expansion of soul. An aged Christian, when his pastor inquired for what he should specially pray at his bedside, answered, — as if everything needful for himself were already granted, — "Pray for the whole family of mankind." His thoughts went beyond the limits of self, and his own household and country; they embraced all who are proper subjects of prayer. Similar was it a few years since with a member of the writer's congregation, an aged widow, in a retired part of the city, wholly dependent upon her unconverted son, in whose house she and her daughter found a home. For nearly two years before death she was unable to go to the sanctuary, a cancer having consumed her eyes. For a long time her sufferings were extreme, yet was her peace like a river. Shortly before the great change, her pious daughter put this question, "Mother, what is now your strongest desire?" After a moment's pause, she replied, "The conversion of the world, — the conversion of the world!"

How often have martyrs exhibited a commanding elevation of soul; and that, too, at an hour when we

might well suppose their thoughts could hardly go beyond themselves! Memorable was the last prayer of Tyndale, translator of the Bible, when he suffered at the stake: "Lord, open the King of England's eyes!" "Spare, Lord,"—thus did Oswald, a pious Saxon king, breathe out his life on the field of battle,— "Spare, Lord, the souls of my people." "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory!" was the signal which the gallant Earl of Derby gave that the axe should fall. Holy heroism of devotion! Sublime victories over the world and the powers of darkness! Was there not a heaven in their hearts? Did angels then behold men on earth more enviable in character or condition?

II. PRAYER FOR BELIEVERS.

"Supplication for all saints." How many examples are recorded for our guidance and encouragement! When Israel had provoked God at Sinai, and he was about to destroy them, Moses interceded and "The Lord repented him of the evil which he thought to do unto his people." Afterwards, on a like occasion, the great leader again cried, "Pardon the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of thy mercy, and the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word." Samuel made his protestation, "Moreover, as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you." What the practice of Paul, the prince of human intercessors, was with respect to communities of believers, we have already seen.

How many there were for whom he prayed individ-

ually ! Who can doubt that this was the case in regard to all those to whom in his several epistles he sends Christian salutations by name ? while in his letter to Philemon, merely a business note, five verses out of twenty-five refer to his intercession for that friend. It is well thus to individualize supplication. There will be more of fervor, particularity, and concentration. "I never fail," said the devout Romaine, "to make intercession in all my addresses to the throne of grace. But once a week, on Friday, I have only what I call the clergy's litany, in which, after general petitions for the outpouring of the Spirit upon all the ministers of our church, I make mention by name of those of my fellow-laborers whom God has highly honored in making them faithful and useful in the ministry. As I go over their names, recommending them to the care, and their people to the blessing, of our glorious Head, it is my custom to ask particularly for them such things as I know or hear they want." Excellent practice ! Whether requested or not, such particularity serves to fan the flame of holy devotion, and greatly reduce sins of shortcoming in the various relations of friendship. The more intimate any social or other relation is, the more obviously does this duty commend itself, though intimacy is not required to create the claim.

How often is such a devout remembrance privately requested ! Can any claims of friendship be more sacred than these ? "Always," said an eminent Christian of the seventeenth century,¹ — "always, when you think of your friends, let it be with a praying thought." He would sometimes request those intimate with him

¹ John Machin. Clarke's Lives, I. 93.

to make a memorandum in his day-book of such things as were specially appropriate for reciprocal intercession till they should meet again. Give me such a friend as one¹ who, two hundred years ago, wrote thus to a correspondent: "Though I have been long silent, I am your orator before the Highest Throne, and do earnestly desire that you may grow in the faith of Jesus, and in lively communion with him, which is the most comfortable thing in the world." Give me such a friend as Richard Baxter had. "To show how great his charity was, and what a loss I have myself sustained, and how faulty I and others are in too much forgetting our friends, I will tell you that he often told me that (as far as I can remember, about twenty years) he never went to God in prayer but he particularly remembered me." Do costly presents, do frequent kind messages or other attentions, afford such proof of valuable attachment as devout intercession?

Brethren in Christ stand connected with particular churches, to all of whose members they owe special duties of supplication; but obligations of this kind cannot be limited by the narrow bounds of a single church or denomination; the entire church-militant is an appropriate field of intercession. That invisible community has in character, aim, and destination, far more that is homogeneous than any other community on earth. As individuals, and as a whole, they are bound by a living and everlasting union to Christ the head. From him proceeds the Sanctifier who dwelleth in them all.

What lively mutual interest should there be throughout the family, and how can such sanctified sympathy

¹ Rev. J. Mason.

show itself more appropriately than by intercession? In proportion as Christ assimilates them to himself will their hearts go forth in supplications for one another.

Reverting once more to the practice of the great apostle, we find upon examining his thirteen epistles, that eleven of them make express mention of prayer in behalf of those addressed. The second one to the Thessalonians has a prayer in every chapter; while intercessory aspirations seem to mingle with all that he wrote and said. Constant entreaty for saints he both enjoined and practised. He assures the church just referred to that he devoutly remembered without ceasing their work of faith and labor of love: "Wherefore also we pray always for you." To Timothy he writes, "Without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day."

Literally uninterrupted supplication is not meant. The same Lord who requires fervency of spirit also requires us to be not slothful in business; and this same apostle who exhorts to pray without ceasing, and did himself pray thus, also wrought with his own hands, and was a man of utmost activity. Respecting Mephibosheth, it is recorded that "he did eat continually at the king's table;" yet who would infer that he never rose from the table, nor did anything but eat? At appropriate times he always appeared at the king's table. At appropriate seasons, and those, it may be, occurred much oftener than his meals, Paul prayed for individual believers and churches. In popular language, and without danger of misunderstanding, it is said of anything which occurs frequently, that it takes place all the while.

Such a habit of constant intercession does not interfere with special prayer on particular occasions. As has just been cited, Paul tells Timothy that, at one time, he prayed for him night and day; and much the same is perhaps to be understood by it as in the case of a more modern believer. Under an unusual pressure of a spirit of supplication, John Welsh used to rise at midnight to go and pour out his heart before God. Retiring to the garden, he would sometimes spend most of the night in that exercise; a thing so frequent with him that he used to wonder how a Christian could remain on his couch all night, without rising to spend a season in prayer and praise. Look at the picture of an aged minister,¹ no longer able to do anything publicly for God and his church; one too who could scarcely suffer anything more for the honor of either, having for the testimony of a good conscience relinquished his entire stated maintenance. He gave himself wholly to prayer for the church, spending usually three, four, or five hours, and sometimes six or seven, every day in the week.

What Christian does not find that he is at times moved with special urgency to plead for others? Such quickenings of the Spirit of intercession are to be heeded; the believer should avail himself of the heavenly impulse to seek great things for Zion. When Ahasuerus says to Esther, "What is thy petition, it shall be granted thee," then is the time to plead for the life of her people.

Intercessory cries, however, should daily ascend to the God of Sabaoth. Amidst the utmost urgencies

¹ Samuel Fairclough.

of business, may ejaculations be darted up, without hindrance upon the sight or thought of a Christian friend. These little momentary prayers

“Form the links of an electric chain,
That join the orisons of morn and eve,
And propagate through all its several parts,
While kept continuous, the ethereal fire.”

Such a habit expands and liberalizes the heart. It does this not in the way of rendering one more tolerant of error but more charitable to souls. Alas for the strength of remaining selfishness, the undying antagonist to all that is high and holy, to all the benevolent forthputting of implanted grace! Many a professing Christian is there whose charity begins at home and ends there too; whose sympathies shiver at the thought of crossing his own threshold, and so through the whole winter of life he crowds around his own narrow hearth-stone.

“With lips depressed as he were meek,
Himself unto himself he sold;
Upon himself, himself did feed;
Quiet, passionate, and cold.”

It is possible for a whole church to lapse into this state of isolation, becoming an ecclesiastical China, the vernacular name of which, as well as its character and policy, is *All-within*. If uniformly and needlessly absent from the place where Christ has engaged to meet them, whether for prayer and conference among themselves, or in behalf of his churches and laborers in other lands, what can they reasonably expect but a torpor of religious affections? We stand under covenant engagements which claim our warmest sympa-

thies. It should be between such, as between harp-strings that are tuned in unison: if one be struck, the others tremble.

Intercession reacts happily in promoting fraternal attachment and a holy expansion of soul. Who does not find that in pleading with Christ for all believing brethren, his love to them and to Him becomes more fervent? Who would not then say with Rutherford, "Oh that Christ would break down the old narrow vessels of these narrow and ebb souls, and make fair, deep, wide, and broad souls, to hold a sea and a full tide, flowing over all its banks, of Christ's love!"

"Since I began the practice," says Cotton Mather in his Diary, "I have constantly maintained it, of spending the best part of an hour every Tuesday morning, prostrate in the dust before the Lord, with cries unto him in behalf of his church in the several parts of the world, especially our own depraved and betrayed nation. In this action I have enjoyed an unspeakable communion with heaven, and a comfortable assurance of my being a member of that body whereof my blessed Jesus is the head! and it has left a sweet impression on my mind, and a sensible improvement in piety has been the consequence of it. Sometimes, and very particularly this morning, I have had my mind mightily enlightened in begging of the glorious Lord, that he would not utterly cast off his poor creature, man; but visit mankind, and by his Holy Spirit possess and enlighten and purify vast numbers among the children of men, and render the world like a watered garden, by mighty effusions from the river of God upon it. I pleaded that his kind intentions

toward mankind have been in an astonishing manner signalized in his uniting a man unto his own sacred person, advancing a man unto the matchless dignity of the hypostatical union. There has also been a signal and wondrous intimation of those kind intentions, in what the Holy Spirit has done for a few that have been singled out from the ruins of the human race, and been made the children of God, and beautiful temples in which he has chosen to dwell forever. I am filled with unutterable groans for the day to come on, when mankind shall more generally see and become the kingdom of God."

What a privilege to be within the range of so much intercession! How many there are in the almost countless evangelical churches of Christendom, who daily pray for all saints on earth! From how many different denominations, and in how many different languages are there going up constant petitions for all who love our Lord Jesus Christ! while He, the Great High Priest, who presents this volume of incense from many lands, is himself pleading for every individual suppliant. Day after day, and year after year, thousands of hearts here, and the Heart of hearts in heaven are moved in behalf of all living saints on earth! Who would exchange this privilege, and the benefits thus accruing, for any gold mine, or throne on the globe?

Is it delightful to see a faithful brother or sister, moving about benignantly and perseveringly among the sick, the needy, the distressed, ministering comfort and sympathy? The outward eye witnesses no fairer sight in this world; but there is a spectacle

within the unseen sphere of supplication, on which angels gaze with an intense interest,---the spectacle of those devout believers who pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

III. PRAYER FOR PASTORS.

Repeated reference has been made to the unrivalled character of Paul, in whose career there is nothing more noteworthy than the earnestness and frequency with which he pours out his soul in behalf of particular churches and individuals.

Along with this is the scarcely less noticeable, though less noticed fact that he often requests a remembrance in the intercession of friends. The one who prays abundantly for others has a right to ask an interest in their prayers, as Paul does in his Epistle to the Romans, in his second to the Corinthians, and to the Thessalonians.¹ To the Christians at Philippi, he expresses himself confident of the efficacy of their petitions for him. To the Hebrews he writes: "Pray for us;" while also in his first letter to the Thessalonians, he makes the general request, "Brethren, pray for us."

Such are the notes, asking prayers, that he was accustomed to send up, not to fellow-apostles, or other preachers engaged in the public functions of their office, but to humble saints in Christ Jesus scattered here and there, some of whom he had never seen, and

¹ Rom. xv. 30-33; 2 Cor. i. 10, 11; 2 Thess. iii. 1, 2.

to all of whom he stood in the highest earthly relation, that of an inspired apostle. These requests, it should be remembered, were from the man having such fine natural talents, such superior training, such special gracious endowments.

Every minister needs prayer for himself as a man and a Christian. Like others, he has his temptations and fears; like our Lord, he is set upon by the Arch-Adversary, and has to agonize in his Gethsemane. Shall not his church watch with him one hour?

Can there be any reasonable expectation that pastoral duties will be performed acceptably to the Master, if his headship and constant inspection be not recognized, if pastor and people do not meet oftener at the throne of grace than elsewhere?

The first duty of a people to their spiritual guide is affectionate prayer for him. If that primary obligation be discharged, subordinate ones will hardly fail to be fulfilled; while fidelity in all other duties can do little to atone for the want of that. The best stipend that can be bestowed upon a minister must go through other hands than those of a society's treasurer.

Much is said in these days about the ministry we want. Something should be said about the churches and congregations we want. There are wanted churches that continue steadfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer; churches that esteem the responsibility of hearing not inferior to that of preaching; churches alive to the high claims of practical godliness, of neighborhood evangelism, and of earnest, persistent aggression upon the whole domain of sin and Satan from one end of the world to the other.

When our Lord grants an ascension-gift in the person of a spiritual teacher, he gives one made by himself; for who but the Creator of all things can make a minister? Still, it is a gift not completed. Whatever of promise there may be in him, his character as a pastor, if still a young man, is yet to be formed, and formed not as an isolated person, not merely by carrying out suggestions made to him when ordained, and at other times, and from other sources, but in concurrence with his people, and under a reciprocating influence. The Holy Ghost can make him what he pleases in that university where the young man is to preside, indeed, but which in turn, will inevitably mould and fashion him. Over and above the assimilating influence of intimate relations, there may be a special and most potent energy visiting him in answer to their supplications. The electric chain from the pew to the pulpit does not stop there; it passes on to the mercy-seat above. He who dwelleth between the Cherubim saith, "Be it unto you as ye will; your minister shall become what you ask, if you only wish him to be what I would have him."

Particular churches are schools of the prophets, where they are resident graduates, and where professional education is carried on. Prayerfulness on the part of a people will make a praying pastor. If he is not a devout man, alas for him and for them!

Whatever else may be said in regard to a ministry for the times, or be thought respectively of the public and private method of preparation, of this seminary or that seminary; whatever opinion may be entertained relative to general deterioration or improve-

ment in doctrinal soundness and clerical character, there is no doubt a summons in the Word and the providence of God, that they should more earnestly give themselves to prayer. "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night; ye that make mention of the Lord keep not silence, and give him no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." What dying minister ever deemed the time thus spent by him excessive? Not the pious Henry, who said, toward the end of life, "Were I to enjoy Hezekiah's grant, and have fifteen years added to my days, I would be much more frequent in my supplications at a throne of grace. We sustain a mighty loss by reading so much, and praying so little."

If, at the outset and onward, it is a leading desire with a people that an admiring crowd should be drawn to their place of worship, a place for the worship of the preacher as well as his Master; if they would have oxen and garlands brought to the gates of the city; if they would have beautiful things and smooth things prophesied; if they would have opiate divinity, and would move on respectably and comfortably in the broad way, they may expect to be gratified. If their taste and moral sense sink so low as to allow of their tolerating a pulpit actor, they have only to restrain prayer, and God will be likely to let them have one capable of such things; their pulpit will be transformed into a platform, and the house of God into a house of man.

True, there is correlative responsibility on the preacher's part. The obligation rests on him for his

full development as a minister, and there is a woe unto him if he handle the Word of God deceitfully, if he do not preach Christ crucified in all plainness, and do not watch for souls as one that must give account. The devotional or other defects of a congregation will not stand him in stead at the final bar. But the pastor has a right to expect that a people will wish to have him seek not their admiration, but their salvation; that they will coöperate to that end in making him eminently a man of God; that their prayers shall supply the buoyant atmosphere and wings to his soul where-with he shall rise to heaven! Whenever a preacher presents himself in the sacred desk, those before him have a right to assume that he comes from the audience-chamber of the Great King; that his heart is aglow with holy thoughts. Alas that such a heart should be chilled by finding the air of the sanctuary at a lower temperature! His appearing in the pulpit is a silent challenge, like the audible one of early times in the churches, *sursum corda*, Up with your hearts! All the warmth of pious love, faith, and hope, in a congregation, should go forth in holy breathings that envelop and refresh his soul like choicest perfumes. According as the tide of their devotion ebbs or flows will his heart sink or rise.

Perhaps no man fit for the place ever entered the pulpit without trepidation. What hallowed composure, what ease and unction does it impart to him, if he finds the prayers of the congregation like the Lord's host encamping round about him, as angels ministering tenderly to him, and strengthening him! Whatever the theory or practice may be in regard to

congregational singing, there ought to be no difference of views about congregational praying.

The minister should be devoutly remembered elsewhere, as well as in the sanctuary. A place should be assigned to him habitually at the household altar, and in the hour of prayerful retirement. Every sight of him in the street should be the signal for at least the ejaculation, God bless him. When blemishes are noticed, how much better to go to God with them than to one's neighbor, or to discuss them around the table.

Who is the best parishioner? Not the one most cordial in his greeting, most respectful in his bearing, most cheerful in his pecuniary portion of support; but the one who daily and earnestly commends his pastor to the God of all grace; who never sees him pass up the aisle, or rise in the pulpit without breathing a devout ejaculation for him. Such are the Aarons and Hurs of the Lord's host.

It is sometimes right for a church to pray all night for a minister. It was done for Peter; and whenever such a spirit of grace and of supplications is poured upon the churches, then are pentecostal scenes witnessed. What were the antecedents of that wonderful outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the famous communion season in Lanarkshire, more than two hundred years ago? How shall we account for it, that the immediate fruits of one sermon, and that by an unordained man, were the hopeful conversion of five hundred souls? Prayer had been offered. Devout believers, assembled at Shotts, had spent the previous night in supplication for the young preacher, John

Livingstone. Christ's blessing can at any time make the lad's two barley loaves and five small fishes feed five thousand men besides women and children.

Intercession for a pastor is among the most remunerative kinds of prayer that can be offered. It will return with ample blessings to the souls of those who engage in it. People and pastor go on the same errand to the same place, to the One perfectly acquainted with the views and wants of each, and who has brought the parties into this sacred relation for the express purpose that reciprocal benefits may be enjoyed. How are both delighted to find providential adaptations and coincidences! they bringing away from the throne a grant made out in full, and he meeting them in the sanctuary with the very signet-ring of Him who signed and sealed the grant. What a word in season do they have, on asking the Lord to send one by him! Entering the Lord's courts with wounded consciences and bleeding hearts, they find the Balm of Gilead has been sent there already by the Great Physician. With full fidelity on their part, there will never be a poor or an unseasonable sermon from him. Their own souls shall be as a watered garden; on them will fall the dew that descendeth upon the mountains of Zion, for there the Lord commands the blessing, even life for evermore.

IV. PRAYER FOR CHILDREN.

Parent and child! What human relation so momentous! What tie so intimate! What affection so universally strong and lasting! No other attachment impels to deeds so heroic, and to language so touching, or makes itself so widely felt in human society. Children are hostages to the God of Abraham and the God of nations. By every child, the parent is laid under bonds, heavier than the highest ransom ever paid by man for man, to observe all laws, human and divine. The child is one's-self transplanted. In the child, the parent outlives himself, and onward, from generation to generation, is to have a memorial on earth.

It is taken for granted that the great aim of every parent should be to train the child for the most efficient service of God here and hereafter; that nothing short of early conversion and subsequent growth in grace to the highest degree, may be thought of; that any system of education which does not proceed upon the acknowledged principle of complete dedication to God is just as unscriptural and defective as the professed piety in which there are selfish reservations. So far as instrumentality can go in effecting it, parents are bound to see to it that their children become children of God, rich in faith and in holy living.

Here, if anywhere, is prayer demanded. No sooner has a helpless immortal been ushered into the world than it should be acknowledged as the Lord's. God has breathed into that tender framework the breath of life,

and there is a living soul which shall survive the paternal home where the little stranger has made its appearance, yes, the great tabernacle of this world, where dwell the family of man from age to age. How many hours it is to remain here, who can tell? Then let prayer to the Father of spirits be its welcome. The parents of the Rev. Dr. Finley, soon after the birth of each child, were accustomed to set apart a day for prayer that it might be an heir of eternal life. They had the happiness of seeing their eight children, seven of whom were sons, distinguished for piety in youth, and growing in grace as age increased.

As months and years pass, it should be with a confirmed habit of supplication for the child, fast ripening to the period of mature responsibility. Each birthday, each New Year's day, and every important anniversary, as it occurs, should be devoutly improved, in addition to the more frequent and stated times for parental prayer. Often as the child leaves home for school, for a visit or other purposes, and in returning from the same, let the heart rise to God in his behalf.

To a father or mother, watchful for such seasons, there will occur on the Sabbath, and at other times, opportunities peculiarly favorable for a serious and impressive inculcation of divine truth, and for earnest appeal to the throne of grace. With what familiarity and plainness can a parent then address the mind of a listening child, or the whole parlor auditory! Often will happy moments be found for setting home the all-important lessons of heavenly wisdom, and for securing a blessing from the Father of mercies. Those favorable junctures, those Sabbath hours in a child's

soul,—how can any one fail to improve such genial seasons for sowing the good seed, and for calling down the dews and rains of heaven upon it!

Praying habitually with children is indirectly the most powerful of all means for their conversion. What can so reasonably be expected to impress the tender heart, as warm, familiar supplications by a father or mother kneeling beside the child? Cotton Mather says, "When the children are of a suitable age for it, I will sometimes have them with me alone, and converse with them about the state of their souls, and then pray with them, earnestly entreating that the Lord would bestow his grace upon them, and thus make them witnesses of the agony with which I am travailing to see the image of Christ formed in them." To have the susceptible minds of our children im-bathed thus in the atmosphere of heaven,—what is there so delightful, so hopeful to contemplate! The biography of the church is crowded with illustrations of the power of such influence.

Listening to the fervent prayers of Richard Knill, for parents and children, and his earnest appeals to them some years ago in Chester, England, the writer was led to inquire whether that devout man did not enjoy peculiar favors in pious nurture. His own answer is, "I have a vivid recollection of the effects of maternal influence. My honored mother was a religious woman, and she watched over and instructed me as pious mothers are accustomed to do. Alas! I often forgot her admonitions; but in my most thoughtless days I never lost the impressions which her holy example had made on my mind. After spending a large

portion of my life in foreign lands, I returned again to visit my native village. At night I was accommodated with the same bed in which I had often slept before ; but my busy thoughts would not let me sleep. I was thinking how God had led me through the journey of life. At last, the light of the morning darted through the little window, and then my eye caught sight of the spot where my sainted mother, forty years before, took my hand, and said, ‘Come, my dear, kneel down with me, and I will go to prayer.’ This completely overcame me. I seemed to hear the very tones of her voice. I recollected some of her expressions, and I burst into tears, arose from my bed, and fell upon my knees, just on the spot where my mother kneeled, and thanked God that I had a praying mother. And oh ! if every parent could feel what I felt then, I am sure they would pray with their children as well as for them.” He has since rested from his labors, — labors under which, it is said, more than one hundred were converted who became ministers, most of whom now occupy pulpits, or are engaged in the missionary work. The tracts written by him have a larger circulation than those of any other man, more than six millions of them having been printed in England, and more than seven millions in the United States ; while some of them have been translated in ten different languages. What a harvest from a mother’s prayers !

Dr. Doddridge resolved, — would that all parents might so resolve ! — “As a father, it shall be my care to intercede for my children daily ; to converse with them often upon some religious subject ; to drop some short hints of the serious kind when there is not room

for large discourse ; to pray sometimes with them separately ; to endeavor to bring them early to the communion of the church."

With how much earnestness should these petitions go up to the Mercy-Seat ! What parent, reflecting for a moment on the condition and prospects of an unconverted child, will not be impelled to the most intense entreaties ! "Arise, cry out in the night ; in the beginning of the watches pour out thy heart like water before the face of the Lord ; lift up thine hands toward him for the life of thy young children."

Here, too, as in other departments of intercessory prayer, the reflex influence is of great importance. Often do fathers and mothers find themselves tempted to relax their steady pursuit of the highest aim in training children. Often are they tempted to yield to the seductive influence of parental ambition, and to tolerate amusements and companionship that are questionable, or are known to be pernicious. What will bring such a corrective and fortifying power as habitual prayer for one's offspring ?

V. PRAYER FOR COLLEGES.

Our broad, national domain lifts up her hands, crying, Pray ye the Lord of the harvest ! Whole continents, and many an island of the sea, waving for the sickle, send over their cry, like the voice of many waters, Pray ye the Lord of the harvest ! As eighteen hundred years ago on earth, so to-day in glory, our gracious Lord, seeing the multitudes, is moved

with compassion on them because they faint, and are scattered abroad like sheep having no shepherd; and he saith to his disciples, Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.

Most of the colleges in our land were founded in prayer, and mainly with a view to train up men for the ministry. In 1643, our provident fathers said, "After God had carried us safe to New England, and we had builded our house, provided necessaries for our livelihood, reared convenient places for God's worship, and settled the civil government, one of the next things we longed for and looked after, was to advance learning, and perpetuate it to posterity, dreading to leave an illiterate ministry to the churches after our present ministry shall be in the dust." A historian of Harvard College notices the remarkable fact that such a literary institution, founded for the instruction of a whole people in general science, should have been from the first spoken of, lauded, and conducted, as though it had been a theological seminary, destined exclusively for the benefit of one order of men. The same has been true substantially of the later colleges in New England, as it is of similar institutions which have sprung up in the Middle States and at the West.

We have not, as a general thing, to grapple with difficulties almost insurmountable when we direct our interest to these seats of science; we have not to draw them away from their original design, to seek the introduction of a new element; they were given to the triune God in their infancy. His covenant is with them,

and the primal intent of pious founders, with their prayers and alms, comes up in remembrance before him. The earnest, original thought, which gives being and form to an enterprise, never wholly loses its vitality. It will not entirely vanish until the dissolution of the body which it has animated. Here is a mighty argument with which we may approach the throne when praying the Lord that he would send forth laborers into the harvest. We may plead his faithfulness, his peculiar glory, as we thus entreat him.

To a large extent our colleges are officered by men who have themselves entered the Christian ministry, and have a religious solicitude in some measure kindred to that of the pious founders. We rely upon coöperation with our prayers. How different this from the condition of things in the German and some other European universities, within which the voice of prayer is, perhaps, never heard, and an evangelical influence found only in feeble measure!

The situation of young men in institutions of this kind is in many respects favorable to their spiritual interests. True, the ingenuity and facilities for mischief are often great; there is always a degree of hazard, and wreck of character is no unfrequent thing. Yet, in such cases there is, probably, always an evil and a defect lying further back. Colleges are not to be made responsible for parental neglect and the corrupting influences of previous bad companionship. Was the infidelity in Yale College, at the close of the last century, anything peculiar to that institution? It has been stated that, from the year 1796 to 1801, there were only three individuals in the city of New Haven,

under twenty-five years of age, who were church-members. The college was only an index of the country.

It should be borne in mind that those congregated at seats of learning come together at an age, and under circumstances, favorable, on the whole, for saving impressions, if appropriate influences bear upon them. They form a community exceedingly compact, socialities and sympathies having peculiar strength. A single serious mind can hardly exist among them without being known and felt; a single conversion will often electrify the whole.

This is a class very much withdrawn by their location and habits from the general eye, and hence somewhat naturally from the prayerful remembrance of our churches. These institutions have increased for the last hundred years at the rate of more than one annually, and during the present century at a much higher rate. Side by side with almost any church edifice erect twenty or thirty others of the same dimensions, and in them congregate the college-students of our land; they would occupy all the seats. What assemblages! What hopes and aims inspire those youthful breasts! What a future lies in the seeds of knowledge, and the elements of character now accumulating! What centres of influence will those twenty thousand minds be! Their biographies may be read in the ten thousand public prints of the remainder of this century, and pregnant will be those chapters in the general history of our globe.

Into any such sanctuary gather the instructors of these institutions, a thousand men. It gives a crowded house; a house containing talent, scholarship, and in-

fluence, such as constitute a truly august body. They are the prime educators, the silent legislators, of our country.

To the young men thus congregated, who are in a considerable measure isolated from the common life and observation of the land, there should be directed a more earnest Christian regard. To them must we look mainly for present required reinforcements to the ministry.

There is an advantage in bringing before our minds precisely such a class,—a class distinctly defined, separately assembled, homogeneous, and rapidly approaching their professional course, which, once adopted, is not often abandoned. The salvation of so many individuals, apart from all thought of their position in the world, might well move the general heart; but when we consider what power educated intellects carry with them; that the influential positions in the land are to be filled chiefly by these same young men, we begin to realize their social importance. It gains upon our thoughts as a momentous fact that the education, the jurisprudence, the literature, the manifold application of science to the useful arts, will soon be in their hands.

Thanks for the many revivals in these institutions! What fruits have followed from some of them! It was at one such in Dartmouth College, that President Marsh, Bishop Chase, and Levi Spaulding, missionary at Jaffna, were gathered in. During a similar season at Nassau Hall College, 1815, there were thirty converts, of whom were Bishop Johns, of Virginia, Bishop McIlvaine, of Ohio, Dr. Beattie of the same State, Dr.

McGee, of Elizabethtown, N. J., Drs. Hodge and McLean of Princeton, and Dr. Armstrong, late Secretary of the American Board. The revival of 1820 in Yale College, was a memorable one. During the progress of that work an individual remarked to a fellow-student, as they observed one of their number passing by, "If that young man were converted, he might be another Henry Martyn." That young man was converted, and became a missionary, the late Dr. Eli Smith of the Syria Mission. Who can tell what a future of blessed labor and hallowed influence on earth there is in the habitual supplications for colleges, and in the prayers of that day set apart annually for this purpose!

It would not be inappropriate to take a survey of our professional institutions; and also of our academies and other schools, public and private, not forgetting naval and military schools, and institutions for the deaf and dumb, and bespeak prayerful remembrance of them likewise; but there is a present urgency in view of the fact that the number of theological students has long been decreasing. The deficiency is one which cannot be suddenly supplied, and must be felt for years. The young men of our colleges may, with the blessing and by the call of God, be most readily brought forward to the sacred office.

It can hardly be necessary, in a connection like this, to go back to such first principles as that the ministry is an ordinance of our Lord; that it is the chief instrumentality in making known his gospel, and by which sinners are converted to God and educated for heaven. It is Christ's main legacy to a darkened race.

It admits of no substitute ; and inadequacy of supply is an evil to be lamented more than any other deficit in the agencies which he appoints.

Such being the high importance of a sufficiency of accredited ambassadors of Jesus, men supplied by him in answer to the prayers of the church, under a sense of her own wants and the wants of the world,—this ought, in every age, to be a distinct, habitual subject of earnest entreaty.

At the present time there is more than usual reason for urging the duty. The rapid, natural increase of our population and the remarkable influx of immigrants suggest that the former ratio of supply in the ministry must be quite inadequate. On the one hand, we have the startling fact of a diminishing supply of ministers, the diminution not accidental and temporary, but extending through a series of years ; on the other hand, we have an unprecedented increase of population at home, and of opening fields abroad. Never was the harvest so great ; never was the proportion of laborers so small.

The pressure of the case coming on gradually has not been widely and deeply felt. There has been a noticeable apathy ; yet it would seem impossible that it should much longer resist the inquiry, Are these things so, and to remain so ? Considering the means taken to keep the churches informed respecting the wants of our land, and other lands, this incredulous spirit itself indicates the reason. It is the lack of holy zeal in the cause of Christ ; an encroaching worldliness has kept the community here contented with its own privileges, without gratefully cultivating

a broad, benevolent spirit, eager to impart the good in which it shares, and earnest in its entreaties that Christ will dispense his ascension gifts largely through the land and the world. Whatever secondary causes there may be, this doubtless is the primary one, a want of proper appreciation of the high worth of evangelical truth and practical godliness, a want of loyalty to Him who has bidden us go and disciple all nations. The main difficulty now is not so much a defect of opportunities, appliances, or funds, for reaching the destitute, near and afar off, as men, sanctified men, living, devoted laborers to go into the harvest-field. It is not to be expected that young men will manifest a piety above the average of that in the churches, and break through the gilded allurements of the world, to enter a self-denying profession, one which cannot be made a sinecure, and which yields at most a bare competency of support. An out-pouring of the Holy Spirit generally, and upon Colleges particularly, at the present time, would be likely to exhibit itself in the dedication of children to this work by parents, and the obedience, in larger numbers, of young men to the special call of God's providence for an increase of earnest reapers.

VI. PRAYER FOR COMMUNITIES.

Will prayer in national calamities, actual or threatened, avail? Let the Word and providence of God reply. Go back three thousand years to Egypt. Hear Moses and the children of Israel crying to God for deliverance; and then see them go forth from the house

of bondage, and pass through the Red Sea as on dry land. See Moses, lifting his hands, supported by Aaron and Hur, till Amalek is discomfited. Did not his prayers deliver them at Sinai, at Taberah, and when fiery serpents were among them? Why were not the whole people consumed upon their defeat before Ai? Because Joshua interceded for them. Why did the five confederate kings suffer such overthrow in the going down of Beth-horon? Because Joshua had prayed. Whence came deliverance, after their eight years' servitude under the king of Mesopotamia, and the twenty years' oppression of Jabin? It came from the Lord in answer to their cries. By the same method were they relieved from the oppression of the Midianites and the Philistines. Would the swords of David and the people have prevailed at the Brook Bezor, but for their prayers? Did not the prayer of Isaiah send back the blasphemous Rabshakeh and the whole Assyrian host? Zerah, with three hundred chariots and a thousand thousand Ethiopians, came up the valley of Zephatha, but the prayer of King Asa routed them. Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast; all Judah joined him in prayer, and the next day they sang their song of triumph over the complete discomfiture of the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon. Esther, Mordecai, and the people at large, fast, weep, and pray, and deliverance comes. Ezra proclaims a fast at the River Ahava, and the Lord is entreated of the people. Did not the prayers of Nehemiah bring out a commission from Artaxerxes, and afterwards carry up the walls of Jerusalem in the face of taunting enemies?

What was the entire history of the Jewish people for fifteen hundred years but a series of depressions for wickedness and of deliverances when a leader, a king, a prophet, or the people as a whole, humbled themselves and cried unto God?

Modern history has its parallels. While the Hollanders, in 1672, were awaiting an attack from their enemies, public prayers were recommended. By a remarkable course of the tide, the hostile troops were prevented from landing, and a storm soon drove their ships from the coast. Did not the breath of prayer in the reign of Queen Elizabeth scatter the so-called Invincible Armada?

New England has many a memorial of answered supplications. Quite signal was that of 1746, when an armament of forty French ships-of-war was on our coast. A day of fasting and prayer was appointed; at once the tempest scattered them. D'Anville, the commander, committed suicide; others did the same; and only a dispirited remnant found their way back to France. At other periods of colonial history, when a savage foe or famine was at the door, "our fathers trusted in thee, O God; they trusted in thee, and thou deliveredst them." What Peniel wrestlings were there during our war of the Revolution! Did it not please our heavenly Father, upon the requests of his people, at the time of disputed boundary questions, with other complications, to avert a conflict then apparently imminent? Has he not, for the same reason, at different times, removed pestilence from our borders?

The nations and cities that forget God he will pluck

up and destroy. The Assyrian, Babylonian, Macedonian, and Roman Empires, were overthrown at his bidding. Thebes, with her hundred gates, Babylon, with her massive walls, Tadmor of the desert, and Jerusalem, the joy of the whole earth, came to nought by his retributive appointment. No deep sagacity of cabinets, no enlarged policy in legislative halls, can avail against the punitive providence of the King of kings. Often does God employ one corrupt nation to scourge another. "O Assyria, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation." When the Assyrian monarch and his generals blaspheme the God of Israel, Hezekiah betakes himself to prayer. The same night, one hundred fourscore and five thousand of the invaders lie dead upon the field. What engine is there so effective against an enemy, what rampart so high, what citadel so firm for a community, as the prayers of God's people?

It is for those in authority, first of all, that prayers and supplications are to be offered. He alone in whose hand their hearts are can impart requisite wisdom, guide into the best policy, and give all needed firmness. The early Christians obeyed the apostolic requirement just referred to. Chrysostom says that "all communicants knew how that every day, both at evening and morning, they made supplications for all the world, for the emperor, and for all that are in authority." In spite of a persecuting hatred to Christians, it would seem that some of the Roman emperors entertained a secret belief in the efficacy of their prayers. When Maximus was smitten with an excruciating disease, he felt that it was a judgment for his

cruelties to the Christians; he revoked his unrighteous edicts against them, and, calling them from their caves and deserts, bade them pray for the life and health of their prince.

As citizens of the United States, we are called upon to remember interpositions of that providence in our behalf. One instance in point, besides those already cited, is often referred to. In the convention which framed the federal Constitution, a difference had arisen which seemed irreconcilable. Franklin—and he not a religious man—arose, and proposed a recess in order that, a chaplain being called in, they might “look, by prayer, to the great Source of light for direction.” The motion was concurred in. Washington, the president of the assembly, was on his knees during the service. Harmony of views soon prevailed, and a new government was successfully formed. In his inaugural address to Congress, Washington employed the following language: “It would be peculiarly improper to omit, in this first official act, my fervent supplication to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe, who presides in the councils of nations, whose aid can supply every human defect, that his benediction may consecrate to the liberty of the people of these United States a government instituted by themselves, and may enable every instrument employed in its administration to execute with success the functions allotted to his charge. In tendering this homage to the great Author of every good, public and private, I assure myself that it expresses your sentiments no less than my own, and those of my fellow-citizens at large. No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible

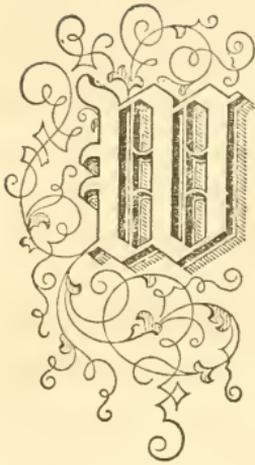
hand which conducts the affairs of men more than the people of these States ; every step by which they have advanced toward the character of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency. These reflections, arising out of the present crisis, have forced themselves too strongly upon my mind to be suppressed. I shall take my present leave by resorting once more to the benign Parent of the human race in humble supplication that his blessing may be conspicuous in the temperate consultations and wise measures on which the success of this government must depend." Would that God might restore our judges as at the first, and our counsellors as at the beginning !

We look round upon a community in which vice abounds, in which crime raises its head to an appalling height and hardihood ; we look abroad upon the country imperilled, of late, to the last degree ; we see portentous clouds overcasting the sky, and our hearts are ready to sink within us. Oh, my beloved land, is God leaving thee ? Will the God of my fathers abandon this fair heritage ? Not if we have faith as a grain of mustard-seed. Supplications can save the commonwealth. John Welsh, the celebrated son-in-law of Knox, was overheard at his accustomed hour of midnight pouring forth a flood of tears, and the fervent cry, " Will thou not give me Scotland ? O Lord, will thou not give me Scotland ? " The single-handed believer may, by the grace of God, cope with all the enemies of our country and our religion.

XIII.

ANSWERS TO PRAYER.

I. ANSWERS CERTAIN.



WHAT has become of all those petitions offered in faith which have been going up to the throne for six thousand years? Answered, or to be answered, in kind or in equivalents. There are, indeed, subjects and promises not limited to any definite time; and the supplications offered may have a continuous and compounded fulfilment, so that no one can single out his own share, and pronounce upon its relation to an answer immediate or postponed, as, for instance, in general intercession for believers.

An expectation of returns should be kept alive. When hope flags, devotion dies. Delay is not denial; yet, on account of postponement, Christians will not unfrequently cease or intermit their entreaties; and when the blessing comes, they are startled, having almost forgotten that it was ever asked. If a resolute belief that God does indeed reward them that diligently seek him were kept up, there would be no surprise, as is often the case, when the answer finally comes. What a comment upon lack of faith, that a gracious

response to supplications should take the suppliant unawares!

There can be no strength of confidence in God, without habitual expectation of a return in his own good time to prayer addressed to him. A praying man being told that an absent son had been converted, his informant supposed he would exhibit great joy, but was disappointed by his calmness; and, thinking that some one else must have previously informed him, inquired who it was. The father replied, "God told me. He did not tell me that he had converted my son, but he told me he would convert him, and I expected it. I believe him, and I am not surprised that he has kept his word."

Suppliants certainly have reason to distrust the integrity of their prayers and their confidence in a prayer-hearing God, if they are not perseveringly on the lookout for returns. A monarch¹ once said to a prisoner brought before him, "You know it is in my power to pardon you?" "Yes," he replied, "I know it is in your power, but it is not in your nature." Just such stupendous effrontery is ours, when we come into the presence of the King of kings professedly seeking pardon and other royal bounties, yet entertaining no reverent expectation of their bestowment. We tell God that although able, he will not grant. We tell him, moreover, we are indifferent about it; that answer or no answer is of small moment. We ask a question and then stop our ears. We toss in a petition before the throne, and retire, thinking little what is to come of it. Habakkuk resolved: "I will stand

¹ James III. of Scotland, to Ayliffe.

upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and I will watch to see what he will say unto me."

God sometimes anticipates prayer with an answer. Those in the habit of diligently seeking God, and having a genuine faith in his declarations, sometimes find that he is beforehand with them in granting their desires. This is in accordance with what he has said: "It shall come to pass that before they call I will answer." It may seem an absurdity to call that an answer which precedes a prayer; yet every believer will gratefully own the solecism. For who has not found, in regard to himself and others, that God has already been doing that which in the order of time was prior to the request; and while it was supposed that the prayer must be persevered in, it unexpectedly appears that petition is to be turned into praise?

"While they are yet speaking, I will hear;" no sooner uttered than answered. Such is the case in emergencies, and with respect to constantly recurring wants. Each morning's petition for daily bread finds its answer in needed supplies. While Abraham's servant was engaged in prayer at the well, it came to pass, before he ceased speaking, the desired events began to take place. When Elijah besought God to decide the controversy then pending, fire at once descended from heaven and consumed the sacrifice. While Hezekiah was yet praying and weeping with his face turned toward the wall, a message of peace was brought to him. The ruler, upon inquiring diligently, found that the same hour that Jesus had said to him, "Thy son liveth," his son recovered. While the church were still supplicating for Peter's deliverance,

the liberated man knocked at their door. To the present hour, who that has sought the Lord aright has not frequently found that to ask and to receive were the work of the same moment? "In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me." Does the arrow mount fleetly? Prayer outstrips it. One essay of the wings of faith, and it is at the door of heaven; knock and it shall be opened unto you.

God often gives an equivalent for what is asked. This is as truly an answer as if the thing specifically sought were bestowed. It is a grant in value, not in kind. Thus Paul besought the Lord thrice that the messenger of Satan, with which he was buffeted, might be removed; but the only answer he received was, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

This is true in respect to the mode of bestowment, as well as the blessing itself. The man who waited so long at the pool had looked for no other way of cure but by the water, at the time of its periodical agitation. He had not thought of the more direct and signal method. Often does the sick man long impatiently for one and another article of food, and being refused, he, to his joy, finds health, which was his great desire, returning. The discoverer of this continent dreamed of nothing but a nearer and easier passage to a distant part of the Old World. So the believer is in pursuit of health, but God takes him to heaven; or, like Solomon, he asks for wisdom only, and God gives that, and with it, peace, riches, and honor. Sometimes the Giver of every good gift not merely grants an equivalent, but a reduplication of blessings.

God often rewards without answering prayer. A

devotional spirit may exist, an acceptable expression of it be made, and yet the specific petition be denied. Isaac prayed for Esau, and Samuel for Saul, in a way that was not answered. Moses prayed that he might enter the goodly land of promise, but God permitted him only to view it from Mount Nebo. Our Saviour fell on his face saying, "Oh my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" but he was called to drink it to the very dregs. Was not that an acceptable appeal? Did Christ entertain an unfounded assurance when he said, "I knew that thou hearest me always"? Was it not true that in the days of his flesh, that in the evening at Gethsemane, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save him from death, he was heard in that he feared? What was his petition? Not merely that the dreadful hour might pass from him, but that the will of his Father might be done. Our Lord possessed what is requisite in every prayer,—a submissive spirit. His regard to the glory of God was paramount to all considerations of a personal nature. No one having this spirit can fail of a reward, whatever the result may be as to his particular request.

II. ANSWERS DELAYED.

"How long," cries the distressed Psalmist,— "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? Forever?" It is the outburst of an agonized heart. Accumulated grief breaks forth, not so much in a psalm as in a piercing wail, a vehement expostulation. Hope de-

ferred has made King David's heart sick. He has cried and cried, apparently to no purpose.

Similar half-chidings and complaints come up from the general heart of the suppliant church. Omission to answer seems like forgetfulness, or positive displeasure; but it only seems. God is no less kind, wise, and faithful at such times than at others. He is conducting the affairs of our world upon a plan that embraces all men and all events; surveying the whole, seeing the end from the beginning, he knows how to time his good gifts so that least of harm and most of benefit shall accrue. A premature bestowment, though well in itself, might prevent a greater good. It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father hath put in his own power. There may exist many reasons, some evident and some inscrutable, why an answer should be delayed till you have finished all your prayers, and have passed beyond present possibility of knowing that they are answered. Far more of these gracious results will be learned hereafter than here; and learned too far along in the panoramic retrospect of what takes place on earth.

There is a great deal of undevout hurry among Christians; and a most unseemly thing it is to be so impatient; as if God were dilatory, as if he were slack concerning his promises. The unremitting perseverance of the children of this world should teach us. Ancient history mentions the king, who, on receiving a petition from a poor woman, hastily glanced at it, and returned the same unanswered. The next day her petition was presented again, and was treated in the same manner. Repeatedly did she bring the

document with no better success; till at last the king tore it in pieces. These were carefully gathered up, stitched together, and again handed to him. Struck with her perseverance, the monarch read the petition and immediately returned a favorable answer. Did not our Saviour speak a parable unto them, to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint?

How many are the parents who have prayed and prayed, year in and year out, for their dear children, and have seen them still going on aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise! For nine long years, while her son was hurrying headlong from sin to sin, the mother of Augustine continued instant in prayer on his behalf. Said a mother in Israel, "Forty years was I praying for my husband, thirty years for my daughter, and God heard me for them." Another aged female, requesting prayer in behalf of a number of grandchildren, wrote this preface: "Mothers of only sons, pray on. For forty years, one now present, the mother of an only son, prayed for his conversion, and in this blessed revival the Lord brought him into the visible church."

By such experience of delays, the habit of prayer is confirmed. That is something to be attained, and maintained, only on the same terms as other elements of spiritual life, which throughout is one of effort. How vividly is that life pictured in the closing part of the last chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians! In the great spiritual struggle, which every believer must carry on, there is needed the whole armor of God, and a resolute use thereof, which will be acquired only with the aid of unremitting prayer. Believers

must not only stand in their armor, and stand fast in it, but stand as suppliants no less than combatants, "Praying always;" a constantly devout spirit being exercised which shall have utterance, silent or otherwise, almost uninterrupted. "With all prayer and supplication;" all appropriate kinds of prayer being practised; social and solitary; oral and inarticulate. "In the Spirit;" in dependence upon and with the aid of the Holy Spirit. "Watching thereunto with all perseverance;" this habit being maintained with eager and unremitting purpose. "And supplication for all saints;" individuals praying not for themselves alone, but each for all, the great brotherhood having a large and constant share in this devout remembrance. The inner life should be one continued flow of prayer, a ceaseless tide of supplication, adoration, and praise. Such is the life of God in the soul; such the indwelling Comforter's abiding witness.

In the delay of answers there is scope given for invigorating various Christian graces. Indeed, prayer is sometimes more remunerative as a means than as an end; more valuable to the believer by its own exercise than its answer is to him or to others. In spiritual forces, action is sometimes less than reaction. Can any personal benefit this side the holiness of heaven be more important than a lively, persevering spirit of supplication? Jacob would not have been such a prince in prayer if the blessing had come early enough to allow him a good night's rest; nor would the aged Simeon have attained such eminence as a devout man if he had not been long waiting for the consolation of Israel. A greater loss could hardly occur to the Chris-

tian than to have all petitions granted immediately. Better even to grow weary in prayer, provided one does not grow weary of it, than to be so relieved by answers as to relapse into undevout contentment. Better go crying, for half a century, How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord! than for once to say, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years.

Domine quousque? "Lord, how long?" was Calvin's favorite ejaculation in his seasons of suffering, and especially of painful sickness. Paul thrice besought the Lord for the removal of that which, after all, was not removed. Through many a wearisome year of captivity did Israel cry, How long? For forty years in the wilderness they cried, How long? and it was only the continuation of a cry that had resounded through Egypt for a yet longer period.

You have yourself, perhaps, been out toiling in rowing till about the third watch of the night; and, wondering why our Lord did not come to the rescue, have sent up your cry amidst the storm, How long, O Lord? Or you may have been a night and a day in the deep, and all the while you were entreating, Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul; the floods overflow me. Were you not finally rescued; and had you ever before experienced such a sense of dependence upon God; or had you ever felt such gratitude? When did you, or did David, pray so mightily as during a long night amidst the billows, or sing with such exultation as when, after deliverance, looking off upon those same dark waters?

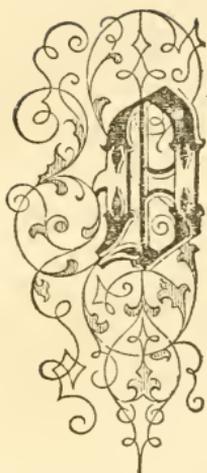
Particularly is faith thus fostered. That magnet power of the soul, that evidence of things not seen,

though in some measure constant, is yet tremulous. Faith is the eye of the soul, first opened at the new birth, when spiritual light is apprehended. It needs to be educated and clarified, for men are seen only as trees walking. Faith is the porter to the soul. Christ stands at the door and knocks. He commands and promises, but there is no ear within to hear. God at length stirs up an agent who listens; who credits what falls from the Saviour's lips, hastens to open the door, and welcome the divine Guest. Christ enters and sups with him. Faith is the phoenix virtue. It dwells where is found the oblation of frankincense and myrrh; its life is measured by centuries. Though it seem extinct, it rises from its own odorous ashes in the freshness of youth and the strength of age; it rises to the region that is full of glory; it assures itself, and the world too, of high and unseen realities. It is a messenger welcome in heaven. God honors it; he proves himself a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. The search may go on for years, but the reward is immediate, and ultimate success certain.

XIV.

CONCLUSION.

I. PROVINCE OF PRAYER.



H the rapture of converse with God! To talk with him as a man speaketh unto his friend, to have the soul caught up to the third heaven, to reënter Paradise, to see the great, white throne, the precious blood of sprinkling on the mercy-seat, — what joy like that!

Wonderful, too, it is that, for so high and sacred an exercise, such facilities should be afforded; that the door of the resplendent temple should not be closed day nor night; that every child of God, amid the whirl of mid-day cares, or the stillness of night-watches, on the ocean, or in the desert, may, in a moment of time, pass to the river of life, present himself at the footstool of Jehovah, and feel the refreshing influence of uncreated light!

There are special memorials of rapture and of success to be set up. The Eben-ezer of old was less a monument of victory over the Philistines than of Samuel's victorious prayer. It is well to erect monuments to the glory of Him who heareth prayer. He has himself suggested it in the changed name of the wrestling patriarch, who, as a prince, had power with God and

with men, and prevailed. That very word, Israel, will forever remain the remembrancer of a signal triumph of struggling supplication. Every true believer has his Mizpeh, and has occasion between there and Shen to set up a pillar, with the inscription, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped me." What devout man or woman has lived who could not appreciate such a memorandum as this of the Duchess of Athol: "O my soul! remember Friday, the eighteenth of November, sixteen hundred and eighty-one, and Thursday, the twenty-fourth, wherein the Lord thy God was pleased to give thee sweetest consolation in himself, and some assurance of his reconciled countenance, at Hamilton."

The reflex benefit of prayer is large. Suppose there were no direct influence from petitions; that entreaties for others and even for ourselves were of no avail except by a natural reaction upon the suppliant, still it is an ennobling exercise. The assimilating power is decided; the mind is filled with great and good thoughts; the soul is expanded and refined. "For no sooner," says Chrysostom, "does a man lift up his hands to heaven, and call upon God, than he is snatched from this world and translated into the other, if he pray with care and diligence; so that if anger boil in him, it is presently quieted; if envy gnaw, it is easily expelled; if lust burn, it is quenched. For, as the Psalmist observes, that when the sun arises, all the beasts of the forest, who in the night had crept forth, lay themselves down in their dens; so, when prayer goes forth out of our mouth, the mind is enlightened, as with a certain beam of light, and all unreasonable and brutish passions steal away and dare

not appear. Nay, if the Devil himself were there, he is driven away; if a demon, he departs, provided we pray with attentive and waking minds."

Hallowed peace is a result. Such peace has no alliance with insensibility; we do not call the rocks peaceful. It is something more than the absence of commotion; though the lava be not flowing, we do not pronounce the volcano a placid object. Widely different is it from religious quietism, of which the calmness is mere apathy; which does not cheer, but stupefy.

Whoever would have genuine Christian peace, and experience it in joyful measures, must give himself to frequent prayerful meditation. Then will he hear the Saviour say, "My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you." Oh! what a sanctified calm is felt, what sacred repose of the soul in God through Christ! Then does the weary, fluttering bird find rest for the sole of her foot. Then does the panting hart, which the hounds have chased, sit down quietly beside the water-brook.

We would, however, beware of a selfish luxury in our communion with Heaven. We do well to bring our feelings to the test. Is it in comparative self-oblivion that we stand upon the Mount? Do we with Peter at the Transfiguration say, Lord, let us build three tabernacles, one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias? Does such good company seem enough for us, be our private accommodations, or want of accommodations, what they may? Does each involuntarily cry out, It is good for me to be here? The cold ground is enough for me; let others, let my Lord, have a tabernacle; I have no thought about a home for my-

self; enough that I may be permitted to stand door-keeper!

Ours is a golden key; it opens the door to treasures beyond all estimate. With that in our hand, shall we keep our own souls and the Church of God in a state of needless impoverishment? To us is let down a golden chain from heaven,—the chain that cannot be broken; shall we decline to rise and draw with us the sinking world? Do not our own hearts, a languishing Zion, and perishing millions, call for the exertion of all our devotional strength?

It is a great lesson to learn where to look for spiritual help. Most appropriately does the Psalmist charge his soul, "Wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him." So would we. I charge thee, O my soul, look not to the pastor, not to the church officers, not to this one or that one; wait thou only upon God. Others are changeable; he is a rock. Others are insufficient; he is my defence. I shall not be moved.

There are some usually in advance of others; some souls moved before the generality are stirred. Who has not watched in mountain regions the dawn of day, and seen the higher summits tipped and gilded with light, while it was yet darkness or dense shades in the valley beneath? So, when the Sun of righteousness rises, there are souls dwelling comparatively in heavenly regions which are the first to catch and reflect his rays. Such, too, are often among those accounted socially, and who spiritually are indeed, the humblest. A distinguished pastor¹ made these statements: "Late

¹ Dr. Murray, of Elizabethtown, N. J.

on a cold November night, I was retiring to rest. There was a knock at my door, and an aged member of the church, a simple, praying, warm-hearted man was introduced. After a brief silence, he thus addressed me: 'My dear pastor, I have come to tell you that God is about to revive his work among us.' I asked why he felt so? 'I went into the stable,' said he, 'to take care of my cattle two hours ago, and there the Lord has kept me in prayer until now. And I feel we are going to be revived.'" There could be no doubt as to his sincerity; and that was the commencement of the first revival under the ministry of the preacher referred to.

A few years afterward, and in another field of labor, an aged man, venerated for piety, came to the same person. Though poor in this world, he was rich in faith. In prayer he seemed to converse with God. "I have called to say to you, my dear pastor," he stated, "that the Lord is in the midst of us, and we shall all soon see the effect of his presence." "I had observed," says the narrator, "a marked solemnity in the congregation, but nothing more. I asked the venerable man why he felt so? His reply was as follows: 'Since twelve o'clock last night, the Spirit of God has been so upon me that I have been unable to do anything but pray, and to rejoice in the prospect of a blessed refreshing from the presence of the Lord.'"

Most Christians profess to have desires for such a season of refreshing from on high. Prayers generally imply this. Who would risk his reputation by confessing to an entire absence of such aspirations? After all, however, are we even willing to have a powerful

and general revival? Have we courage to meet a revival, to meet such taunts and sneers as it brings in its train? We pray that our children may be saved; but are we desirous to have them really and thoroughly converted, rescued from the wiles of the Adversary, turning from all the ways of a wicked world, and becoming Christians indeed, tenfold more earnest and godly than ourselves?

It behooves us to look with a scrutinizing eye at the sincerity of our desires. Do we anticipate anything more than a transient excitation and ebullition of feeling? Are we truly in earnest for anything more than the reputation of being very active and very warm, the credit of more eminent piety than others? If useful ourselves, are we willing that others should have praise for it?

Must not Christ be amazed at us? There are only two recorded instances in which our Saviour marvelled. One was when he wondered at the centurion's faith. It is not stated that Christ felt any surprise in view of the works of creation; and still less at the products of human skill or genius. Indeed, what mental process or result can be so marvellous as the simple act of saving faith,—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as able and ready to do all that is most needed by every one? The loftiest efforts of human intellect bear no comparison with that simple, wonder-working act. The only other instance was when "He marvelled because of their unbelief." They despised him. They were offended because of him; his human relatives were persons of no figure in the world. "He could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a

few sick folk and healed them." What can be so strange as not to believe the faithful and true Witness, not to believe incarnate truth Himself; practically giving the lie to the Lord that bought us?

We must notice the established order in God's appointments,—the order of succession, the order of means and end. Spring precedes summer and autumn; the season of labor as well as prayer goes before that of ingathering. The Great Ruler of the world hath indeed enacted that "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest shall not cease;" but he has also ordained that in the sweat of the face man shall eat bread. The means are ordained as much as the end; and this is as true in spiritual as in natural husbandry. We believe the doctrine of election, but we believe it as a whole; "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience;" elect unto obedience as much as to anything else. We hold to the first, but we hold to the second part also. Christian effort is as truly a means to the end as is ploughing and sowing; and in the neglect of such appointed means no harvest, natural or spiritual, may be expected. Moses prays, but Joshua's sword must be unsheathed. To pray and not to fight would be presumption; to fight and not pray would be rebellion. It was in the name of the Lord that David went out against Goliath; but he took his sling and well-chosen stones with him. If the three kings who came to Elisha had not, at his instance, digged the canals, the valley would not have been filled with water, though the supply for them and their cattle was supernatural. It

is a plain point of common sense as well as of Scripture, that in proportion to sincerity of devout desires for a given result will be readiness to labor for it.

A lazy man cannot have faith requisite to the proper offering of the petition, "I pray thee, send me good speed this day." He who cries, "Give me this day my daily bread," and does nothing else toward securing it, will never find the ravens coming to him, as did the prophet; his own corpse will feed the ravens. God gives, but man must toil, must show his faith by his works. To trust wholly in one's-self, or wholly in Providence without effort, are extremes equally removed from the golden mean of Scripture.

II. FUTURE ACHIEVEMENTS OF PRAYER.

The course of divine providence is like that of the mighty river which has its source far up in the north-western regions of our continent, and flows onward, here through level and there through hilly regions; at one time spreading out into the broad lake, at another pressed by its banks into a narrow channel; now a steady, unruffled stream, and now a rushing cataract or foaming rapids. So history is a succession of broad expanses, swift-flowing currents, with abrupt turns and falls.

In his spiritual administration, God observes no unvarying course. There have been enlargement and contraction, the clear and the turbid intervals. There have been withholding and outpouring of the Spirit of supplications. In the antediluvian age occurred a

noteworthy period at which men "began to call upon the name of the Lord." Jewish history supplies similar notices, as in the times of Elijah and Elisha, of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Predictions are on record not yet fulfilled, relating to the character and amount of prayer, showing that there will be achievements of faith such as have never been witnessed. Our world is to become one vast sanctuary, and we may believe there will be concerts of prayer observed not by meagre assemblages, but by nations. Then cometh the end; the last unfulfilled desire of the church will send up the closing petition, when the mercy-seat may be taken down. "In that day," said Jesus, when I am come to receive you finally, personally, and forever to myself; when I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you,—“In that day ye shall ask me nothing;” the desires of my people shall all be satisfied; and no want remaining, supplication will cease.

“Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name.” The apostles had healed diseases and cast out devils, but had not won the yet greater achievements of prayer offered distinctly in the name of Jesus. The advent and expiatory work of Christ, his resurrection from the dead, and his sitting at the right hand of the Father, opened a new era in the kingdom of grace and the scope of prayer. Not only was the middle wall of partition broken down, so that both Jews and Gentiles, through him, might have access by one Spirit unto the Father, but there was a corresponding enlargement of the field of supplication, and of encouragement in

prayer. The great work in contemplation for untold ages is finished. The delight of God the Father in the Son, now reascended, and bringing a glorified humanity with him, is infinite. Him he heareth always; nothing does the only-begotten Son ask that is not granted.

Not more close is the relation, on his divine side, to the Godhead, than on the other to his people; he is one with them; their interests are his. When he ascended on high, the breastplate, that most significant article of priestly attire, was not forgotten; and how much larger his breastplate and his heart than those of Aaron! The Jewish high priests bore only general names,—those of the several tribes as a whole; but consider the great apostle and high priest of our profession, who carries with him the particular name of every individual belonging to the Israel of God.

How comprehensive, how tender, how wise the interest he feels in those given him, and for whom especially he died. He is a solicitor acquainted as no other ever was with affairs intrusted to him. Never did he lose a case; his advocacy is more potent than if all angels and all saints in heaven were pleading. His name is infinitely sweet in the ear of the Father; to have him is to have Benjamin with us when we go to court. No fee is asked, no bribe taken.

When, especially, the higher blessings, personal or public, are to be sought, faith finds in the name of Christ a basis broad enough for the utmost of her desires. The name of Jesus,—it is the name above every other,—the name of one familiar with the purposes of the Godhead from eternity; a participant, a

coördinate in the council-chamber of the Ancient of Days; one sharing in the fellowship of the tri-personal Jehovah; one specially deputed to discharge the executive acts of Deity. It is the name of Messiah, for whose coming forty centuries of preparatory march were required; to whom the eyes of kings and prophets looked dimly through clouds of incense, and whose voice they heard in the bleat of every sacrificed victim; whose priestly office and whose predicted conquests were the soul of the old dispensation, the one vital idea of the most remarkable, the most homogeneous, the most indestructible nation on the globe. It is the name of the Wonderful, God and man, Creator among creatures, Lawgiver under the law, the innocent standing where the guilty should stand, whose mission on earth marked the turning-point of all time, the high noon of duration, when the central Sun of the universe suffered his only eclipse. Jesus Christ is the name of One who undertook—and did he fail?—to more than vindicate a broken law, to reconstruct, upon a scale of surpassing grandeur, the dilapidated temple of truth and righteousness; to bring forth to the gaze of angels and men the more intimate glories of the Godhead; to shed a new and ever-brightening lustre upon all the paths and prominences of divine administration. He rose mighty in his conquest to the mediatorial throne, where he holds all power in heaven and earth. Is not his a prevailing name? What object is there of legitimate desire, however vast, for which his merits do not avail?

It behooves all believers to measure the blessings craved, by the dignity, authority, and doings of our

Advocate with the Father. When that takes place, the utmost achievements of prayer will be won, and latter-day glory come in all its fulness. We look for the time when seasons of concerted prayer shall cease to be monthly, in order to become weekly, and then again to become daily; when at every descent of the sun the eager inquiry shall be, Watchman, what of the night? when that occasion shall be the focus of Christian interest, and in thronging attendance shall yield to no other. "Ye that make mention of the Lord keep not silence; and give him no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

We may not suppose that God will convert nations very much in advance of a preparation in the church and its missionaries to appreciate the glorious work. Preparation for it may be known by a strength of desire commensurate to its magnitude. The work of subjugating the world to himself Christ has given instrumentally to his church; but in that enterprise the most important elements are a faith and prayer proportionate to the work. For Christians to have narrow views and feeble faith is a criminal deficiency. It impeaches the God of Sabaoth, the King of Zion. The first thing needed is that we go to the utmost in studying and applying the dynamics of prayer. We should make full proof of the integrity of Him who says to us, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." No longer should we neglect such unwrought mines of heavenly wealth for ourselves and an impoverished world. Has all this vast arrangement for supplication been made; all these

promises of God; all these visitations of the Comforter; all this advocacy of the great High Priest, that we might merely ask a few personal favors? "Attempt great things; expect great things."

Many are the Christians who engage monthly in concerted prayer for the universal triumph of Christ's kingdom. Many are the petitions daily offered for that glorious consummation. Yet how does the work linger! Where, now, in reference to the world's conversion, do our thoughts and hopes rest? On the modern progress of society? On the increasing wealth of our churches? On the many laborers already in the field? If so, alas for us and for the cause!

Let the house of Israel inquire anew. In full assurance of faith let them draw nigh to the Holy of holies, where our mediating Forerunner has entered. We hear his intercession: "Hast thou not given me the heathen for mine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for my possession? Are not all kings to fall down before me, and all nations to serve me? Behold this ransom blood of mine upon the mercy-seat. Hear thou from these bands of waiting believers the supplication, 'Thy kingdom come.' They will not keep silence; will give me no rest till thou establish, and till thou make Jerusalem a praise in all the earth."

Are not our hearts enlarged? Before our sympathizing gaze a dying world is spread out. We behold the destined reward of crucifixion sufferings. Irrepressible desires are kindled, and our hearts echo Christ's pleading in heaven.

Who may speak of mental inferiority? It requires no great strength of mind, no extensive culture, to lay

hold of this simple declaration: "I say unto you." Fishermen and tentmakers can apprehend it as quick as any. All that is wanting is the eye of faith and the heart of love. Every one capable of knowing that Christ uttered such words, and that God is faithful, stands herein upon a level with the loftiest intellect. A peasant's voice, sounding amidst Alpine heights, sometimes brings down the avalanche. Is the feebler sex exempt from participating in these sublime efforts? The most delicate hand has launched as proud a ship as floats on the water.

THE END.

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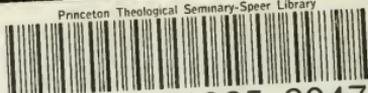
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