

# Taking Hold of God

SAMUEL M. ZWEMER, D. D.

---

**T**he whole book has made a deep impression upon me and has taught me many new and blessed lessons concerning prayer. You have written out of your experience--an experience which has been very high and large. The chapters are amazingly fresh and several are beautiful beyond description."

Henry W. Frost, D.D.,  
Home Director Emeritus, China Island Mission

DR. SAMUEL M. ZWEMER

replies to

“RE-THINKING MISSIONS”

in

# THINKING MISSIONS WITH CHRIST

*Third Edition*

Dr. Zwemer has been an ardent and influential missionary in Arabia and Egypt for forty years. He has earned the right to speak with authority on this all-important subject.

The Sunday School Times reviewed it thus . . .

“All ought to read this penetrating interpretation of a true re-thinking missions. It is written by one whose life has been devoted to foreign missions. His is a practical Christian viewpoint. . . . The author arrests us by strong affirmations. Dr. Zwemer breathes the passionate love of a redeemed soul into the thought he has put into his book. Here we have an examination of the problems of missions from a life that has known sacrifice—the perils of land and sea, by night and day, in dangers oft. The great missionary has a right to a hearing. This book should be widely read.”

Price, paper, \$1.00; cloth.....\$1.50

---

A NEW EDITION OF—

## THE GLORY OF THE CROSS

by

Samuel M. Zwemer

The titles of the chapters are:

“First of all . . . Christ died”

“We have not followed cunningly devised fables”

“They blindfolded Him”

“They bound Him” . . . “They spat on Him”

“They parted His garments among them”

“My God, My God, why . . . ?”

“Behold the Lamb of God!”

“They . . . Crucified the Lord of Glory”

“He Showed them His Hands”

“The Power of His Resurrection”

Attractive cloth.....50c

---

Published by

ZONDERVAN PUBLIK

Cloth, \$1.50  
Paper, \$1.00

---

---

## TAKING HOLD OF GOD

STUDIES ON THE NATURE, NEED AND  
POWER OF PRAYER

BY  
SAMUEL M. ZWEMER

*Professor of the History of Religion  
and Christian Missions,  
Princeton Theological Seminary*

There is no lack of studies available of what in his Foreword, Dr. Zwemer calls "this fine art in the spiritual realm." Yet the theme is inexhaustible and men and women will continue to ventilate their views concerning it, so long as the world endures. This latest volume by Dr. Zwemer contains a wealth of rich, suggestive counsel relating to the pertinence and power of prayer. Among other features, his pages deal with its antiquity, universality and nature; hindrances to its successful exercise and its effectiveness on the mission-field. There are chapters on Old Testament prayers; the petitions of Paul; the Lord's Prayer and the prayers of Jesus. Its special features include a devotional service of meditations, a selected list of important volumes dealing with the subject and several blank pages on which can be recorded instances of answered prayer in the individual experience of the reader. The present volume cannot but be regarded other than a definitely important and helpful body of comment on the most effective weapon in the Christian's arsenal, without which he is largely defenseless against the attacks of worldly temptation, his own lower nature and the enemy of his soul.

---

---

ZONDERVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE  
GRAND RAPIDS MICHIGAN

# TAKING HOLD OF GOD

Studies on the Nature, Need  
and Power of Prayer

By

SAMUEL M. ZWEMER

*Professor of the History of Religion and Christian Missions,  
Princeton Theological Seminary*

ZONDERVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE  
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

Copyright, 1936, by  
Zondervan Publishing House

815 Franklin Street, S. E.  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

TO  
MY COLLEAGUES IN THE MISSION FIELD  
WHO HAVE BEEN AN INSPIRATION IN THE  
GOODLY FELLOWSHIP OF PRAYER

## FOREWORD

**W**E believe that “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow” and that He alone who taught his early disciples can also teach us how to pray. We believe that prayer is a great reality; that prayer changes things; that prayer, if a lost art, is lost only for those who have lost the consciousness of God. Therefore we begin with the Name which is above every name and in the chapters that follow, will strive to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

Stradivarius at Cremona is said to have marked every violin he made with the name of Jesus, and his handiwork is still called *Stradivarius del Gesu*. Mozart wrote at the head of his music score, *In nomine Domini*. We cannot believe in prayer or write on prayer unless we believe in God. “He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

A recent writer in *The Christian Century* (March 13, 1935) under the sarcastic title, “Why Not Use a Prayer-Wheel?” makes light of family prayer and public prayer. He says, “We no longer pray, but go through gestures. There is a decided wane in real be-

lief in the efficacy of prayer.” And he accounts for this tragedy in light-hearted fashion as follows:

“Baldly stated: the views about God and the nature of the universe have changed. The element of petition in prayer, however carefully it may be phrased, is a relic of the day when people actually did believe that God intervened directly to aid his friends and discomfit his enemies. Prayer was a specific means to a specific end.

“Our changed ideas of God make it impossible for us to believe in the efficacy of our prayers as we once did. For a few elect souls there may be no difficulty. They may be able to adjust themselves to relationships with this nebulous personality, Eternal Goodness, Essence of Life, or however it may be designated; the majority of men, I believe, only fool themselves in thinking they can do it.

“Accordingly, as I see it, prayer in the conventional sense of the word is doomed as surely as burnt sacrifice and the Juggernaut car. Private meditation; a fresh taking stock of life; thanksgiving for the kindnesses we have received in not always reaping what we have sowed, moving us to a more charitable attitude toward those who have had few buffers between them and failure and disgrace — these, yes. But the expectation of getting something for nothing, or the readiness to request someone else to do what



we know we ourselves ought to do — for this the knell has sounded.”

This is Liberalism at its worst. He that cometh to God must believe that *He is*. The saints of the Old and New Testament lived in a different atmosphere. They had a unique sense of the presence of God. Heaven was not far from earth. Prayer is an attitude as well as a practice. It is impossible in a godless universe or to a Christless Christianity. As a French writer puts it, “The whole practice of the New Testament and the implications of the Old Testament are that the Christian life is a perpetual communion with God sustained by prayer as frequent as possible.” There is a world view in which prayer is impossible or even absurd, but this is not the world view of humanity at large or down the ages. The universality of prayer, its antiquity, its nature, its mystery, and its history — all give proof that prayer, in the words of Gladstone, “is the highest expression of the human intellect.”

There is no lack of literature on this fine art in the spiritual realm. Our great libraries give extensive bibliographies on prayer. Our hymnologies and liturgies enshrine the prayers of the ages. Our Bible concordances offer an index to the thousands of references to prayer and praise in Scripture. Yet the theme is inexhaustible and we offer these brief studies that fol-

low in the hope that some may find them useful in the school of prayer in which we are all mere learners and there is only One Master. "Lord teach us to pray."

SAMUEL M. ZWEMER.

*Princeton, New Jersey.*

## CONTENTS

I	THE ANTIQUITY AND UNIVERSALITY OF PRAYER .....	13
II	THE NATURE OF PRAYER.....	25
III	PLACE AND POSTURE IN PRAYER.....	37
IV	THE TIME ELEMENT IN PRAYER.....	49
V	THE POWER OF PRAYER.....	67
VI	HINDRANCES TO PRAYER.....	81
VII	NON-CHRISTIAN PRAYER AND MISSIONS.....	93
VIII	PRAYER AND MISSIONS.....	109
IX	SOME OLD TESTAMENT PRAYERS.....	121
X	THE PRAYERS OF PAUL .....	137
XI	THE LORD'S PRAYER .....	151
XII	THE PRAYERS OF OUR LORD.....	165
	A DEVOTIONAL SERVICE OF MEDITATION.....	179
	A SELECTED LIST OF BOOKS ON PRAYER.....	185

**I.**

**THE ANTIQUITY AND UNIVERSALITY OF  
PRAYER**

*“O that Thou wouldst reveal Thyself and rend  
The heavens and come down,  
Of prophecies and symbols make an end  
And show to us Thy crown,  
That we might humbly kneel and hear Thy voice  
And look upon Thy glory and rejoice!*

*“So hath man’s plaint ascended, Lord, to Thee,  
As he hath longed to know  
The very meaning of life’s destiny,  
Whence came and where shall go  
His soul so complex: yea, his age-long cry  
Hath sieged the ramparts of eternity.*

*“Man’s prayer was heard, and so Thou camest here  
And showed to him Thy crown,  
And let whoever would, kneel very near  
Where stood Thy manger throne:  
And yet how very few had eyes to see  
In thorn or cross or straw Thy royalty.”*

— FATHER ANDREW, S.D.C., in *Horizons*.

## I.

### THE ANTIQUITY AND UNIVERSALITY OF PRAYER

**S**INCE prayer is the act by which man approaches God, it is the very heart of religion. There can be no religion without prayer. In the words of the great German theologian, Schlatter, "the battle for religion is a battle for prayer; the theory of a religion is its philosophy of prayer; normal prayer belongs to normal religion, corrupt forms of prayer to false religions." The relation between prayer and religion is so close that Novalis remarks, "Prayer is to religion what thought is to philosophy." Take away prayer and you choke the channel of communion with the unseen; there is then no bridge across the abyss of eternity; there is then no voice to respond to the voice of God in nature and in the human heart. Where there is no prayer there can be no vital religion.

On the other hand, there *is* no religion without prayer. It is the oldest and most universal of all religious rites. According to many, it is even older than sacrifice, for it lies at the root of the latter in all primitive religion. Men began from the earliest ages "to call upon the name of the Lord." Prayer is instinctive. The wing of the bird seeks flight, the fin of the fish demands water, the instinct of the heart is for

God. George Matheson voices the longing of all humanity in his prayer:

“My heart needs Thee, O Lord, my heart needs Thee! No part of my being needs Thee like my heart. All else within me can be filled by thy gifts. My hunger can be satisfied by daily bread. My thirst can be allayed by earthly waters. My cold can be removed by household fires. My weariness can be relieved by outward rest. But no outward thing can make my heart pure. The calmest day will not calm my passions. The fairest scene will not beautify my soul. The sweetest music will not make harmony within. The breezes can cleanse the air; but no breeze ever cleansed a spirit.

“This world has not provided for my *heart*. It has provided for my eye; it has provided for my ear; it has provided for my touch; it has provided for my taste; it has provided for my sense of beauty — but it has not provided for my *heart*. Provide Thou for my heart, O Lord! It is the only unwinged bird in all creation; give it wings.”

Therefore, even as a wingless bird or a finless fish would be a monstrosity in nature, so in the realm of the spirit is a prayerless man. We are never so natural as when we pray. “Rise my soul and stretch thy wings,” for man is born to pray. The Greeks called man *anthropos*, some say, because he is the being with face up-turned to God.

Whatever the form of prayer among primitive races, the fact of prayer is universal. There is no tribe or people, however degraded or ignorant of even the beginnings of civilization, that does not pray. In

all ages and in all lands men have called upon their gods, invisible spirits, or the Great Spirit, and poured out their needs. The evidence has been collected by Schmidt and Heiler and is also found scattered in missionary reports.

The motive of this universal practice must be either an urge to prayer from within or from without. Men began to pray and continued to pray, either because their petitions were answered and they received blessing, or they began to pray and continued to pray because necessity of their moral nature bade them commune with the Unseen. As Augustine said, "O God Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts find no rest until they rest in Thee."

This is true, not only of those who have a knowledge of the Scriptures and of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, but of all men, for they were made in His image and in His likeness.

*"Far and wide, though all unknowing,  
Pants for Thee each human breast.  
Human tears for Thee are flowing,  
Human hearts in Thee would rest."*

Not only is the fact of prayer universal among primitive races, but more and more the evidence is accumulating that much of what we call primitive prayer by savage tribes is addressed to a Supreme Being. A study of prayers among primitive peoples contributes its testimony that monotheistic ideas preceded the worship of many gods and that the earliest



form of religion among them, as in China and India, not to mention ancient Egypt, was monotheistic.<sup>1</sup>

Among backward races, such as the American Indians or the Bushmen of South Africa, we find prayer addressed to a Great Spirit. In the South Sea Islands and among some of the hill tribes of India, the Great Spirit is even called Father-of-All.

The study of non-Christian religions reveals the fact that God did not leave Himself without a witness among the nations and that His common grace was shed abroad in human hearts even where no knowledge of the Gospel has illuminated the soul.

The use of prayer is earlier and more universal than magic itself. Prayers of various kinds are found in the ancient records of India, Egypt, China, Babylonia, Peru, and Mexico. That is, the ritual of prayer already existed in the earliest civilizations. Of course we must remember that men in early times expressed their religious feelings in terms of their own moral standards. The divine image was often blurred by their own gross desires. But they expressed those desires in prayer to unseen supernatural powers.

As we study the prayer-life of pagan tribes today we find that there is always a special reverence and an attitude of awe in the worshipper, and we must not forget the psychological significance of this fact. The position of the body is not ordinary. The tribes of which we have spoken lift their hands or their arms; they prostrate themselves, take off their sandals or their

---

<sup>1</sup> Compare the evidence in Zwemer's *Origin of Religion* and the references.

clothing; they cover or uncover the head; again they use special gestures of invocation or greeting when they pray: all of which is not intended as mere magic or spell, but evidently is due to the sense of awe and fear in approaching the unseen Spirit whose dwelling place is high above men and whose attributes are not like those of mortals.

Not in every case, indeed, is prayer addressed to the High-god or the Great Spirit. Alas! Most of these prayers are to the spirits of the forest or the sea, to the lesser gods who dwell with men. They also address prayer to idols and fetishes, the local gods who rule their immediate environment. They invoke the aid also of their ancestors or seek to propitiate their spirits by offerings and supplications. Nevertheless the conception of a supreme God is not absent.

Among the Khonds of Orissa, India, they use this prayer:

“O Boorah Penner [the name of their God], who created us and made us to be hungry, who gave us corn and taught us to plow, remember this and grant our prayers. When we go out in the early morning to sow, save us from the tiger and the snake. Let not the birds eat the seed. Let our ploughs go easily through the earth. Let the corn be plentiful. Let our cattle be many.”

The simplicity and directness of prayer in many of the primitive religions reminds us of the earliest prayers recorded in the Old Testament. The chief desires expressed are for temporal blessing.

The following prayer was heard from the lips of an African pagan, a chief among the Khonds:

“Mbamba, thou hast held back the rain; give us rain lest we die. Save us from death by famine. Thou art our Father and we are thy children and thou hast created us.

“Dost thou desire our death? Give us daily food. Thou hast given us legs to run and arms to work and children also. Now give us rain that we may have a harvest.”

Nor do pagans pray only for material things. Some of their prayers rise to the ethical and spiritual level and reveal the deeper hunger and famine of the soul. The Gallas of East Africa have an evening prayer which has this beautiful petition: “To Thee, O God, we take our flight; do not take Thy flight and go away from us.”

The ancient Mexicans recognized, amid all their cruel idolatries, a Supreme Being and addressed him as “Invisible, without body, One God of perfection and purity under whose wings we find repose and sure defense.”

Even among the Hottentots of South Africa, one of the names of the Great Spirit was “the Father of all our chiefs”; and the Kekchi tribe of Indians prayed: “O Lord, our Mother, our Father, Lord of the hills and the valleys.” So near and yet so far was their thought from Christ’s words, “Our Father which art in heaven.”

Heiler, in his great monograph on prayer, devotes over one hundred pages to the prayer of primitive races, and discusses its cause and motive as well as its

form and to whom it is addressed. It is true that the earliest cry of prayer is only a cry for help, but it is genuine. Says Heiler:

“Primitive man takes the same attitude when he prays as he does when addressing a chief or a superior. The same affection and trustfulness which he shows toward parents and relations he reveals also in prayer to those exalted beings who are to him as father or mother, grandfather or grandmother. He speaks as a child to his parents. In perfect candour he expresses himself frankly, he ‘pours out his heart’ in simple confidence — God is no stranger, he knows Him well; with unaffected sincerity he loves Him because he has often experienced His goodness; with heartfelt confidence he trusts in Him, he relies on His power and kindness.”

Perhaps this is put too strongly. Yet if prayer is the ladder between earth and heaven; if the man who prays belongs to two worlds and the prayerless man to only one; if the man who prays looks up and away from himself and so is made better — then we gladly recognize that even among primitive savages prayer is a means of strengthening emotion, sustaining courage, and awakening hope.

Prayer among the ancient Greeks was woven into their public and private life. As a rule they prayed in short formulas which they believed had a magical power. Plato says, “Every man of sense before beginning any important work will ask help of the gods.” Plutarch tells of the great orator Pericles that before

he began an address he always prayed the gods to make his words profitable.

Seneca the Roman, a philosopher in the midst of idolatry, proclaimed God's unity when he prayed:

“We worship and adore the Framer and Former of the universe; Governor, Disposer, Keeper. Him on whom all things depend; mind and spirit of the world; from whom all things spring; by whose spirit we live. God of all power, God always present, God above all gods, Thee we worship and adore.”

These altars to unknown gods, to a half-known God, or to the Great Spirit who broods over the chaos of a world lost in sin, whatever else they may teach us, are undoubtedly a rebuke to prayerless Christians and to a form of Christless Christianity that questions the legitimacy and efficacy of prayer.

A year or two ago there was a discussion in a well-known religious periodical as to whether prayer for rain was not absurd in an age of science. Dr. Krapf in his Nika-English dictionary gives the reply from the lips of African pagans in two beautiful prayers, the one used when ploughing and the other in time of drought.<sup>2</sup>

“O Thou God, I beg of Thee! I am going to cultivate this field. Very well, it is to have enough to eat. Come, Manes! I till this field that the grain may spring up abundantly and that the harvest may be great when it is ripe.” Then he spits on his hoe and says, “May my hoe dig deep into the wet ground.”

And here is the prayer for rain: “Thou, God, give

---

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Le Roy's *The Religion of Primitives*, pp. 197-198.

us rain! We are in a wretched state! We are toiling hard and we are Thy children. Give us clouds full of rain so that the people may have food, we beg Thee, O Thou God. Thou art our Father.” The reader can judge how close this is to the prayers in the Old Testament in time of drought and famine, when “Elias prayed earnestly . . . and the heavens gave rain and the earth brought forth her fruit.” (James 5:17)

One of the oldest and most pathetic prayers in time of agricultural distress is found in the first chapter of the Book of Joel. Professor Robertson Smith says:

“Every verse sparkles with gems. The fig-tree stripped of its bark standing white against the arid landscape; the sackcloth-girt bride wailing for her husband; the empty and ruinous garner; the perplexed rush of the herds maddened with heat and thirst; or the unconscious supplication in which *they* raise their heads to heaven with piteous lowing, are indicated with a concrete pregnancy of language which the translator vainly tries to reproduce.”

To the Apostle Paul, who was not insensitive to suffering, “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain.” The Psalmist asserts that Jehovah hears the young ravens which cry. (Ps. 147:9) No wonder that children, watching the birds, exclaim, “Now the rooks are saying their evening prayers!” (as Gilbert White of Selborne relates) or of domestic fowls that “they look up to God and give thanks” for every morsel of food. We live in a world of prayer. Everything that hath breath praises the Creator or cries to Him for help.

It is more than Hebrew poetic fancy that led Hosea to write:

“And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord. I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel.”

A chain of prayer from animate and inanimate, from the lowest to the highest-of-all. An American poet, E. Merrill Rood, voices *The Prayer of the Seed*:

*“I grow (Thy will be done!)  
From earth’s oblivion  
Toward lightning and the sun.  
But oh, since Thou didst share  
The world that I must bear,  
Hear my dark prayer!*

*“Birth is a miracle —  
And, therefore, terrible —  
Remembering Calvary,  
Pity my agony!*

*“Dark, dark, the callous mould  
Covers my heart’s deep gold.  
Strengthen me, shut alone  
With earth, and worm, and stone!  
Confirm my dream: the fair  
Leaves that shall find the air,  
The golden grain to be.  
Bread of Eternity!  
O answer me — and bring  
The heartbreak of the Spring!”*

**II.**  
**THE NATURE OF PRAYER**



*O Lord seek, O Lord find us,  
In Thy patient care;  
Be Thy Love before, behind us,  
Round us, everywhere;  
Lest the god of this world blind us,  
Lest he speak us fair,  
Lest he forge a chain to bind us,  
Lest he bait a snare.  
Turn not from us, call to mind us,  
Find, embrace us, bear;  
Be Thy Love before, behind us,  
Round us everywhere.*

— CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

## II.

### THE NATURE OF PRAYER

**P**RAYER, as we have seen, is the most ancient, the most universal and the most intense expression of the religious instinct. And yet of all the acts and states of the soul it is the most difficult to define — it escapes definition and is broader, higher, deeper than all human language. “Prayer,” says a mystic of the sixteenth century, “is to ask not what we wish of God, but what God wishes of us.” Two years before his death, Coleridge said to his son-in-law:

“To pray, to pray as God would have us — this is what at times makes me turn cold to my soul. Believe me, to pray with all your heart and strength, with the reason and the will, to believe vividly that God will listen to your voice through Christ, and verily do the thing He pleaseth thereupon — this is the last, the greatest achievement of the Christian’s warfare upon earth.”<sup>1</sup>

According to this deep thinker and earnest disciple, the act of prayer enlists all the powers of the soul and requires the whole panoply of God. Did not Paul teach the same truth when he made prayer the climax of the great passage on the weapons of our spiritual warfare? (Eph. 6:10-18)

<sup>1</sup> Jane T. Stoddard, *The New Testament in Life and Literature*, p. 158.

What is the essential nature of prayer, what various elements must be included in it and what takes place in the soul when man prays to God? Undoubtedly, prayer includes more than petition; yet petition is at the heart of prayer. "Ask and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you" — that was one of Christ's first lessons in the school of prayer.

There are many definitions of prayer. James Montgomery crowds fourteen into a single hymn of six stanzas. Prayer is sincere desire; prayer is often inaudible; prayer is hidden fire; prayer is a sigh, a tear; prayer is the upward glance to God; prayer is simple as the lisp of a child; prayer is sublime as God's majesty; it is the cry of the prodigal, the breath of the soul, the mountain-air that invigorates, the watchword at death, the key to heaven and the pathway of our Saviour. To meditate on these definitions alone would lead us into all the wealth of the Scriptures on prayer.

George Herbert, the saintly poet, who died in 1633, has some quaint lines that indicate other and unusual aspects of prayer; he writes in epigrammatic phrases fit to stir our sluggish imagination, if we take time to fathom their depth:

*"Prayer — the Church's banquet, Angel's age,  
God's breath in man returning to his birth,  
The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage,  
The Christian plummet sounding heav'n and earth;*

---

*“Engine against th’ Almightye, sinner’s towre,  
Reversed thunder, Christ-side-piercing spear,  
The six-daies-world transposing in an houre,  
A kind of tune which all things heare and fear;*

*“Softnesse, and peace, and joy, and love, and bliss,  
Exalted manna, gladnesse of the best,  
Heaven in ordinarie, man well drest,  
The milkie way, the bird of Paradise,*

*“Church-bels beyond the starres heard, the soul’s bloud,  
The land of spices, something understood.”*

That last statement is significant. We must pray not only with the spirit but with the understanding.

In the sixty-fourth chapter of Isaiah (one of the five great chapters on prayer in the Bible) we have a definition of prayer that surpasses all others in its boldness, simplicity and psychological accuracy.

After saying that “men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen . . . what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him,” the Prophet confesses his own sins and those of his people. “Our righteousnesses,” he says, “are as filthy rags.” Then follows Isaiah’s definition of prayer in the seventh verse: *“There is none that calleth upon Thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of Thee.”* It is a bold definition. Literally (in the Hebrew text) he says that prayer means to rouse oneself out of sleep and seize hold of Jehovah. Of course, it is not a carnal touch

like that of the heathen who embrace their idols or beat them to obtain their answers. Yet we have here the pathos of a suppliant who is in deadly earnest; the arms, the hands, the very fingers of the soul reaching out to lay hold of God; man's personal, spiritual appropriation of deity!

No wonder Paul calls Isaiah very bold! The human soul is poor and needy, yet can take hold of the infinite and eternal Spirit.

*“Speak to Him thou, for He hears, and spirit with spirit may meet.*

*Closer is he than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.”*

This is the psychology of prayer — the outreach, the communion and union of the whole soul with God as revealed in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the ladder of Jacob by which we climb to God. Anything less than this is not real Christian prayer. Prayer is not only “the highest exercise of the human intellect”; but it is also the highest exercise of the affections, the will, the memory, the imagination and the conscience. All the powers of the human soul find an adequate ethical field of action *only* in prayer. The person who never prays is literally godless. He who does pray is godly in proportion to his inner prayer-life. This is true in all theistic religions, but supremely true in the Christian faith.

First of all, we must take hold of God with our thoughts. The things which the angels desire to look into we may contemplate on our knees. “Wherefore,”

as Peter tells us, we must “gird up the loins of our mind,” and on our knees study to know God with all our mind; not nature, which is His garment; nor man only, although made in His image; nor the saints who are only His servants; but God Himself. By the exercise of our intellects, illuminated by His Spirit, we must strive to understand His being and attributes; to adore Him for our creation and preservation and his daily providence. This is what David said, for example, in the one hundred fourth Psalm: “O God, Thou art very great, Thou art clothed with majesty as with a garment.” Many chapters in the Book of Job and many of the nature Psalms consist almost entirely of this intellectual adoration of God.

Our mind also takes hold of God when we remember His goodness. Thanksgiving is the exercise of our memory in the presence of the source of all blessings. Our imaginations are kindled when we contemplate the marvels of creation, the ocean of the fullness of His love, the firmament of His glory, and the exceeding greatness of His power. When we think of these things we shall regain the lost art of meditation. “My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips: when I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches.” Lean souls may be restored to health and vigor by the exercise of this lost art. How little time we really give to this element in prayer!

The psychology of prayer also includes taking

hold of God with our emotions, our passions and our deepest feelings. We find them all in the prayers of David — awe, fear, sorrow, joy, love, hatred, jealousy, passion. All these emotions exercised in the right way find their place in secret prayer. Here they need not be stifled. The only cure for hypocrisy is to lay hold of the source of all sincerity — secret prayer. This is what David meant when he said, “*Pour out your heart before Him.*” The scum, and the dregs! Paul makes reference in his Epistles once and again to his tears. It is worth while to look up the references. In his *Private Devotions*, Bishop Lancelot Andrewes has a remarkable prayer for tears:

“Give tears, O God, give a fountain of waters to my head. Give me the grace of tears. Bedew the dryness of my desert heart. Give me tears such as Thou didst give David of old, or Jeremiah, or Peter, or Magdalene. . . Give me tears which Thou mayest put into Thy bottle and write into Thy book . . .”

In the confession of sin, daily and detailed, this element of prayer comes to its own. Not without reason does *The Book of Common Prayer* begin with a great confession. Bunyan’s *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* and Bishop Andrewes’ *Private Devotions* are two books in which every page seems wet with tears. Both men were giants in prayer.

Again when we are filled with a passion of love for God's kingdom and a holy zeal for His glory, we can understand the journals that record the prayers of Henry Martyn in Persia or the diary of David Brainerd in his work among the Indians. What an outpouring of compassion for Africa in the prayers of David Livingstone, or in those of Andrew Murray! One is reminded of the lines of the poet:

*"The heart is a strange thing:  
It has no eyes,  
But it can see through dark earth  
And beyond blue skies.*

*"The heart has no hands,  
But, knowing Love's touch,  
All the hands of the world  
Cannot do so much.*

*"The heart has no feet,  
But it may go  
Swiftly to Heaven above  
Or Hell below.*

*"The heart is a strange thing,  
More strange than the head:  
Sometimes it may live again  
After long dead."<sup>1</sup>*

---

<sup>1</sup> Minnie Case Hopkins, in *The Christian Century*.



But prayer is even more than this. It is indeed the highest exercise of the intellect and the noblest use of the emotions, but it is also the largest arena for the use of the will. This power of contrary choice God has given us. It is not merely subjective and submissive, but objective and active. The will of God is not only a pillow on which we may rest our weary souls, but a power-house to give us strength for service. The will of a Christian in prayer is far-reaching because it is heavenly in its origin and earthly in its potentiality. When Daniel prayed, archangels were set in motion. True prayer sets in motion divine forces (and restrains evil forces) in a way we shall never understand until we stand in the Kingdom of Light.

True prayer will achieve just as much as it costs us. It is the little further that costs; it is the little further that counts. "He went a little further and prayed the same words." Gethsemane. Gabbatha. Golgotha. The Resurrection morning.

The ministry of intercession is a great battlefield. We need the whole armour of God, for we wrestle in the trenches against all the powers of darkness. On our knees we are kings and priests in God's universe. Napoleon or Alexander never had such an empire. George Muller and Hudson Taylor were ambassadors plenary of their King.

---

The inner chamber into which we retire for daily prayer is the gymnasium of the soul. Dr. Karl Heim, of the University of Tuebingen, in his book *The New Divine Order*, has the following remarkable statement regarding prayer:

“It is part of the essence of prayer to have the certainty that the whole of world-history, from the solar orbits to the oscillations of the electrons, lies in this moment in the hand of God like soft clay in the hand of the potter. He can make of it what He wills. No sparrow falls from the roof without His will.

“Whether the form of the world changes or remains the same, it does not happen from causal necessity, but because God wills it so. In everything that may befall me in the next moment, I have to deal not with dead matter, with laws of Nature, nor with men, but only with Him. Always I stand before the simple choice between Him Who draws me upwards, and the adverse force, which wants to draw me down. Everything else is only expression and precipitate of this spiritual strife.

“Prayer, therefore, whether the one who prays is conscious of it or not, assumes always the interpretation of Nature which has been evolved in the foregoing discussion. For men who pray the history of the world, when seen from within, is Will, divine

and demoniac Will. Miracle is the victory of God in this strife of spiritual powers. Everyone who prays knows that this victory is possible at any moment and in any situation.”

We must bear all this in mind if we would understand the true nature of prayer, its psychological elements and the arena in which true prayer becomes effectual because it is fervent.

### **III.**

## **PLACE AND POSTURE IN PRAYER**

*“Therefore when thou wouldest pray, or dost thine alms,  
Blow not a trump before thee: hypocrites  
Do thus, vaingloriously; the common streets  
Boast of their largess, echoing their psalms.  
On such the laud of men, like unctuous balms,  
Falls with sweet savour. Impious counterfeits!  
Prating of heaven, for earth their bosom beats!  
Grasping at weeds, they lose immortal palms!  
God needs not iteration nor vain cries:  
That man communion with his God might share  
Below, Christ gave the ordinance of prayer:  
Vague embages, and witless ecstasies,  
Avail not: ere a voice to prayer be given  
The heart should rise on wings of love to heaven.”*

—AUBREY DE VERE in *The Right Use of Prayer*.

### III.

#### PLACE AND POSTURE IN PRAYER

**A**LL places are not alike for prayer, although prayer may be made in all places. In one sense we may say of prayer what God said to Joshua: "Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours." And yet in the experience of God's people, both under the Old and the New Covenants, there are places that are more sacred than any other because of solitude or of symbolism, because of special memories or of special promises; holy places where the worshipper is more conscious than elsewhere of the presence and power of God; where God has manifested His blessing or shown His favor.

Jacob's experience at Bethel is typical of how ordinary desert stones may become a holy altar with a ladder that leads up to heaven and how the commonplace becomes a never-to-be-forgotten sanctuary. "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not . . . how dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

Faced in our day with a welter of diverse forms and modes of worship and a confusion of tongues regarding the proper place for private and public prayer, it is well to recall and re-examine the charter of Christian worship given by our Lord. In His conversation

with the woman of Samaria (John 4:7-26), she herself, like many of us today, tries to evade the personal trend of Christ's teaching on prayer by referring to the controversy regarding the *place* of prayer and sacrifice. Gerezim or Jerusalem, which is more sacred and, therefore, more suitable? The woman asked the wrong question. It is not supremely important *where* we worship but *how* we worship — in Spirit and reality; and *whom* we worship — the Father of all, who is a Spirit and seeks spiritual worshippers.

“At the same time” (as someone observes) “we need to remind ourselves that to worship in spirit does not necessarily mean that we are to dispense with the aid of material things, as the Quakers try to do. The material is not unspiritual; it is neutral, but it may become sacramental. The contrary to spiritual is not material but formal; and that was just the weakness of Jewish worship—its formality.”

Why are certain places more suitable, more inspiring, more helpful, more holy than others when we pray? For at least three reasons — solitude, symbolism and memory. Private prayer to be real seeks solitude. The suppliant desires to be alone with God. “Thou when thou prayest enter into thy closet and when thou hast shut thy door pray to thy Father which is in secret.” The saints of all the ages have sought and found God in solitude: Abraham when the horror of great darkness fell upon him and he kept lonely vigil over his sacrifice; Moses at the burning bush in the desert waste; Elijah on the top of Carmel and at the mouth of the cave; Isaiah in the temple court; Daniel on his knees

alone, facing Jerusalem; Peter on the house-top at Joppa; Saul after the vision on the road to Damascus; John in the Spirit on the Lord's day on lonely Patmos; David Livingstone on his knees in the hut at Chitambo's village praying until God called him home. But most of all, Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours, praying alone in the desert place, alone on the mountain top, alone in Gethsemane, alone when they all forsook Him and fled, praying for the soldiers who nailed him to the Cross. The secret place of prayer is alone with God. Jesus loved solitude for prayer. He sought to be alone.

*“Shadows of evening fall, yet wildly still  
They throng Him, touch Him, clutch His garment's  
hem,  
Fall down and clasp His feet, cry on Him, till  
The Master, spent, slips from the midst of them  
And climbs the mountain for a cup of peace  
Taking a sheer and rugged track untrod  
Save by a poor lost sheep with thorn-torn fleece  
That follows on, and hears Him talk with God.”*

Next to solitude the best place for prayer is where we have the special promise of God's presence and where His name is recorded. “Where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.” (Ex. 20:24). How amiable are His Tabernacles and the courts of Jehovah! A day in His courts is better than a thousand. Where the sparrow finds a house and the swallow builds a nest the Jewish worshipper would fain pour out his soul before God. The Taber-



nacle in the wilderness and afterwards at Shiloh, the temple of Solomon with all its glory, the later temple of Ezra and that built by Herod the Great — all of them were the centers of worship for believing Israel, the holy place where God manifested His presence, and therefore preeminently the place of prayer. “Who shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place?” “Peter and John went up into the Temple to pray” and like their Master undoubtedly prayed every sabbath-day in the synagogue. The upper room (wherever that may have been in Jerusalem) was the accustomed place of prayer where the disciples gathered with one accord before Pentecost. Down the centuries and in all lands, catacombs, conventicles, chapels, churches, cathedrals, a wayside cross or a Quaker meeting-house, all have witnessed the truth of the great promise: “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit” (Isaiah 57:15). God’s house is the place of prayer for God’s people. Why, therefore, should its doors be closed during the long week, and open only on Sunday?

A third factor that enters into the sacredness of the place of prayer is reminiscence. Memory clings to scenes and places as well as to persons and events. We read in the Gospel, “And He [Jesus] went again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode . . . and many believed on Him there.” It was the place where John preached

repentance, where Jesus, although sinless, was numbered with the transgressors, where the heavens opened, where the symbol of the Dove and the Voice proclaimed the eternal sonship. No wonder that Jesus sought the place again and that many believed on Him there. The association of ideas is of great help in prayer. Sometimes it is well-nigh irresistible. The story is told of an earnest, humble Christian man who lingered at the close of the memorial service held in the church where William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, was converted. He kneeled alone at the altar-rail praying repeatedly: "O Lord, do it again! Do it again!"

The place where we first confessed our Lord; the place where we were baptized as adults or in infancy; where we took our first Communion; where we made some great decision or obtained some great forgiveness — all these places of prayer are holy ground because of holy memories.

An American poet pictures one of the soldiers who crucified our Lord and was compelled to pray:

*"We gambled for the clothes He wore,  
His sandals fell to me.  
They had been scarred upon the road  
That winds to Calvary.  
I clasped them on unholy feet,*

*Set out upon my way —  
The paths were strange the sandals chose,  
I could not make them stay.  
They took me to an olive grove  
So dark I could not see —  
And I, who always scoffed at prayer,  
Knelt down beneath a tree.”<sup>1</sup>*

There is truth in the imagination of the poet, for there is no stronger influence on the mind than the association of ideas and the power of memory. Jacob could never forget Bethel, and Christ was recognized by the disciples of Emmaus in the breaking of the bread. Across the brook Cedron there was a garden which even Judas knew full well, “for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with His disciples.” Where He meets with us, whatever the circumstance, is the place of prayer. Even as David gave Solomon “the pattern . . . of the place of the mercy seat” (I Chronicles 28:11), so David’s greater Son, as we shall see later, gave us the pattern of the prayer-life. Many of the high places and the holy places of the Old Testament now lie desolate, but the “heavenly places” of the New Testament are waiting to welcome all true worshippers.

We may still worship in some holy temple and catch a vision as Zachariah did; or go with David

---

<sup>1</sup> Goldie C. Smith, *Sandals*, in “The Master of Men,” p. 142.

with glad heart to the assembly of the upright and the great congregation. We may have fellowship with a chosen few in an upper room waiting for the blessing, tarry on a housetop with Peter, pray on the seashore with Paul, or find God near, as Jesus did, in the solitude of the desert and on the mountain-side. "I will therefore," said the apostle, "that men pray *everywhere*, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting."

The reference here to uplifted hands shows that place and posture are closely related in the practice of prayer. We grow accustomed to pray in a certain place and we also form the habit of a certain posture when we commune with God. All the great non-Christian religions put emphasis on the right posture in their minute regulations of public and private prayer. This is most pronounced in Islam, where in mosque worship the believers are drawn up in ranks and prostrate themselves with various genuflections and movements of the arms and even of the fingers until it strikes the onlooker as being prayer-drill rather than spiritual worship. Nevertheless, prayer in the Old and the New Testaments is generally accompanied by some kind of posture or gesture. The most usual form was prostration, that is bowing down low, like that of the Oriental to an earthly superior. The Hebrew words "he prostrated himself" are usually rendered "he worshipped." Ezekiel fell on his face when he saw the

glory of the Lord (Ezekiel 3:23; 9:8; 11:13). Jesus took the same posture in Gethsemane; and the angels in glory fall down on their faces in adoration.

Prayer also is offered kneeling. We read that Daniel, Stephen, Peter and Paul knelt. Sometimes the temple worshipper stood. So, Hannah prayed for a son, Solomon blessed the congregation, and Jeremiah offered his prayer. The Pharisees, Christ's own disciples and the publican offered prayer while standing. "It has been suggested," says Dr. McFadyen, "with some probability, that ordinarily prayer was offered kneeling or standing with prostration at the beginning and the end." Sitting is mentioned only once, in David's prayer of gratitude (II Sam. 7:18), and may be taken as an exception, or perhaps it was due to his old age. Surely it is the least reverent attitude of the body when we approach the King, eternal, immortal, invisible, and call Him our Lord.

The lifting up of the hands toward heaven, or towards Jerusalem, accompanied kneeling or standing (II Chron. 6:13; Ex. 9:29; I Kings 8:22,24) and was so common that it becomes a synonym for prayer itself (Psalm 141:2). We infer that eyes were open during prayer from the statement that the publican "would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven" and from the practice of Jesus Himself (Mark 6:41; 7:34). How

the Western custom of praying with closed eyelids arose is uncertain. Orientals do not generally observe it. It may be an application of the words of Jesus regarding secret prayer and the closing of the door against intrusion or interruption.

Neither place nor posture is of supreme importance, but both deserve attention. Slovenly habits in prayer cannot yield great spiritual power. The wise words of Augustine may well be pondered for they are abundantly illustrated in the lives of the saints:

“In prayer to God, men do with the members of their bodies that which becometh suppliants when they bend their knees, when they stretch forth their hands, or even prostrate themselves on the ground, and whatever else they visibly do, albeit their invisible will and heart’s intention be known unto God, and He needs not these tokens that any man’s mind should be opened unto Him: only hereby one more excites himself to pray and groan more humbly and more fervently. And I know not how it is, while these motions of the body cannot be made but by a motion of the mind preceding, yet by the same being outwardly in visible sort made, that inward invisible one which made them is increased: and thereby the heart’s affection which preceded that they might be made, groweth because they are made. But still if any be in that way held or even bound, that he

is not able to do these things with his limbs, it does not follow that the inner man does not pray, and before the eyes of God in its most secret chamber, where it hath compunction, cast itself on the ground."<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Hastings, *The Christian Doctrine of Prayer*, p. 431.

## **IV.**

### **THE TIME ELEMENT IN PRAYER**



*“Jesus appears to have devoted Himself specially to prayer at times when His life was unusually full of work and excitement. His was a very busy life; there were nearly always many coming and going about Him. Sometimes, however, there was such a congestion of thronging objects that He had scarcely time to eat. But even then He found time to pray. Indeed, these appear to have been with Him seasons of more prolonged prayer than usual. Thus we read: ‘So much the more went there a fame abroad of Him, and great multitudes came together to hear and to be healed by Him of their infirmities; but He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed.’*

*“Many in our day know what this congestion of occupation is: they are swept off their feet with their engagements and can scarcely find time to eat. We make this a reason for not praying; Jesus made it a reason for praying. Is there any doubt which is the better course?”*

— JAMES STALKER in *Imago Christi*.

## IV.

### THE TIME ELEMENT IN PRAYER

**T**HOSE who are staggered and offended when they are told by the saints of the ages that man should spend hours upon hours alone with himself and God, need only to recall the prayer-life of our Lord. He was never conscious of sin and therefore needed neither confession nor forgiveness. He was ever mindful of God's presence and power. Yet of Him we read that He arose "a great while before daybreak" to pray; that "he spent all night in prayer to God"; that "being in agony he prayed the more earnestly"; that He spoke a parable to this end "that men ought always to pray and not to faint"; and that "because of our importunity" our Heavenly Father will give His Holy Spirit (Luke 11:1-13).

First of all, we must ask ourselves what time is, before we can know how much time or how little time we need for prayer. The Victorian idea of time was different from that of the present day. Philosophers and theologians have grappled with the problem of time and one of them says: "All enigmas are bound up with the problem of time; if once we knew what time really is, all metaphysical questions would be answered." The mystic as well as the scientist is puzzled by the real relation of time to eternity. Is it quantitative

or qualitative? Is eternity, past and future, merely the extension of time or is it something on a higher plane than time and space? According to Althaus, "Each point of time has relation perpendicularly to eternity. Eternity is supra-temporal. Time is as full of eternity as the atom is of energy." Every point of time may, therefore, be a crisis between two eternities. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." The present hour, the present moment has a value that can only be fully expressed in terms of the eternal.

The solemnity and the supreme value of time is its relation to the unseen and the eternal. And this relation is momentary. Time flies.

"The peculiarity of Time," [says Karl Heim], "is this, that each moment is only once present, then it is over, never to return again, and never to be recalled. A little while ago, anything was possible. Now the dice are fallen, the books are closed. The past stands eternally motionless. History is a flowing stream, which as soon as it has passed a certain place is suddenly frozen."

All this has the closest possible relation to the habit of prayer and the life of prayer. We need God every hour. Moment by moment we must be kept by His love. Unless we take *time* to be holy, there will be no holiness for us in *eternity*. We must pray without ceasing if we would live our life in conscious fellowship with God. We must pray always, for we are in the midst of foes, and temptation lurks everywhere. We must pray at all times for we know not which time may

be a time of crisis, nor when time for us will end and eternity begin.

To the saints of the Old and New Testament from Jacob at Peniel to Paul in the Mamertine prison, prayer has been a wrestling against invisible foes. The Christian soldier is always to be on guard, always alert, always at prayer. Amy Wilson Carmichael, that brave missionary in Southern India, became seriously ill as the result of an accident in 1931. But she continued her prayer-conflict. In *Rose from Briar* she writes regarding the ministry of intercession:

“There is no discharge in our warfare — no, not for a single day. We are never *hors de combat*. We may be called to serve on the visible field, going continually into the invisible both to renew our strength and to fight the kind of battle that can only be fought there. Or we may be called off the visible altogether for awhile, and drawn deep into the invisible. That dreary word ‘laid aside’ is never for us; we are soldiers of the King of kings. Soldiers are not shelved.

*“For us swords drawn, up to the gates of heaven,  
Oh may no coward spirit seek to leaven  
The warrior code, the calling that is ours;  
Forbid that we should sheathe our swords in flowers.*

*“Swords drawn,  
Swords drawn,  
Up to the gates of heaven —  
For us swords drawn  
Up to the gates of heaven.”*

Could there be a finer interpretation of the difficult words of the psalmist, "Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hands . . . this honor have all his saints" (Ps. 149).

There is a second reason why we need time, and much time, for prayer. It is not only because time is short and we are stewards of this priceless gift, but because some things cannot be done in a hurry. True prayer takes time. There are processes of growth and development in nature that can by no artificial means be hastened. The tree "that looks to God all day and lifts her leafy arms to pray" is not the mushroom growth of a summer night. We need time *before* we pray to realize God's presence, *while* we are praying to realize our own and the world's need, and *after* we have prayed to meditate on God's wonderful grace and to thank Him for what He has promised.

Preparation for prayer is almost as important as prayer itself. We cannot rush into the presence of the King of kings. There is a little book of devotion called *God's Minute*, and although the contents are valuable one wonders why there should be Christian people who have only one minute to spare for God and leave one thousand four hundred and thirty-nine minutes of the day for themselves! In the increasing hurry of life and in the midst of its drudgery there are doubtless those who must crowd their prayers and compress their periods of devotion into ejaculatory petitions. Yet

even such may learn a secret from the unknown author of the kitchen-prayer:

*“Lord of all pots and pans and things, since I’ve no  
time to be  
A Saint by doing lovely things, or watching late with  
Thee,  
Or dreaming in the dawnlight, or storming Heaven’s  
gates,  
Make me a saint by getting meals, and washing up  
the plates.*

*“Although I must have Martha’s hands, I have a Mary’s  
mind;  
And when I black the boots and shoes, Thy sandals,  
Lord, I find.  
I think of how they trod the earth, what time I scrub  
the floor;  
Accept this meditation, Lord, I haven’t time for more.”*

It is meditation in prayer as well as preparation for prayer that makes it impossible to pray in a hurry. The difference between a luke-warm Christian and the saints lies here. The latter waited on God. They held their hearts still, and gave them to be broken and made contrite. They poured out their hearts — all the dross and all the dregs — and that takes time. The broken and the contrite heart is not attained by a Coué’ formula or by vain repetitions of others’ prayers which we have not yet made our very own. Again, we can never learn the patience of unanswered prayer until we have tar-

ried long and repeatedly at the mercy-seat. "God is patient because He is eternal," says St. Augustine, and until we practice patience in prayer we do not become intimate and colloquial with our Creator and Redeemer. In the words of one of our present-day mystics,

"If we gave ourselves to systematic meditation even for a few weeks, we would be surprised to discover how feeble our hold upon fundamental principles has been and how badly we lacked orientation in our spiritual geography."

Prayer is the gymnasium for the soul. If we would grow in grace and knowledge we must give time for this spiritual exercise.

Yet because "to everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven" we may well ask what is the best time for meditation and silence, for adoration, confession and intercession in the busy day and amid life's irksome duties. "Daniel . . . kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime" (Dan. 6:10). And David tells us what his custom was: "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud; and He shall hear my voice" (Ps. 55:17). The author of another later Psalm says, "Seven times a day do I praise Thee" (Ps. 119:164). Paul bids us pray without ceasing and at all times. Of Peter we read that he prayed at the third hour, the sixth hour and the ninth hour. David also prayed in the silent watches of the night. "My soul shall be satisfied as

---

with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips: when I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches" (Ps. 63:5,6). Father John, of the Orthodox Greek Church, wrote a little book on *Making Every Day Sacramental*. We give a paragraph from the translation by Dr. Whyte:

"On rising from your bed, say: 'In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, I begin this new day, when I awake I am still with Thy righteousness, and with Thy whole image.' While washing, say: 'Purge me from the sins of the night, and I shall be clean. Wash Thou me, and I shall be whiter than snow.' When putting on your clean linen, say: 'Create in me a clean heart, O Lord, and clothe me with the fine linen, which is the righteousness of the saints.' When you break your fast, think of the length of Christ's fast, and in His Name eat your morning meal with gladness of heart. Drinking water, or tea, or sweet mead, think of the true quenchings of the thirst of the heart. If you wish to walk or drive, or go in a boat somewhere, first pray to the Lord to keep this your going out and coming in. If you see and hear a storm, think of the sea of passions in your own and in other men's hearts. If you are a scholar or an official, or an officer, or a painter, or a manufacturer, or a mechanic, remember that the science of sciences to you is to be a new creature in Christ Jesus. And every day, and in every place, work at the new creation which you yourself are. Working with all your



might at your proper and peculiar calling — work out your own salvation in every part of every day.”

Sir Thomas Browne, the author of *Religio Medici*, although a busy physician, tells us that whenever he saw a church or entered a street he prayed. Charles Simeon devoted four hours a day to prayer, and Charles Wesley, two hours. Bishop Lancelot Andrewes spent five hours daily in prayer and meditation. He was a contemporary of Shakespeare and one of the translators of the King James Version. His life was steeped in prayer and his book *Private Devotions* is incomparable, immortal and priceless. I bought a copy of Alexander Whyte's edition in Bombay, in 1905, and have used it more than any other book except the Bible for private devotion. What Andrewes prayed for in his closet and how he prayed for it and how long, all the world may now openly know and have the reward of — for he did it in secret. Only long after his death was it discovered and published. One is covered with confusion and shame or stirred to emulation and despair when he contemplates the prayer-life of those who lived so close to God. David Brainerd among the Delaware Indians; David Livingstone on his travels; Hudson Taylor in China; “Praying Hyde” of North India; saintly George Bowen of Bombay; Henry Martyn with his diary; Francis Xavier and his rosary; James Gilmour on his knees in the deserts of Mongolia; Bishop Bompas in the Arctic regions or Mary Slessor wrestling with God for souls in Calabar — how they put us to shame when we say we can find no time for prayer!

More than one of the saints have told us that it is

not "until we feel utterly bored with our prayers, and still pray on, that we can know the true power and joy of prayer." St. Francis of Assisi waited long before the answer came and then the joy of the Lord was his strength. We are not to begrudge the hours when we watch in vain for the Lord's coming. Sometimes, as to the disciples on the lake, He comes "at the fourth watch," the bleak, weary, disillusioned end of the night or of the false dawn. We must watch and pray lest we enter into temptation. And then, when we *are* tempted, we need prayer all the more. The morning-watch gives us the treasures of silence and meditation; the night-watch, the joy of fellowship and the memory of past victories. Such experiences are not the exclusive property of mystics or the prerogative of a class; they are the birth-right of all those who approach the mercy-seat. This is the secret of His presence, the hiding-place of the soul. "Wait, I say, on the Lord." Repair the broken altar. Bind the sacrifice with cords. Then wait for the fire of God. The spark of a living faith, then the ignition and illumination of the Holy Spirit.

*"If we with earnest effort could succeed  
To make our life one long connected prayer,  
As lives of some perhaps have been and are  
If never leaving Thee, we had no need  
Our wandering spirits back again to lead  
Into Thy presence, but continued there,  
Like angels standing on the highest stair  
Of the sapphire throne, this were to pray indeed.*

*But if distractions manifold prevail,  
And if in this we must confess we fail,  
Grant us to keep at least a prompt desire,  
Continual readiness for prayer and praise,  
An altar heaped and waiting to take fire  
With the least spark, and leap into a blaze."*

In order to pray without ceasing throughout all the hours of the day the ancient Latin church and the Greek church employed devices and aids to memory. The rosary, the breviary and the horology were all intended as aids to the memory and guides for persistent and protracted private prayer. Remembering the teaching of our Lord, that prayer is not heard "because of much speaking" and that we must not cultivate but avoid "vain repetitions," we may yet, I think, greatly profit by the use of such an horology as is given by Bishop Andrewes. It may well conclude this chapter on the time element in prayer.

### AN HOROLOGY

(A prayer for every hour of the day)

O Thou, Who hast put in Thine own power  
the times and the seasons:  
give us grace that in a convenient and  
opportune season we may pray to Thee  
and deliver us.

Thou, Who for us men and for our salvation,  
wast born in the depth of night:  
grant us to be born again daily by renewing  
of the Holy Ghost,

---

until Christ Himself be formed in us,  
to a perfect man;  
and deliver us.

Thou, Who very early in the morning,  
at the rising of the sun,  
didst rise again from the dead:  
raise us also daily to newness of life,  
suggesting to us, for Thou knowest them,  
methods of penitence;  
and deliver us.

Thou, Who at the third hour didst send down  
Thy Holy Spirit  
on the apostles:  
take not the same Holy Spirit from us,  
but renew Him daily in our hearts;  
and deliver us.

Thou, Who at the sixth hour of the sixth day  
didst nail together with Thyself upon the cross  
the sins of the world:  
blot out the handwriting of our sins  
that is against us,  
and, taking it away, deliver us.

Thou, Who at the sixth hour didst let down  
a great sheet from heaven to earth,  
the symbol of Thy Church:  
receive into it us sinners of the Gentiles,  
and with it receive us up into heaven;  
and deliver us.

Thou, Who at the seventh hour didst command  
the fever to leave the nobleman's son:

if there be any fever in our hearts,  
if any sickness, remove it from us also;  
and deliver us.

Thou, Who at the ninth hour, for us sinners,  
and for our sins,  
didst taste of death:  
mortify in us our members which are upon earth,  
and whatsoever is contrary to Thy will;  
and deliver us.

Thou, Who didst will the ninth hour to be  
the hour of prayer:  
hear us while we pray at the hour of prayer,  
and grant unto us that which we pray for and  
desire;  
and deliver us.

Thou, Who at the tenth hour didst grant unto  
Thine apostle  
to discover Thy Son,  
and to cry out with great gladness,  
We have found the Messiah:  
grant unto us also, in like manner,  
to find the same Messiah,  
and, having found Him, to rejoice in like manner;  
and deliver us.

Thou, Who didst, even at the eleventh hour of the  
day,  
of Thy goodness send into Thy vineyard  
those that had stood all the day idle,  
promising them a reward:  
grant unto us the like grace,

and, though it be late,  
even as it were about the eleventh hour,  
favorably receive us who return unto Thee;  
and deliver us.

Thou, Who at the sacred hour of the supper  
wast pleased to institute  
the mysteries of Thy body and blood:  
render us mindful and partakers of the same  
yet never to condemnation, but to the remission  
of sin,  
and to the acquiring the promises  
of the new testament;  
and deliver us.

Thou, Who at eventide wast pleased to be taken  
down from the cross,  
and laid in the grave:  
take away from us, and bury in Thy sepulchre,  
our sins,  
covering whatever evil we have committed  
with good works;  
and deliver us.

Thou, Who late in the night, by breathing  
on Thine apostles,  
didst bestow on them the power  
of the remission and retention of sins:  
grant unto us to experience that power  
for their remission, O Lord, not for their retention;  
and deliver us.

Thou, Who at midnight didst raise David Thy  
prophet,

and Paul Thine apostle, that they should praise  
Thee:

give us also songs in the night,  
and to be mindful of Thee upon our beds;  
and deliver us.

Thou, Who with Thine own mouth hast declared,  
at midnight the Bridegroom shall come:  
grant that the cry may ever sound in our ears,  
Behold, the Bridegroom cometh,  
that we may never be unprepared to go forth  
and meet Him;  
and deliver us.

Thou, Who by the crowing of the cock,  
didst admonish Thine apostle,  
and didst cause him to return to repentance:  
grant that we, at the same warning, may follow his  
example,  
may go forth and weep bitterly  
for the things in which we have sinned against  
Thee;  
and deliver us.

Thou, Who hast foretold Thy coming to judgment  
in a day when we think not, and in an hour  
when we are not aware:  
grant that every day and every hour  
we may be prepared, and waiting Thy advent;  
and deliver us.

Thou, Who sendest forth the light,  
and createst the morning,  
and makest Thy sun to rise upon the evil

and the good:  
illuminate the blindness of our minds by the  
knowledge of truth,  
lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us,  
that in Thy light we may see light,  
and at length in the light of grace the light of  
glory.  
Thou, Who givest food to all flesh,  
Who feedest the young ravens  
which cry unto Thee,  
and hast held us up from our youth until now,  
fill our hearts with food and gladness,  
and establish our hearts with Thy grace.  
Thou, Who hast made the evening the end  
of the day,  
so that Thou mightest bring the evening of life  
to our minds:  
grant us always to consider  
that our life passeth away like a day;  
to remember the days of darkness,  
that they are many,  
that the night cometh  
wherein no man can work;  
by good works to prevent the darkness,  
lest we be cast out into utter darkness;  
and continually to cry unto Thee.



Abide with us, Lord,  
for it is toward evening, and the day of our life  
is far spent.

The work of the Creator is justice;  
of the Redeemer, pity;  
of the Holy Ghost, inspiration,  
Who is the other Comforter,  
the Anointing,  
the Seal,  
the Earnest.

**V.**

**THE POWER OF PRAYER**

*“Out of solitary dialogue with God streams a power whose importance cannot be imagined, a power of concentrating the will and overcoming temptation, a power to endure all suffering, a power to influence the lives of others, yea even a power to force the fundamental laws of the physical world off their hinges. That we as Christians have the tremendous possibility of speaking personally with the Supreme Power which directs the course of all events, gives a strength and depth to our devotion to our Lord’s cause such as no other movement possesses, however powerful may be the organization it has brought forth.”*

—KARL HEIM, D.D., PH.D., in *The Church of Christ and the Problems of the Day*.

## V.

### THE POWER OF PRAYER

**T**HERE can be no doubt that in some way or other prayer has power. The most spiritual men, the greatest heroes of the faith, the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles have found power in prayer. Our Lord Himself could not dispense with it. Inter-course with God and with the unseen world is not only a reality for those who pray, but power comes to them in the very act. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."

From the very nature of prayer we would expect dynamic results. When the negative and the positive poles of a battery are both charged, a spark of fire leaps out when they come in contact. When man's utter need and helplessness are brought face to face with God's might and mercy in believing prayer, something notable happens. Prayer is a lifting up of mind and heart and will to God. And God hears and answers the cry of the soul-of-man made in His image.

When man lays hold of God, God lays hold of man. Deep calleth unto deep. The depth of our misery to the depth of His mercy. Where the roaring sea and the lowering sky meet there is a waterspout. "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." "This poor man cried and the Lord heard him."

We know there is potency in prayer from its very nature, from our own experience, and from the abundant testimony of God's Word in precept, promise and example.

All so-called scientific or philosophic objections to prayer as being futile rest on the false premise that there is nothing supernatural. The same materialistic arguments apply against belief in the Virgin birth, against belief in the Trinity, against faith in the bodily resurrection and the ascension of our Lord. But "there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of" in human philosophy.

*"If radio's slim fingers can pluck a melody  
From night—and toss it o'er a continent or sea;  
If the petalled white notes of a violin  
Are blown across the mountains or the city's din;  
If songs, like crimson roses, are called from thin  
blue air —  
Why should mortals wonder, if God hears prayer?"*

The two chief objections to prayer made by science falsely so-called are, that prayer interrupts the natural order, and that prayer to the Omnipotent and All-merciful is impertinence. Why should we expect the through traffic on the highways of the laws of nature to be side-tracked for a local train that carries our puny petitions? Why should we bother to *ask*, when "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things?"

But both objections fall to the ground when we have

faith in the testimony of God's Word and in the experience of His people since the world began. Those who make these objections are not always experts in the realm of prayer. Who would listen to a lecture on chemistry by any man who had never performed a laboratory experiment? Who would bow to an opinion on harmony by one who was deaf and dumb? We believe what Jesus Christ tells us about prayer because He speaks with authority. No man ever prayed as He did. No man ever taught the power of prayer more explicitly and repeatedly than our Master. So we answer the scientific objector in the words of one who knew the power of prayer, Dora Greenwell:

“Can the humble request of believing lips restrain, accelerate, change the settled order of events? Can prayer make things that are not to be as though they were? Are events, in short, brought about through prayer that would not otherwise take place? Yes, a thousand times yes! To believe anything short of this is to take the soul out of every text that refers to prayer, is to do away with the force of every scriptural illustration that bears upon it — to believe anything short of this is to believe that God has placed a mighty engine in the hands of His creature, but one that will not work, useful only as a scientific toy might be that helps to bring out a child's faculties, valuable only as a means of training the soul to commune with God. Yet what so easy for the unbeliever as to cavil at prayer; what so easy even for the Christian as to fail and falter in this region, and to stop short of the fulness of this, God's own

Land of Promise, through unbelief? The commonplace objection to prayer, founded upon the supposed immutability of the laws by which God governs the world, is easily met and answered by the fact that prayer is itself one of these laws, upon whose working God has determined that a certain result shall follow."

The Bible contains a wealth of testimony to the power of prayer. Every injunction to pray, every command to make our requests known to God would be hollow mockery if prayer did not prevail. "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." How could Christ say that, if there were no hearing Ear, no Divine Personality with whom we could commune, no Hand to lift the latch and open the door. Concerning a poor oppressed slave Jehovah says to Moses, "And it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, I will hear; for I am gracious" (Exod. 22:27). To Solomon He gives the great promise: "If My people which are called by My name shall humble themselves and pray and seek My grace . . . then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and will heal their land" (II Chron. 7:14). In the book of Psalms we have a score of definite promises that God hears and answers prayer (Ps. 9:12; 10:17; 34:15; 37:4; 56:9; 62:2-5; 69:33; 81:10; 86:5; 91:15; 102:17; 145:18, etc.). "He will regard the prayer of the destitute and not despise their prayer . . . for He hath looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth,

to hear the groaning of the prisoner and to loose those that are appointed to die." Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Amos, Zephaniah, Zechariah — all contain great and definite promises for those who pray.

The door that stands only ajar in the Old Testament is flung wide open in the New Testament with its exceedingly great and precious promises for those who pray. "Every one that asketh receiveth." *"If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father. . ."* "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it to you."

Therefore the apostles came "boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace" in all their time of need. They asked of God who gave to all men liberally and did not upbraid. They prayed for themselves and for each other and for the Church of God without ceasing because they knew that the "effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." The lonely apostle testified at the close of his life: "Whatsoever we ask we receive of Him because we keep His commandments; if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us; and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him."

Equally abundant and, if possible, even more convincing than these promises are the examples of answered prayer in the Scriptures. The lives of Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Gideon, David, Elijah, Elisha, Asa,



Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Isaiah, Manasseh, Daniel and Jeremiah are illustrations of the power of prayer both subjective and objective. The New Testament evidence is even more familiar. In the day when they cried, God answered them and strengthened them with strength in their souls. "When they prayed," on the day of Pentecost, "the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost; and they spake the word of God with boldness." The mighty acts of the Apostles began with common prayer. Their united prayer produced miraculous change in themselves and in the world in which they lived, through the baptism of the Spirit.

This is the two-fold power of prayer. We must not limit its efficacy to the subjective, but it begins there. The subjective power is on the mind and heart and will of him who prays. Its objective power is on others for whom we pray or in the realm of the material world.

First of all, prayer is mountain air for the soul. We open our windows towards Jerusalem and breathe the air of heaven. "Prayer is the Christian's vital breath, the Christian's native air." Prayer is self-discipline. The effort to realize the presence and power of God stretches the sinews of the soul and hardens its muscles. To pray is to grow in grace. To tarry in the presence of the King leads to new loyalty and devotion on the part of faithful subjects. Christian character grows in the secret-place of prayer. There is no more congenial soil in which to cultivate the fruit of

---

the Spirit than near the throne of grace. There the cluster ripens to perfection — “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control.” Prayer strengthens the mind, purifies the emotions and invigorates the will. Habitual prayer, as James Hastings reminds us, confers decision on the wavering, energy on the listless, calmness to the distraught, and altruism to the selfish. Prayer changes us. It always produces a sense of sin; if we are near to God in Christ, He pours contempt on all our pride. It produces submission of the wayward will; for prayer is essentially a surrender to God. “Not My will, but Thine be done.” Someone has expressed it in a beautiful simile: “The pull of our prayer may not move the everlasting throne, but, like the pull on a line from the bow of a boat, it may draw us into closer fellowship with God and into fuller harmony with His holy will in the harbor of rest.”

Another result of prayer is inward peace. Those who “in everything by prayer and supplication” make their needs known to God experience a peace that passeth all understanding, in mind and heart. And the peace within reveals itself to others. Moses wist not that his countenance shone, but Israel knew. In *The Choir Invisible*, James Lane Allen tells of the beautiful face of an aged Christian:

“Prayer will in time” he says, “make the human countenance its own divinest altar; years upon years of fine thought, like music shut up within, will vibrate along the nerves of expression until the lines of the living instrument are drawn into correspon-

dence and the harmony of visible form matches the unheard harmony of the mind.”

And this was first said nineteen hundred years ago by the Apostle Paul: “We all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory even as from the Lord the Spirit.”

If only subjective results, and nothing more, expressed the power of prayer, how we should covet the privilege of such communion and waiting on God. His fellowship ought to be far more to us than any gift we could ask. Yet this is not the whole of prayer.

The more we study the Gospels and Epistles, the more clear it is that to Christ and His apostles prayer was a means to an end. The answer is proof that our prayer is acceptable. In the New Testament and in the life of the Christian, prayer has objective power. It operates outside of ourselves. We do not live in a closed universe, but can converse with our Heavenly Father Who knows and cares and loves.

In speaking of “prayer as an instrument of God,” Dr. W. Douglas Mackenzie says:

*“No conceivable calculation of probable coincidences will account for the enormous, the incalculable mass of evidence that human beings can live, and do live, in such relations with God that he acts upon them, and even upon mankind as a whole in terms of their prayer-life. The evidence is immeasurable; I say, it is universal.”*<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Paternoster Sheen or Light on Man's Destiny, p. 57.

The mystery of intercessory prayer is doubtless great but its history is ample evidence of its power; and that history extends from Abraham's prayer for Sodom to the unceasing intercession of the saints of the Church universal in our own day by which

*"The whole round earth is every way  
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."*

Prayer has power in the realm of nature. "Elijah prayed fervently that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again and the heavens gave rain and the earth brought forth her fruit" (James 5:17,18). In the *Life of Lord Lawrence* (vol. 2, p. 375) we are told that when some one deprecated prayer for rain as useless to change the order of nature, the great Indian statesman and Christian said, "We are told to pray and that our prayers will be answered; that is sufficient for me."

Prayer has power in the realm of grace. When we are commanded to pray for one another, it is not idle mockery but a divine prerogative and privilege. Christ prayed for Peter. Paul prayed for his converts and fellow-workers by name. Every revival of religion has been the result of prayer. One has but to read the lives of John Wesley, Charles Spurgeon, Dwight L. Moody and other great evangelists to realize that the secret of

their power with men was their daily communion with God.

Prayer has power to produce "special providences." The life of George Muller is an extraordinary illustration of the constant intervention by Providence to supply the needs for his orphanages, which he laid before God in prayer. The story is either utterly incredible or it is convincing evidence of the miraculous power of intercession. God was his business partner. He supplied all his needs in Bristol and often did so in the nick of time and in many circumstances that could not be mere coincidences.

The story of Hudson Taylor's life and that of the China Inland Mission is one long record of answered prayer. In seventy years this Faith Mission received the enormous sum of 5,103,701 pounds sterling, in unsolicited gifts. "The barrel of meal wasted not nor did the cruse of oil fail according to the word of the Lord." In 1854 Hudson Taylor landed in Shanghai alone. Today that one mission has four thousand preaching places where Chinese Christians gather in worship and over a thousand missionaries in every part of China.

The place of private prayer in the story of the Christian Church down the ages is told by Jane T. Stoddart. She begins with the martyr-church of the pagan empire of Rome, and tells how prayer was of-

ferred and answered in the catacombs and at the stake. She tells of the early Church fathers, Ignatius, Polycarp, and Clement; of Monica's prayer for Augustine—the patience of prevailing prayer; of St. Patrick in captivity, in journeys and in perils, delivered by prayer; of St. Bernard of Clairvaux and St. Teresa, both of them giants in prayer; of St. Francis, St. Louis and Dante in the dark ages; of the reformers, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Knox—all of them mighty in prayer; of their apostolic successors in the ministry of intercession. As one reads this marvelous story, faith is quickened, love kindled and hope made radiant.<sup>2</sup> And we recall the words of Martin Luther:

“No one can believe what power and efficacy there is in prayer, unless he has learned it by experience. It is a great thing when a soul feels a mighty need and betakes itself to prayer. This I do know, that as often as I have prayed earnestly I have certainly been heard in rich abundance and have obtained more than I asked or sought. Our Lord has sometimes delayed, but yet at last He heard me.”

*“Never a sigh of passion or of pity  
Never a wail for weakness or for wrong  
Has not its archive in the angel's city  
Finds not its echo in the endless song.”*

---

2. Jane T. Stoddart—*Private Prayer in Christian Story*, New York, 1928.

There are no unanswered prayers. Even our tears are treasured in God's bottle, as David said, and remembered in His Book. This is the patience and power of unanswered prayer.

VI.

**HINDRANCES TO PRAYER**



*“Lord, I am tired. I can bring to Thee  
Only a heavy weight of tiredness.  
I kneel, but all my mind’s a vacancy  
And conscious only of its weakness —  
Can it be prayer, this dragging dreariness?”*

*“‘The effectual fervent prayer avails,’  
Wrote downright James; and here inert kneel I;  
I would feel fervent but the effort fails;  
Like some starved mendicant, too weak to cry  
His need, I wait—perchance Thou wilt pass by.”*

—ANONYMOUS.

## VI.

### HINDRANCES TO PRAYER

**W**HICH of the saints in the secret-place of prayer has not struggled against apathy and indolence, against wandering thoughts and a wayward will? Who has not felt the seeming unreality of the spiritual world, and lifted hands into empty space seeking God's presence?

*"How have I seen, in Araby, Orion,  
Seen without seeing, till he set again,  
Known the night-noise and thunder of the lion,  
Silence and sounds of the prodigious plain!"*

*"How have I knelt with arms of my aspiring,  
Lifted all night in irresponsive air,  
Dazed and amazed with overmuch desiring,  
Blank with the utter agony of prayer!"*

The hindrances to prayer are indeed many and manifold. The Enemy of our souls knows that prayer is the arena of conflict and victory for the Christian, and he therefore uses all his strategy to baffle and overcome. Not always is it true that, "Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees." John Bunyan had a deeper insight into the life of the pilgrim and pictures Christian in the Valley of Humiliation,

in Doubting Castle, and elsewhere, surrounded by foes who hinder his prayers and whisper evil while he walks through the darkness.

The various hindrances to prayer may be classified as external and internal; some that are due to outward circumstances or interruptions and others that lurk within the soul.

There are those for whom there seems to be no sacred time nor sacred place; who sit in darkness and the shadow of death or are bound to the wheel of life without time for relaxation or for prayers. It is easy to look up to God under the blue sky and the over-arching trees; it is easy to find quiet and communion with God in a great cathedral with its vast spaces, its heavenly music and the jeweled windows that make the sunlight speak of heaven. But when Louis Untermeyer interprets the cry of Caliban in the coal mine we note a difference:

*“God, we don’t like to complain,  
We know that the mine is no lark —  
But — there’s the pool from the rain;  
But — there’s the cold and the dark.*

*“God, You don’t know what it is —  
You, in Your well-lighted sky,  
Watching the meteors whizz  
Warm, while the sun goes by.*

*“God, if You had but the moon  
Stuck in Your cap for a lamp,  
Even You’d tire of it soon,  
Down in the dark and the damp.*

*“Nothing but blackness above,  
And nothing that moves but the cars—  
God, if You wish for our love  
Fling us a handful of stars!”*

Circumstances make prayer difficult at times. Job felt it when he had lost all his property and his family, when his friends misunderstood him and his body was tortured with pain:

*“Behold I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard;  
I cry aloud but there is no justice. He hath fenced  
up my way that I cannot pass, and hath set darkness  
in my paths. He hath stripped me of my glory and  
taken the crown from my head . . . My kinsfolk have  
failed and my familiar friends have forgotten me.”*

Yet in the same chapter we have his confident appeal to the vindication of a living Redeemer (Job 19:7-27).

And Jeremiah, when the sorrows of captive Zion overwhelmed his soul, found it hard to pray. “The Lord was as an enemy; He hath swallowed up Israel . . . He hath cast off His altar, He hath abhorred His sanctuary” (Lam. 2:5,7). He was in sore affliction and misery. He tasted the wormwood and the gall. “I called upon Thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon . . . Thou hast covered Thyself with a cloud, that our

prayer should not pass through” (Lam. 3:44). Yet Jeremiah found a way through and the man of sorrows became an example of triumphant faith in the goodness of God. Persevering prayer can overcome all circumstances that seem against us. In the darkest hour God is our light and our salvation.

Another external hindrance to prayer is that of interruption. We seek silence, and then the clamor of the street, the noise of the crowd breaks in. We enter our closet (whatever that retreat may be) and the telephone rings insistently or incessantly. The next-door radio-program, the children’s play, the untimely doorbell—all seem to choose the very hour when one would wait on God. How can we be patient with such interruptions and make them stepping-stones instead of stumbling-blocks in the way of prayer?

Here again Christ is our example. Study the Gospel story and you will find that He made every interruption an opportunity for the exercise of His healing power or His comforting words. It is the way the Master went. Should not the servant tread it still?

All external hindrances and obstacles to prayer are of less importance than those that arise in the heart itself and make true prayer difficult or impossible. Unbelief, wandering thoughts, preoccupation, pride, selfishness, formality, sloth, unconfessed sin, an unforgiving spirit — these are the great hindrances to private prayer and the family altar.

He that cometh to God must first of all believe that He is God and that He is a rewarder of those that dili-

gently seek Him. No one can pray fervently in an atmosphere of unbelief. When we throw into the discard all that is distinctive in the Christian faith—a belief in a living God Who rules the world; faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God, Who died on the Cross for our sins, Who rose from the dead and lives today; the power of the Holy Spirit; and in the authority of God's Word, we cut the nerve of all prayer. These articles of the Christian faith are the common heritage of all believers. They are the common denominator of the prayer that is Christian. If we have squandered this inheritance or sold it for a mess of liberal pottage and humanistic philosophy, our prayers indeed will be hindered.

Unbelief is the enemy of prayer. A Christless, or denatured Christianity, of mere abstract morality and pious maxims cannot produce the prayer-life nor can it continue to believe in the power of prayer or its necessity. Yet prayer will overcome unbelief if we persevere. "I fought my doubts," says Sir Thomas Browne in *Religio Medici*, "not in a martial posture, but on my knees."

Another hindrance to prayer is preoccupation or the wandering of our thoughts. We cannot fix our minds on the eternal world. We are bound by our senses and sensibilities to an earthly horizon. We can not look steadfastly upward. We strive to talk with God but are all the time also chatting with the world. Who has not felt the temptation of distraction in worship? Who has not said with the psalmist "Mine eyes

fail with looking upward," when the spirit was indeed willing but the flesh weak.

A short moment of earnest and riveted attention is worth more to God than hours of formal listlessness. We can overcome formality and sloth in prayer by remembering our Lord and His Apostles. When we love, we pay attention. The surrendered heart is not listless. While we muse, the fire will burn, and we shall speak with our tongues words from the heart.

Another hindrance to prayer is pride and selfishness. The Pharisee prayed by himself and his pride was a barrier to communion with God. The first essential of sincere approach to our Maker and our Redeemer is humility of heart. A broken and a contrite spirit are precious in God's sight. To think of others and not of ourselves is good practice in the school of prayer. Many have been brought nearer to God by thinking about others. Some years ago a life of Christ was written by an Italian scholar who had once been an atheist. The book had a great vogue for a time. When Giovanni Papini, the author, was once asked what had turned his mind to Christ, he replied that it was thinking of the needs of his children. Whatever we may desire for ourselves, we want the best for our children. Real love gives us, for those we love, an instinctive fear of evil. Even when a father does not pray, he will often be glad that his children should come to Christ. But if he thought about them deeply, he himself would be led to pray. And we can learn not only to pray *for* our children but to pray *with* our

children. To repeat once more the prayers we learned in childhood will awaken a flood of memories, soften our hard hearts and bring us close to the Father's heart.

Our prayers will be narrow, selfish, parochial if we center attention on our own needs. But we shall run the way of God's commandments in prayer when He enlarges our heart. A Christian's citizenship is in heaven and he is an ambassador for the King, and intercessor for the world.

*"Thou art coming to a King  
Large petitions with thee bring  
For His grace and power are such  
None can ever ask too much."*

A study of our Lord's Prayer and the prayers of our Lord, as we shall see, reveals not only marvelous depth, but breadth of outlook and outreach. "I pray not for these alone but for all those that shall believe through their word"—who can measure the circle of such intercession for the redeemed of all the ages and from all lands!

"Selfishness in prayer," says Dr. Hastings, "be-sets particularly Christians who are advanced in religious life, and to whom prayer has become a constant or at least a frequent exercise. This danger is one that belongs especially to intense natures; but all natures are more or less subject to it. We should be in such sympathy with God that we should have much to pray for touching the honour and glory of His name; we should be in such sympathy with



Divine Providence that we should have much to offer thanksgiving for, in the events that every day transpire round about us; and we should be in such sympathy with our fellow-men that we should find in their wants much subject-matter for petition.”

The smaller the diameter of our knowledge of human need and human suffering, the smaller will be the circumference of our petitions. The larger the diameter of our knowledge, the larger the area of our intercession. Peter the Apostle went up on the house-top to pray and the circle of his prayer was Jewry. When he came down after the threefold vision, his horizon had widened and included the Gentile world.

Another hindrance to prayer is the unforgiving spirit or the unconfessed sin. Isaiah the prophet (chap. 1:15-17) puts it very clearly in his opening chapter, condemning all the unreality and formalism in worship of those who are perverse in spirit:

“When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear; your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless; plead for the widow.”

And again in chap. 59:1,2:

“Behold the Lord’s hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither is His ear heavy that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you so that He will not hear.”

How can we expect a blessing at the altar if we are not first reconciled to our brother? The petition for pardon of our own sins dies on our lips unless we "forgive our debtors" for His sake Who hath forgiven us. How often prayer is lukewarm because we have acknowledged sin, without staying to name our sins or expecting to forsake them. How often we seek forgiveness without shame, and accept it without wonder and adoration. No wonder that in such cases prayer for others is perfunctory and casual, and that we have daily relations with people for whom we never pray earnestly. To amend our prayers we need first to amend our ways and learn the lesson of love for all humanity. For if we love not our brother whom we have seen, how can we say we love God Whom we have not seen? (1 John 4:20). John Donne, one of the old Puritans, says in a sermon:

"God is like us in this also, that He takes it worse to be slighted, to be neglected, to be left out than to be actually injured. Our inconsideration, our not thinking of God in our actions offends Him more than our sins."

There is one more among the "various hindrances we meet in coming to the mercy-seat" to which Peter refers in his epistle when writing of the duties of wives and husbands (1 Peter 3:7). The home is to be the place of love and loyalty, of honor and respect and mutual consideration because husband and wife are together heirs of the grace of life eternal. Then "your prayers will not be hindered." When there is com-

passion, kindness and courteousness in the home circle, the family-altar draws all hearts into Christlike unity. Otherwise there is discord, and prayer becomes a mockery. Nothing tests sincerity more than prayer, if it be real prayer. Bishop Lancelot Andrewes wrote the following introduction to a family prayer to be used at evening-tide:

*“O God we have fled from Thee seeking us;  
Neglected Thee loving us;  
Stopped our ears to Thee, speaking to us;  
Turned our backs on Thee, reaching Thy hand to us;  
Forgotten Thee, doing good to us;  
And despised Thee correcting us.”*

With such confession on our lips and in our hearts, all hindrances and obstacles will melt away and God's promises and presence become real to those who earnestly seek Him.

## **VII.**

### **NON-CHRISTIAN PRAYER AND MISSIONS**

*“God! There is no God but He, the Living, the Eternal!  
Slumber seizeth Him not, nor sleep.  
His is whatsoever is in the heavens,  
and whatsoever is in the earth.  
He knoweth what hath been before  
and what shall be after.  
His throne reacheth over the heavens and the earth.  
And the upholding of both burdeneth Him not.  
He is the High, the Great!”*

—THE KORAN (2:256)

*“O Wise Lord! Whatever Thou hast thought,  
Whatever Thou hast uttered, whatever Thou hast  
created,  
Whatever Thou hast done:—all has been good.  
So, O Wise Lord! We offer and dedicate to Thee.  
We worship Thee. We offer our homage to Thee.  
We render our thanks to Thee.”*

—ZOROASTRIAN PRAYER'  
(Yasna 13:5)

## VII.

### NON-CHRISTIAN PRAYER AND MISSIONS

**W**E have seen in an earlier chapter that prayer is a universal element in all religions. Indeed, it would be difficult to gather all the evidence for the antiquity, the universality and the element of mystery in the prayer-life of the non-Christian world. Friedrich Heiler, in his encyclopedic study on Prayer, devoted no less than one hundred pages to the prayers and prayer customs of primitive tribes in Africa, Australasia and America. He speaks of the form and content of such prayer where

*“The heathen in his blindness  
Bows down to wood and stone,”*

and yet is also conscious of higher powers and most often of a supreme Spirit, or High God, to whom he addresses his petitions. The evidence for this primitive monotheism is becoming more and more convincing. The prayer of savage tribes, the better it is understood, resembles the hunger of the human soul and is witness of that common grace of God which fashioneth our hearts alike.

Prayer is the oldest and clearest expression of man's awe and fear, of the sense of the eternal and of gratitude for the mercies of a divine providence. Even in its lowest form among the blacks of Australia, the Pyg-

mies of the African forest or the Ainus of Japan such prayer exercises a somewhat enabling influence. The man who prays belongs to two worlds, the prayerless man has his portion only in the world of sense. The Sioux Indians say "Spirits of the dead, have mercy on us"; and this very short collect presupposes a partial knowledge of two fundamental Christian truths; namely, that life continues after death and that we need mercy to face the life that never ends. We are told that when some Algonquin Indians set out to cross Lake Superior, the canoes stopped close together and the chief, in a loud voice, offered a prayer to the Great Spirit entreating him to give them a good passage: "You have made this lake and made us your children. Cause this water to be smooth while we pass over."<sup>1</sup> Here we have a glimpse of the creative Fatherhood of God and of His power over nature.

It is true that primitive prayers are generally on a low plane, for temporal success, for victory in war and for outward blessings only. But the exceptions are many and very significant. If prayer is the outreach of the soul to God, then the prayer of such backward races is truly a point of contact for the missionary message. The Reverend Alexander LeRoy tells us that in the great African forest the people invoke the Spirit to guard the life of a new-born child, to have good crops, to heal the sick, to obtain rain and to send peace. "Ordinarily prayer appears under the form of a request, imprecation or conjuration, according to circumstances. It is spoken or sung, and is addressed to the

---

<sup>1</sup> James Freeman Clarke, *Ten Great Religions*, Vol. II, p. 225.

Manes, the spirits and even to the High God.” He quotes from Dr. Krapf two prayers, one for a sick person and one for rain, which are typical:

“Thou, God and Master! I say to Thee, free this person from his sickness. We implore Thee, God, to relieve this person and cure him . . .”

“Thou, God, give us rain! We are in a wretched state, we are toiling hard and we are Thy children. Give us clouds full of rain so that the people may have food, we beg Thee, O Thou God, Thou our Father.”<sup>1</sup>

Surely He who hears the young ravens when they cry (Ps. 147:9) hearkens to the voice of these children in the dark. “He that planted the ear shall He not hear? He that formed the eye shall He not see? He that chastiseth the heathen shall He not correct? He that teacheth man knowledge shall He not know?”

All who have come in close contact with non-Christians — pagans, Hindus, Buddhists, Moslems, Jews — have felt a rebuke at times in *their* earnest seeking after the unseen, *their* ceaseless groping after God in the dark compared with our own frequent lukewarmness, we who have the true Light. God is no respecter of persons but knows his suppliants in every nation. Is there not truth in the words of the poet?

*“He placed a prayer-wheel where the wild winds dance,  
And some complained his piety was lazy;  
But then his thoughts on prayer were rather hazy.  
Yet God attended to his supplication.*

<sup>1</sup> *The Religion of Primitives*, pp. 197-198.



*“He knelt on scarlet plush before his Lord,  
And mumbled words of ancient litanies  
But felt uncomfortable on his knees;  
And God, lost in the gloomy nave, was bored.*

*“Silent, she raised her eyes that burned and glistened  
Like fresh lit tapers, no murmuring, tight-lipped,  
But God stopped stars in flight an hour, and listened.”<sup>1</sup>*

This is not the whole truth however in regard to such prayer.

Many questions, not easily answered, arise when we consider the import and value of such prayer-in-the-dark. What is its subjective value? What is its objective outreach? Is it ever answered? Does God hear their cry or is their telephone to the other world a dead line? Here we have fortunately considerable light in the Scriptures. The prayers of many outside the covenant circle of Israel are recorded. Cain, the fratricide, in his bitter plaint to Jehovah, fearfully in dread of capital punishment, received reprieve, a land in which to find refuge and the blessings of home and civilization (Gen. 4:13-17). For the mercy of the Lord began at the beginning and endureth forever. Hagar's prayer was only “the falling of a tear” but God gave her the answer of compassion. God heard the cry of Ishmael dying of thirst, saved his life, and “was with the lad” (Gen. 21:15-20). The Egyptian midwives (although we do not read that they prayed) received reward for their kindness to Israel. Jethro, the priest of Midian, was not of Israel's seed, yet he knew Jehovah and gives us the earliest beatitude (Exodus 18:

<sup>1</sup> The Upper Room, E. McNeill Poteat, Jr.

10,11). Ruth, the Moabitess, in spite of her heathen genealogy and her mixed marriage, stands out as one of the loveliest examples of purity and motherhood and faith in the whole Old Testament, and she must have been a woman of prayer before she made her great confession (Ruth 1:16). Obed, her son, was the father of Jesse, the father of David. Did Solomon perhaps think of her when he prayed (I Kings 8:41-43):

“The stranger that is not of Thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for Thy name’s sake . . . and prays toward this house, hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling-place and do according to all that the stranger calleth to Thee for: that all the people of the earth may know Thy name.”

Rahab, the harlot of Jericho, Naaman, the leper of Syria, Cyrus, the Zoroastrian of Persia — all of them received answer to their deepest longing of the heart and partook of uncovenanted mercies outside the pale of Israel. None save the Messiah of the seed of Abraham has such titles and promises and blessings as does Cyrus in the prophecies of Isaiah.

In the short story of Jonah we have six prayers. When the mariners pray to their gods, when they cast solemn lot to know their will, and when they pray to Jehovah, they are heard in the storm and their vows are accepted. Jonah’s prayer of penitence in the depths of the sea is also heard, but his petulant complaint and his prayer that he might die are not accepted of God. The contrast in this book is remarkable for the prayer of the Ninevites is also answered.

In the New Testament we have other instances of prayers by those not of the house of Israel, the Magi, the Syro-Phoenician woman and Cornelius, to remind us that

*“There’s a wideness in God’s mercy  
Like the wideness of the sea . . .  
For the love of God is broader  
Than the measure of man’s mind  
And the heart of the Eternal  
Is most wonderfully kind.”*

Dr. Robert E. Hume compiled a *Treasure House of the Living Religions* in which he gives classified selections from the sacred books of the ethnic faiths. Under the head of invocation and worship we have some very beautiful examples of prayer, giving evidence of the ripe scholarship and indefatigable diligence of the compiler. It is an exhibit of pearls and jewels of the thought of man down the ages until we have the Pearl of Great Price in the prayer-life and teaching of our Lord. As we read these selections that prove the yearning of the human heart we are reminded that the kingdom of heaven is “like unto a merchantman *seeking goodly pearls.*” More than a thousand years before Christ, the high caste Hindu prayed:

“From the unreal lead me to the real;  
From darkness lead me to light;  
From death lead me to immortality.”

(Rigveda 3:62)

and this prayer is still in daily use in India. In the hymns of the Sikh Guru, Arjan we read:

“O man! take shelter in that Lord God  
By whose favor all thy defects are concealed.  
O man! at every breath remember the most High  
By whose favor none can equal thee.  
Forsaking all else worship only Him.”<sup>1</sup>

And Kabir, also of the Sikh religion, rises from the low marshes of pantheism to the height of a noble theism when he prays:

“Ocean of mercy! dwell forever in my heart.  
So enlighten my understanding  
That I may love Thee, O God.  
O Lord God! may I ever know Thee near me.  
We are ever and ever Thy children.  
Thou O God art our master.  
Thou art our Father and mother.”<sup>1</sup>

In the Zoroastrian religion there are many beautiful prayers used in worship and adoration:

“I will speak of Him who is greatest of all  
Praising Him, O Right, who is bounteous to all  
that live  
Ahura Mazda in whose adoration I have been  
taught  
By His wisdom let Him teach me what is best!  
So long as I have strength and power through the  
right  
I shall be and shall be called Thy praiser, O God!  
May the Creator of life bring about  
Through good thought in accordance with His will  
The realization of that which is perfect.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dr. R. E. Hume, *Treasure House of the Living Religions*, pp. 29-31.

Every traveler who has visited the Near East recalls the cry of the muezzin from the minaret and the solemn ranks of worshippers in the mosques. The public and private prayer of Islam is no doubt the best point of contact in presenting the Gospel there. The life of the religious community still centers in the five daily prayer-periods and these were undoubtedly the great formative element in early Islam. The utmost solemnity and decorum are observed in the public worship of the mosque. The looks and behaviour of those who come for prayer betray not only enthusiastic devotion but a calm and modest piety. The worshippers appear wholly absorbed in adoration and confession. While there may be many Pharisees among them who for a pretence make long prayers and repeat idle words, there are also many who stand like the Publican and plead for mercy. What shall we say of such prayer on the part of non-Christians?

Here is an illustration from my own experience:

One morning, many years ago, sailing on the Indian Ocean we were reading a little manual of Moslem devotion published at Colombo, in Tamil and Arabic. It was a book of prayers of the Naqshabandi dervishes, and is typical of this kind of literature, which is everywhere in the hands and on the lips of the people. Here is a translation of one beautiful page: — “I am truly bankrupt, O God. I stand before the door of Thy riches. Truly I have great sins — forgive me for Thine own sake. Truly I am a stranger, a sinner, a humble slave who has nothing but forgetfulness and disobedi-

ence to present to Thee. My sins are as the sands without number. Forgive me and pardon me. Remove my transgressions, and undertake my cause. Truly my heart is sick, but Thou art able to heal it. My condition, O God, is such that I have no good work. My evil deeds are many, and my provision of obedience is small. Speak to the fire of my heart, as Thou didst in the case of Abraham, 'be cool for my servant.'" (The reference here is to a story in the Koran of Abraham's trial by fire).

What a beautiful prayer this is for pardon. What heartaching to realize God's forgiveness, and yet all these petitions are directed to God for the sake of the Arabian prophet. So near and yet so far is the Moslem heart from Him. But when the prodigal "was yet a great way off," his father saw him and ran out to meet him. Shall we not do the same?

Take, as another example, the first chapter of the Koran, which is used as a prayer by all Moslems:

"In the name of God the Merciful and Compassionate,  
 Praise be to God who the worlds did make,  
 The Merciful the Compassionate!  
 King of the Day of fate!  
 Thee do we entreat and Thee do we supplicate.  
 Lead us in the way that is straight,  
 The way of those whom Thou dost compassionate,  
 Not of those on whom abides Thy hate  
 Nor of those who deviate. Amen."

(Surah I)

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan of London was so impressed by the sincerity of such a prayer for guidance and the pathos of its universality for thirteen centuries in the dark world of Islam, that he had the following mission collect, printed in large letters, hung on the reading-desk to face his audience in Westminster Chapel:

O GOD, TO WHOM THE WHOLE MOSLEM  
WORLD BOWS DOWN IN WORSHIP FIVE  
TIMES DAILY, HAVE MERCY UPON ITS PEOPLES  
AND REVEAL TO THEM THY CHRIST.

Al Ghazali, the greatest Moslem theologian and mystic, who died in A.D. 1111, wrote much on prayer and the mystery of communion with God. He is without doubt the most remarkable figure in the history of Moslem thought and his influence has greatly increased in the past century. One of the deepest thinkers of his age, he was a true seeker after God and was somewhat acquainted with the Gospel, yet his whole life was devoted to the defense of Islam. How close he approaches to Christian ideals we see in his teaching on prayer. He defines it as "a nearness to God and a gift which we present to the King of kings." "True prayer," he continues, "consists of six things: the presence of the heart, understanding, magnifying God, fear, hope and a sense of shame." It is not enough, he says, to turn your face toward Mecca when you pray. "The heart does not truly turn to God save by being separated from everything else than Himself." Al Ghazali also gives

a beautiful prayer for forgiveness which he ascribes to the prophet Mohammed: "O God, forgive my sin and my ignorance and my excess in what I have done, and what Thou knowest better than I do. O God, forgive me my trifling and my earnestness, my mistakes and my wrong intentions and all that I have done. O God, forgive me that which I have committed in the past and that which I will commit in the future, and what I have hidden and what I have revealed and what Thou knowest better than I do, Thou who art the first and the last and Thou art the Almighty." How very different all this is from the present-day, superficial teaching about the sinlessness of Mohammed which is current in popular Islam. Al Ghazali's teaching on the Practice of the Presence of God is very like that of the Christian mystics. In his *Beginner's Guide (Badayet)* he writes:

"Know, therefore, that your companion who never deserts you at home or abroad, when you are asleep or when you are awake, whether you are dead or alive, is your Lord and Master, your Creator and Preserver, and whensoever you remember Him He is sitting beside you. For God Himself hath said, 'I am the close companion of those who remember me.' And whenever your heart is contrite with sorrow because of your neglect of religion He is your companion who keeps close to you, for God hath said, 'I am with those who are broken-hearted on my account.' And if you only knew Him as you ought to know Him you would take Him as a companion and forsake all men for His sake."



These are noble words and point to a life of real devotion.

Now it is impossible to study such prayer-life among Moslems, Hindus, and other non-Christians and fail to realize that we have here a point of contact with the Gospel message. Prayers and altars to an unknown or a half-known God are a challenge to the missionary today as they were to the Apostle Paul. We may not ignore nor despise the groping of the penitent and longing soul.

*“Far and wide though all unknowing  
Pants for Thee each mortal breast;  
Human tears for Thee are flowing,  
Human hearts in Thee would rest,  
Thirsting, as for dews of even,  
As the new-mown grass for rain,  
Thee they seek as God of heaven,  
Thee, as man, for sinners slain.”*

There is a remarkable prayer of St. Augustine which in its broad catholicity may well arrest our thought:

“Everywhere, O Truth, dost Thou hear all those who consult Thee and dost answer all. Clearly dost Thou answer, though all do not with clearness hear, for they hear not always that which they wish to hear. He is Thy best servant who does not so much look to hear from Thee that which he himself wishes, but to wish that which he heareth from Thee.”

And yet after this catholicity of viewpoint is conceded, there remains a fundamental difference between

all non-Christian prayer and the prayer of a true believer. The prayer of the Hindu Mahatma Gandhi, for example, differs totally from that of the lowliest out-caste who has accepted Christ as Saviour and Lord. The difference is qualitative. *Christian prayer is in the name of Christ, according to the will of God, and in the power of the Holy Spirit.* All this is possible only when there is vital union with Christ.

The words recorded regarding Saul of Tarsus after he had seen the vision of his living Lord are very significant: "Behold, he prayeth." Saul the Pharisee was a pious and conscientious Jew and prayed often both in public and in private. But now his prayer was different: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do." (Acts 9:6 and 11). The prayers of Saul were Old Testament prayers, those of Paul were in the name of Jesus Christ.

In the parting words of Christ to His disciples He gave this most important lesson on prayer; it supplemented and completed all His previous teaching: "Verily, verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name. He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name: ask and ye shall receive that your joy may be full." Here are the first principles of New Testament prayer. By Christ's own interpretation and that of His apostles, to pray *in His name* means: that we rely on the redemption He has wrought for us; that we have the spirit of Christ and seek the things which He seeks; and that we are in vital union with Him.

Prayer of non-Christians at its best is in the outer court of the Temple. Those who have received new life and adoption into the family of God have "boldness to enter into the Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by the way which He dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say His flesh."

Union with Christ implies identification of interests, and therefore puts prayer on the highest plane. "If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7). All the general definitions of prayer as a universal religious practice fall short of the idea of prayer in Christian experience. That kind of prayer differs. It is in the words of the Shorter Catechism, "an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to His will in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of His mercies." When those who are still afar off but pray to God and are brought nigh, they, too, will receive the spirit of adoption and cry, Abba, Father. "O thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come."

VIII.

PRAYER AND MISSIONS

*“Aside from the example and teaching of Jesus, there is no richer field than missionary biography for the study of one who believes in prayer and would help others to realize its power and use, it . . . The evangelization of the world in this generation depends first of all upon a revival of prayer. Deeper than the need for men; deeper, far, than the need for money; deep down at the bottom of our spiritless life, is the need for the forgotten secret of prevailing, world-wide prayer. Missions have progressed slowly abroad because piety and prayer have been shallow at home . . . Of far greater service than any array of learning or gifts of eloquence; more to be desired than gold and fine gold; more to be sought than a great name or apparent opportunities for large usefulness is this gift—the secret and sweetness of unceasing, prevailing, triumphant prayer for the coming of the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

—ROBERT E. SPEER, in *Missionary Principles*.

## VIII.

### PRAYER AND MISSIONS

**S**INCE the beginning of the missionary enterprise in the upper room at Jerusalem prayer has been the secret of power and perseverance and victory. The history of missions is the history of answered prayer. From Pentecost to the Haystack meeting in New England and from the days when Robert Morrison landed in China to the martyrdom of John and Betty Stam, prayer has been the source of power and the secret of spiritual triumph.

All the great missionaries whose names stand out for pioneer service and great accomplishment were first of all great in their prayer-life. Paul leads them all in his life and epistles, where everything is begun, continued and ended in prayer; where prayer (as we shall see) marked every crisis and every emergency in his life. The very impulse to his great career came to him in Jerusalem on his knees. "While I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance . . . and He said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." Simon Peter was in prayer when he received the vision of God's love for humanity. Of St. Patrick we have the record that prayer led him on his journeys and kept him steadfast in the face of loneliness and persecution. His writings that remain are very scanty,

but we have his *Breastplate of Prayer*, one of the most remarkable devotional prayers in the annals of missions.

Raymund Lull, the earliest missionary to Moslems, was profoundly convinced that the only weapon which Christians can rightly wield against their foes is prayer. In an age of Crusades and Inquisitions he wrote in one of his many books on prayer:

“It is my belief, O Christ, that the conquest of the Holy Land should be attempted in no other way than as Thou and Thy apostles undertook to accomplish it — by love, by prayer, by tears and the offering up of our own lives. As it seemed that the possession of the Holy Sepulchre and of the Holy Land can be better secured by the force of arms, therefore let the monks march forth as holy knights, glittering with the sign of the Cross, replenish with the grace of the Holy Spirit, and proclaim to the unbelievers the truth of Thy passion. Let them, from love to Thee, exhaust the whole fountain of their eyes, and pour out all the blood of their bodies, as Thou hast done from love to them.

“Lord of heaven, Father of all times, when Thou didst send Thy Son to take upon Him human nature, He and His apostles lived in outward peace with Jews, Pharisees, and other men; never by outward violence did they capture or slay any of the unbelievers, or those who persecuted them. This outward peace they used to bring the erring to the knowledge of the truth. So, after Thy example, should Christians conduct themselves towards the Saracens.”

Francis of Assisi, Xavier, William Carey, Henry Martyn, David Livingstone, David Brainerd, Mary Moffat, Mary Slessor, James Gilmour — what diversities of gifts and tasks and environment! Yet in one gift of the Spirit they all had a large share, the gift of prayer and intercession. As one reads these biographies, again and again the narrative is eloquent with testimony to God's miraculous power in answer to prayer.

They seem to stand in the midst of foes, in the midst of peril and loneliness and opposition, undiscouraged and undismayed. One is reminded of the prayer of Jehoshaphat: "O our God, wilt Thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee" (II Chron. 20:12). In their case as in that of the King of Israel, man's extremity was God's opportunity.

It is well to consider what these who hazarded their lives for the Lord Jesus, who were His ambassadors in distant lands and who died for the faith, thought of prayer. "Unprayed for," said James Gilmour of Mongolia, "I feel like a diver at the bottom of a river with no air to breathe, or like a fireman on a blazing building with an empty hose." John Eliot's trust in God and great love for the Indians was expressed in his watchword: "Prayer and pains through faith in Jesus Christ will do anything." John Hunt's dying words were, "O let me pray for Fiji, Lord, save Fiji!"

Adoniram Judson of Burma gave this testimony to the power of prayer: "I never was deeply interested



in any object, I never prayed sincerely and earnestly for anything, but it came at some time, no matter how distant the day — somehow in some shape, probably the last I should have devised — it came.” The life of John G. Paton is one long record of answered prayer. By prayer he was led into missionary service; by prayer he was preserved on his long voyages; by prayer he won the affection of degraded savages; by prayer he dug wells and found fresh water where others failed; by prayer he checked the hand of the assassin; by prayer he found the right words for his Gospel translations; by prayer he influenced lives of young and old during his furloughs in Scotland and America. Only in eternity, in the presence of the innumerable company of the redeemed can the result of such a life of prayer be measured.

The story of the China Inland Mission is well-known as a witness to the reward of faith in prayer. Not that this was the first or only mission to lay emphasis on prayer. Francis Xavier’s faith was heroic in dark days when, looking toward China, he cried, “Rock, rock, when wilt thou open to my Saviour?” Peter Parker, the first medical missionary to China, knew the secret of prayer as well as of medical skill. Every missionary organization in China and every station can bear witness to the efficacy of prayer. Yet in no case is the record so startling as in that of the China Inland Mission, beginning with the life of Hudson Taylor, the man who believed in God. His simple faith from childhood in the power of prayer is an awe-inspiring

and tremendous fact. To Hudson Taylor the Bible was "a Book of Certainties," and the living God a reality. "He means what He says and will do *all* He has promised."

The China Inland Mission, founded in 1865, has, today, approximately 1300 missionaries located in 344 central stations with 2000 out-stations. From the commencement of the work more than 150,000 have been baptized, and 1235 churches have been organized. The story of its financial supplies, without direct appeals for funds, is stranger than fiction. It constitutes a convincing proof of the providential care of the living God. No one can explain it all on natural grounds. The only explanation is that given by Hudson Taylor himself in an address at the Ecumenical Missionary Conference in New York in 1900:

"God Himself is the great source of power. Power belongeth unto God . . . Further, God's power is available power. We are a supernatural people, born again by a supernatural birth, kept by a supernatural power, sustained on supernatural food, taught by a supernatural Teacher from a supernatural Book. We are led by a supernatural Captain in right paths to assured victories . . .

"It is not lost time to wait upon God. May I refer to a small gathering of about a dozen men in which I was permitted to take part some years ago, in November 1886. We in the China Inland Mission were feeling greatly the need of Divine guidance in the matter of organization in the field and in the matter of reinforcement, and we came together be-

fore our Conference to spend eight days in united waiting upon God, four alternate days being days of fasting as well as prayer. This was November 1886 when we gathered together; we were led to pray for a hundred missionaries to be sent out by our English Board in the year 1887, from January to December. And, further than this, our income had not been elastic for some years; it had been about £22,000; and we had, in connection with that Forward Movement, to ask God for £10,000."

Then he went on to tell the sequel. The whole number of workers was sent out and a total of £11,000 was received in eleven large gifts! Such believing prayer is surely the greatest gift of God.

The missionary movement under William Carey and his little band of Baptist Ministers was born in prayer and nourished in prayer.

*"Distressed that men for whom the Saviour died—  
In multitudes by festering fetters held—  
Should of redeeming knowledge be denied,  
The clouds of thwarting prejudice dispelled,  
And toiled with tireless resolution till  
He cast abroad, in many a mother tongue,  
The Word Divine for healing human ill,  
And o'er the years still urges old and young:  
'Expect great things from God, the Lord of all,  
Attempt great things at His constraining call.'"*

What great things he expected from God and what gigantic tasks he attempted India now knows.

In the annals of missions one can see how the sud-

den opening of doors, the outpouring of God's Spirit, the revival of churches and great ingatherings were the direct result of waiting on God in prayer. The Lone Star Mission of the American Baptists at Ongole, India, where 2222 received baptism in one day; the revival in the training school at Kyoto, Japan, in 1883; that in Miss Fiske's School at Urumia in 1846; the great revival in Sumatra and Nias, during the World War, at a time when the German missionaries suffered every hardship; the recent story of evangelism in Korea; the marvelous work of God's Spirit among out-castes and untouchables in Southern India — all these are indisputable evidence that prayer and missions are inseparably united. The one is inconceivable without the other. We can trace the alliance in the lives of individuals, in the organization of societies, in the opening of doors, in the founding of churches and in the Christianization of entire communities.

Every element in the missionary problem today depends for its solution chiefly upon prayer. The present-day summons to the Church, as Dr. John R. Mott points out, is to tap the supernatural resources of God Almighty by believing prayer. He can control the hearts of men. He can release the energies of His Church. He can overcome man's selfishness and greed. Prayer will thrust out laborers and provide for their support.

The experience of Pastor Gossner (1836) should stimulate our faith. At sixty-three years of age he became dissatisfied with the mechanical methods of

raising money and managing missions in Bavaria. He inaugurated a new enterprise in which faith and prayer were the principal factors. As pastor of the Bethlehem Church in Berlin he began his Mission. Before his death he put into the foreign field one hundred and forty-one missionaries and secured their outfit, travel and support by prayer. He said, "I would rather ring the prayer-bell than the beggar's bell." No brighter chapter in the story of Indian missions can be found than that of the Gossner Mission among the Kohls.

In 1864, Pastor Louis Harms by faith and prayer led the peasants of the Hermannsburg Church to plant the Gospel abroad, so that after thirty-one years he had put into the field three hundred and fifty missionaries and at the end of forty years his mission gathered out from heathenism a church of more than thirteen thousand members.

If such is the history of the power of prayer in Christian missions, how eager we should be to exercise this gift. Surely such power with God and with men through intercession is more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold. Realizing the utter inadequacy of present efforts to meet the needs of the world the Church needs new tides of spiritual power. This will only come through united, sustained and victorious prayer. It is the key to the whole missionary problem.

Some years ago the Bishop of Salisbury stated the conditions which he believed were essential to effective prayer, namely, receptiveness, obedience, and definiteness:

“RECEPTIVENESS.—The very essence of all prayer is to throw open the whole personality to the incoming of God’s Spirit, to align oneself gladly with His will. The first three clauses of the Lord’s Prayer indicate the true attitude of the praying man.

“OBEDIENCE. — A genuine desire to learn God’s will must involve an absolute readiness to do it. We must clearly be prepared for decisive, even for costly action, action that might cut clean across preconceived ideas and long-established custom. Power is only given by Christ to His disciples as they actually set about doing what He wants.

“DEFINITENESS. — Since God has called us to a share in His creative power, and since our desire is an element in the creation of the world tomorrow, and since His continual challenge to us is ‘Desire of Me’ — ‘What wilt thou?’ — it is our duty to formulate our specific desires.”

When we have met these conditions we are prepared for missionary intercession, and how wide is the range of such prayer for the coming of the Kingdom!

Dr. Johannes Warneck in one of many writings on the science of missions gave an analysis of an inclusive prayer on behalf of the work abroad. He says it is first of all as Christ commanded, a prayer for laborers in the harvest; a larger number and a better quality of missionaries, native leaders and helpers. In this connection he refers to Paul’s prayers for his co-workers as a model for all time. His epistles are full of such prayers.

Then it includes prayer for converts, inquirers and

backsliders, because they are still babes in Christ and beset with manifold temptation. Prayer also for the indigenous churches that they may soon become self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating. Again we must pray, as did the apostles, "for kings and all in authority" in every land so that the gospel may have free course and doors still closed may be opened in God's providence; for peace and brotherhood among the nations.

Nor must we neglect to pray for the enemies of the missionary enterprise at home and abroad. Praying for those who despitefully oppose the gospel and persecute the Church. We need prayer for heathen priests, Moslem mullahs, champions of a false gospel, and all who by unbelief or heartless criticism or by ungodly lives are enemies of the gospel.

Lastly, our prayer should be with thanksgiving for all that God has done; we should recall the miracles of His grace, the power of His spirit; the work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope in the lives of His ambassadors. Following such a program of prayer we will begin to realize the length and breadth and height of true missionary intercession.

**IX.**

**SOME OLD TESTAMENT PRAYERS**



*“Apart from the Psalter, which is a book of prayer within the Bible, the Pentateuch, the Prophets and the Hagiographa are interspersed with prayers. At least one prayer is attributed to every great biblical character from Hannah to Hezekiah. These individual prayers are independent of ritual. They are voluntary and spontaneous.”*

—*Jewish Encyclopedia (Prayer).*

*“The prayer of the righteous is comparable to a pitchfork; as the pitchfork changes the position of the wheat so prayer changes the disposition of God from wrath to mercy . . . Prayer when offered with intensity is as a flame to coal in uniting the higher and lower worlds . . . Prayer is greater than sacrifice and the prayer of the poor is as worthy as that of Moses.”*

— RABBI ISAAC in *The Talmud.*

## IX.

### SOME OLD TESTAMENT PRAYERS

**T**HE history of the Bible in human life has become a vast palimpsest written over and over again, illuminated and illustrated by every conceivable incident and emotion of men and nations. The Bible fits into every fold and crevice of the human heart. It is a universal book. This is perhaps even more true of the Old Testament than of the New, because in it we have the mirror of the Psalms, described as "the heart of the Bible" or, in the words of Calvin, "An anatomy of all parts of the human soul." In this one book we find all the griefs, sorrows, fears, misgivings, despairs, cares, hopes, joys and triumphant hallelujahs of which the soul is capable pictured for us; until the Hebrew Psalter has become the prayer-book of the ages and of all Christendom.

This river of God's pleasure is full of water for thirsty souls; it has over-run its banks; it has gone out to all lands and nations like the river of water of life. Wrote James Gilmour of Mongolia:

"When I feel I cannot make headway in devotion, I open at the Psalms and push in my canoe, and let myself be carried along in the stream of devotion which flows through the whole book. The

current always sets toward God, and in most places is strong and deep.”

Before we consider the prayers of patriarchs, prophets and saints in the Old Testament record we shall do well to pause before this Book of books on the history, the mystery and the art of prayer. It would be difficult to find words to describe its richness and variety of spiritual experience, its heights and depths of communion with God.

Here we have the whole gamut of prayer. Humiliation, contrition, confession, adoration, supplication, intercession, pleading, thanksgiving and again, the waiting of the soul in silence on God. The language of the Psalms is suited to every mood and tense of man's microcosmic soul. It is by far the oldest and best of all the books of public and private devotion we possess. Its treasures are inexhaustible and it has therefore become the model and the source-book for all Jewish and Christian litanies and liturgies. The Roman Breviary, the Greek Orthodox liturgy, and the English Book of Common Prayer owe their finest language and deepest notes of confession and petition to the Psalms. Not without reason did William Law advise his students to improve their prayers “by collecting and transcribing the finest passages of the devotions, confessions, petitions, praises, resignations, and thanksgivings, which are scattered up and down the Psalms, and then range them under proper heads. This would be so much fuel for the flame for their own devotions.” And we might add the testimony of Max

Muller regarding their supreme place in the literature of all religions:

“After reading the prayers of other nations [he says], no unprejudiced critic would deny that the Hebrew Psalms stand out unique among the prayers of the whole world, by their simplicity, their power and the majesty of their language.”<sup>1</sup>

One of the most striking features of the prayers found in the Psalms is their universal outlook and their missionary character. There is nothing equal to it in the outlook of other religions. They are tribal or ethnic; the genius of the Hebrew scriptures is that of cosmopolitan universalism. The Jews were a peculiar people conscious of a special call and destiny. Nevertheless from Abraham to Malachi we have the same key-note that Israel is to become a blessing to all nations, and the Messiah to rule the whole world.

“I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is upon the sea shore” . . . “in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” “From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same My name shall be great among the Gentiles and in every place incense shall be offered unto My name and a pure offering: for My name shall be great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts” (Gen. 12:3; 22:17; Mal. 1:11). This same idea of a universal benediction on humanity through the revelation and redemption in Israel is found in Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the temple, in the prophecies of

<sup>1</sup> *Semitic Studies* (In Memory of Dr. Alexander Kohut, p. 40.)

Balaam, the blessings of Moses, and in the portrayal of a new universal Kingdom of peace and righteousness in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel and the minor prophets.

But it is especially in the Psalms that these visions and promises become missionary prayers. The second Psalm strikes the key-note. "Ask of me and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." In the twenty-second Psalm we are told that "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee; for the kingdom is the Lord's; and he is the governor among the nations."

The sixty-seventh Psalm is one of the greatest prayers for missions in the Old Testament. It was probably arranged for antiphonal singing in the temple worship: "God be merciful to us and bless us . . . that Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise Thee, O God, let all the peoples praise Thee . . ." What a wonderful impression must have been made by such a universal prayer! Notice as you read it the plurals, "peoples," "nations," "ends of the earth" and the recurrent "all" to include every one of the human family. In the same line of thought are the ninety-sixth and the one hundredth Psalms, and just as universal in their outlook:

"Let the heavens be glad and let the earth rejoice;  
Let the sea roar and the fulness thereof . . .

Before Jehovah; for He cometh  
For He cometh to judge the earth:  
He will judge the world with righteousness  
And the peoples in His faithfulness.”

The seventy-second Psalm became the basis of two of our great missionary hymns, *Hail to the Lord's Anointed*, and that of Isaac Watts, *Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun*. They paint the picture of a kingdom of peace and justice taking the place of war and oppression until “the whole earth is filled with the glory” of the God of Israel. While Isaac Watts also took the shortest of all the Psalms and interpreted it as a collect for missions in eight magnificent lines:

*“From all that dwell below the skies  
Let the Creator's praise arise  
Let the Redeemer's name be sung  
Through every land, by every tongue.*

*“Eternal are Thy mercies Lord,  
Eternal truth attends Thy word,  
Thy praise shall sound from shore to shore  
Till suns shall rise and set no more.”*

And so the Old Testament psalter became the hymnal and prayer-book of the New Testament Church. Christ and His apostles used no other liturgy or book of devotion. We must never forget that the early Church was nourished solely on the Scriptures “beginning from Moses and all the Prophets” because they testified of Christ.

We turn from the study of prayer in the Psalms

and of prayer in the Old Testament to the consideration of a few of the outstanding individual prayers as found in the historical and prophetic books. The wealth of material is great and our choice is due partly to the character of the one who offers the prayer (as in the case of Abraham) and partly due to the special nature of the prayer itself as in that of Asa on the eve of battle.

We omit many striking examples of prayer, such as that of Isaac (Gen. 25:21), Job's prayers, Melchisedek's (Gen. 14:19-20), Lot's (Gen. 19:19), Balaam's (Numbers 23:10), Hannah's (I Sam. 1:26), Manasseh's (II Chron. 33:12), the king of Nineveh's (Jonah 3:6), Isaiah's prayer for revival (Isaiah 64) and that of Hezekiah (II Kings 19:14.) The eight prayers we select are by Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Elisha, Asa, Nehemiah, Jeremiah and Habakkuk. Here is great variety of circumstance and of intercession, but the same spirit of faith and confidence in God. Henry W. Frost collected most of the prayers of the Old Testament saints in a little volume entitled *Men Who Prayed*. In the preface to these Bible studies he remarks: "So then the man who prays is the most potential man in the world. It is not that *man* is anything but rather that God is everything. For the man who prays puts himself in his true place as a suppliant and God in His true place as the Benignant and Beneficent One. And when God's grace is thus set free, it flows earthward in floods of blessing so that the desert places of life are made to rejoice and blossom as the rose."

Passing through the story of the Chosen People and listening to the out-pouring of their petitions, we shall indeed see that here is not a theory of prayer but actual accomplishment in the fine art of intercession.

Abraham is called the friend of God. He was the father of the faithful and "the first of foreign missionaries" by his great life decision and the promise he received. But he was also a spiritual giant in the realm of prayer. Among the prayers recorded of him on various occasions his intercession for the Cities of the Plain is supreme. He is now one hundred years old and has learned something of God's covenant faithfulness and tender compassion. Therefore he begins his prayer in deepest humility:

*"And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes: peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt Thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And He said, If I find forty and five, I will not destroy it. And he spake unto Him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And He said, I will not do it for forty's sake. And he said unto Him, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And He said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there. And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And He said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake. And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: peradventure ten*



---

*shall be found there. And He said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake."*

Here apparently, from the sequel of the story, is a case of fruitless intercession. Lot and his family were saved, but the Cities of the Plain destroyed. And yet what marvelous wealth there is here for the study of prayer. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" "Wilt Thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?"—these two questions still perplex the believer, as they did Abraham. We, too, must face the judgments of God in history and plead for His abundant mercies. The friend of God abhorred the wickedness of Sodom but "when he hears of the impending doom the fountains of pity are opened in his heart." Here he was indeed the friend of God and the father of all who have compassion on the multitudes. Here is the secret and the power of persistent intercession.

Another well-known and yet mysterious prayer in the Old Testament is that of Jacob wrestling with the angel: "I will not let thee go except thou bless me . . . Tell me, I pray thee, thy name." This page in the life of the patriarch is indeed holy ground. We can never fathom the depth of *this* taking hold of God, and yet it has been a comfort to the saints down the ages. The way of the transgressor and deceiver was hard. Jacob was at the end of all his own skill and resources. He was left alone with God. Then in the agony of prayer his very strength failed him. He never learned the name of God who wrestled with him but he received his blessing (Gen. 32:26-29). Hosea, centuries later,

referred to the midnight encounter: "Yea, he [Jacob] had power over the angel and prevailed: he wept and made supplication unto Him; he found Him in Beth-el, and there He spake with us." And he draws the lesson for us all, "Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait for thy God continually" (ch. 12:4,6). And we have Charles Wesley's great interpretation:

*"Come, O thou traveller unknown,  
Whom still I hold, but can not see!  
My company before is gone,  
And I am left alone with Thee;  
With Thee all night I mean to stay  
And wrestle till the break of day.*

*"Yield to me now for I am weak  
But confident in self-despair;  
Speak to my heart, in blessings speak;  
Be conquered by my instant prayer.  
Speak, or Thou never hence shalt move,  
And tell me if Thy name be Love."*

In the same class of agonizing prayer is that of Moses for the rebellious people of Israel (Num. 14:17-24). He is utterly self-forgetful but pleads the honor and the covenant promises of Jehovah. No bolder prayer is recorded in the Scriptures. One must read the context to appreciate the great climax of his intercession:

*"And now, I beseech Thee, let the power of the Lord be great, according as Thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is long-suffering, and of great mercy,*

forgiving iniquity and transgression; and by no means clearing the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children . . . Pardon, I beseech Thee, the iniquity of this people, according unto the greatness of Thy mercy, and as Thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt until now."

Moses is of colossal stature as the leader of Israel, but he is greatest of all in his prayers of intercession. The answer to such pleading was immediate and included a promise for the whole human family! "And the Lord said, *I have pardoned according to thy word: but as truly as I live all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.*"

The prayer of Elisha at Dothan (II Kings 6:17) is also remarkable; in this case for its setting and its brevity. Terrified by the hosts of Benhadad the Syrian, the servant of Elisha aroused his master with a cry of peril, "Alas my master! how shall we do?" Then the hero of faith answered, "Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." "*Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes that he may see.*" And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." How often has this prayer been on the lips of saints in peril and when surrounded by their foes. When God opens our understanding, we too shall see the invisible, hear the inaudible voices and lay hold of intangible realities. We all need to be delivered daily from the seeming unreality of the spiritual world. The things that are

seen are only temporal, the unseen is eternal. And we must not forget that

*“Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth  
Unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep.”*

Jesus Christ our Saviour believed in angels, often spoke of them and assured His disciples that He had command of “the innumerable company of angels,” even in Gethsemane.

The battle-cry of Asa, when he saw the strength of the Ethiopian army arrayed against Israel (II Chron. 14:11) is another prayer in distress. Strong in the confidence that God could give victory to the few against many and giving glory to God: “We rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go against this multitude.” His successor Jehoshaphat followed this example of prayer before battle and we have recorded his public intercession, when all the warriors of Judah “stood before Jehovah with their little ones, their wives, and their children” (II Chron. 20:5-13). The Old Testament saints lived in the twilight, before the great dawn, but they did know how to pray. They took hold of God with mind and heart and will. This is the kind of praying “which subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness and obtained promises.”

*“Thrice blest is he to whom is given  
The instinct that can tell  
That God is on the field when He  
Is most invisible.*

*“Workman of God, O lose not heart  
But learn what God is like  
And in the darkest battle field  
Thou shalt know where to strike.”*

These stanzas from the grand hymn of Frederick W. Faber might well have been an interpretation of the prayer of Nehemiah in one of the darkest hours of his life. (Neh. 1:5-11). This cup-bearer to the earthly king in Shushan was an ambassador to the court of heaven. His grief at the desolation of Jerusalem and the sad plight of his people found utterance in a remarkable prayer. After an appeal to God's covenant faithfulness, and contrition for the sin of the nation, he reminds God of His unending grace and then concludes with one great petition, “Prosper, I pray Thee, Thy servant this day and grant him mercy *in the sight of this man.*” And that man was an oriental despot; but Nehemiah prevailed. He arose victorious over all circumstances; a man of iron, patient, unbending, enduring, invincible, triumphant. We need such statesmen, such builders of society today; and they need prayer.

We read that Christ wept over Jerusalem, and Paul is not ashamed of his tears. If prayer be “the falling of a tear,” Jeremiah surely knew how to pray:

“The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved . . . Is there no balm in Gilead — is there no physician there? . . . Oh that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that

I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" (Chap. 8:20,22; 9:2).

Jeremiah has been called "a figure of bronze dissolving into tears." Manly strength and womanly tenderness unite in his character. He is a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; he felt loneliness and the burden of a nation's sins. His life and his lamentations are typical of Christ. He cast in his lot with the poor remnant of Israel and the two books which bear his name are full of the spirit of intercession, for he was a child of destiny. Sometimes his prayers are exceeding bold, as when he cries in his bitter perplexity: "O Lord, Thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived; Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, everyone mocketh me." (Jer. 20:7). The Lamentations of Jeremiah are a spiritual stone-quarry for those who desire to build themselves up in the art of prayer. Nowhere else in Scripture are there more poignant petitions, and telling phrases and heart-searching arguments of intercession. He "calls upon the Lord out of the low dungeon" and yet is confident that God's "compassions fail not, they are new every morning and great is Thy faithfulness."

We close our brief study by reference to the longest and most poetical of the prayers of Habakkuk. His life is obscure and his book has only three chapters. It begins and ends with prayer, and prayer so remarkable that Ruskin wrote, "I should have liked excessively to have known Habakkuk."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> E. T. Cook, *Life of Ruskin*, Vol. I, p. 479.

The last chapter is one continuous prayer for revival: "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years . . . in wrath remember mercy." This model prayer begins with adoration of God in creation and redemption. It continues by recalling His power and majesty in saving Israel from her enemies. "Thou wentest forth for the salvation of Thy people . . . Thou didst walk through the sea with Thy horses, through the heap of great waters." Then we have deep humiliation: . . . "My body trembled, my lips quivered at thy voice"; and the prophet closes with a hallelujah-paradox, because the Lord is his strength:

"Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

**X.**

**THE PRAYERS OF PAUL**



*“In prayer we are not alone or merely in the presence of our fellow-men. We are rather speaking with Another, Who is mightier than the whole world with which we have to wrestle, Who is greater and stronger than all which takes place in us and around us, the creator of heaven and earth. We bring our need before Him, and He answers us; just as Paul besought the Lord thrice to remove the thorn from his flesh, until the Lord answered: ‘My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness’ (II Cor. 12:8).”*

—KARL HEIM, D.D., in *The Church of Christ and the Problems of the Day.*

*“Paul energetic as Peter, and contemplative as John; Paul the hero of unselfishness; Paul the mighty champion of spiritual freedom; Paul a greater preacher than Chrysostom, a greater missionary than Xavier, a greater reformer than Luther, a greater theologian than St. Thomas of Aquinas; Paul the inspired Apostle of the Gentiles, the slave of the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

—F. W. FARRAR, D.D., in *The Life and Work of Paul.*

## X.

### THE PRAYERS OF PAUL

**N**EXT to the book of Psalms there is no part of the Bible that contains such wealth of devotion, such depth of adoration and such abundance of thanksgiving to God as Paul's epistles. The doxology and benediction is a token in every one of his letters. With entire unconsciousness, but with most vivid touch, he portrays his own spiritual life, its deepest and highest aspects, in the fervour of his devotional language and the ardor of his intercessions.

He has undesignedly drawn his own portrait and the course of his own spiritual pilgrimage from deepest night to midday, from the prison-house of sin into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, in the many groans and supplications, the adorations and exultations scattered through his epistles.

“Intellectually, as well as spiritually,” says Alexander Whyte, “as a theologian as well as a saint, Paul is at his very best in his prayers. The full majesty of the Apostle's magnificent mind is revealed to us nowhere as in his prayers. After Paul has carried his most believing and his most adoring readers as high as they are able to rise, Paul himself still rises higher and higher in his prayers. Paul leaves the most seraphic of saints far below him as

he soars away up into the third heaven of rapture and revelation and adoration.”<sup>1</sup>

Paul lived and moved and had his being in the realm of prayer. He offers no argument for prayer because he believed in a living God who exercises direct influence on the affairs of men. Direct revelation of God’s will came to him (Gal. 1:12 and 2:2), and direct answers to his petitions. “There stood by me this night, the angel of God, whose I am and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar: and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee” (Acts 27:23-24). What certainty, what directness! No wonder Paul adds, “*I believe God.*” His attitude to prayer was at the very antipode of much of modern thought and so-called philosophical objection. No one can read his life or study his prayers without the conviction that Paul was ever conscious of the reality of the supernatural; that he lived in the presence of God and that he believed in the efficacy of prayer under all circumstances. He bade his readers “pray without ceasing and in everything give thanks.” This was his own practice. In fact the whole spiritual life of Paul can be summed up in the earliest statement of it, “*Behold he prayeth*” (Acts 9:11). To live as a Christian was to live the life of prayer. He prayed for himself, for others, for the churches which he founded, for the tribes of Israel, for the whole family of humanity. How real his prayer for individuals was we know from the long list of Christian converts all mentioned by name, although he had probably never

---

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Whyte, *The Apostle Paul*, p. 85.

seen them, found in the last chapter of the epistle to the Romans and in his other letters. "I thank God," he tells Timothy, "how unceasing is my remembrance of thee in supplications, night and day longing to see thee, remembering thy tears that I may be filled with joy."

And he constantly asked for the prayers of others, "Brethren, pray for us" (I Thess. 5:25). He specifies urgent personal needs: that he may be delivered from those who oppose the Gospel, that his ministry may be acceptable, that he may have a prosperous journey, that God may open doors for the Word, that he may escape from imprisonment (Rom. 15:30-32; Col. 4:2-4; 2 Thess. 3:1; Philemon 22). To Paul's mind the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ was a present help in time of need. He can be touched with the feeling of man's infirmity. The incarnation brought God near to man and revealed His heart of love.

*"Thou with strong prayer and very much entreating  
Willest be asked, and Thou shalt answer then,  
Show the hid heart beneath creation beating,  
Smile with kind eyes and be a man to men."*

When we try to analyze and classify the prayers of the Apostle Paul their number and variety are perplexing. W. B. Pope, of Didsbury College, Manchester, wrote a series of valuable papers on the prayers of Paul in *The Methodist Magazine* (1875). He classifies them into ejaculatory prayers of single words or sentences, invocations, benedictions, and thanksgivings. In a class by

themselves he puts thirteen special prayers and gives their titles as follows:

Prayer for the abounding of charity — I Thess. 3:12, 13.

Prayer for entire sanctification — I Thess. 5:23, 24.

Prayer for the good pleasure of God — II Thess. 1:11, 12.

Prayer for everlasting consolation — II Thess. 2:16, 17.

Prayer for love and patience — II Thess. 3:5.

Prayer for corporate perfection — II Cor. 13:7-9.

Prayer for the unity of believers — Rom. 15:5, 6.

Prayer for hope — Rom. 15:13.

Prayer for knowledge of God's will — Col. 1:9-14.

Prayer for full assurance of knowledge — Col. 2:1-3.

Prayer for the glory of the inheritance — Eph. 1:15-21.

Prayer for the indwelling Trinity — Eph. 3:14-21.

Prayer for perseverance to the day of Christ — Phil. 1:9-11.

Nine of these prayers are very brief, while the five last named are of considerable length. All of them are definite petitions and intercessions for spiritual graces and gifts. And it is remarkable that five of these prayers occur in the two earliest epistles, written to the believers at Thessalonica.

In addition to these prayers we have salutations which by their form and content are addressed to God first in petition and then to man in fervent wish: "Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Jesus Christ our Lord" (I Tim. 1:2). "Grace be unto

you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Col. 1:2); and so in nearly every epistle, sometimes at the close, but mostly in the opening paragraph. Then we have the apostolic benedictions, in three leading forms with variations. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you" is the first and most general. This is also abbreviated to "Grace be with you," or expanded into the full liturgical form: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen" (II Cor. 13:14).

In all of these salutations and benedictions grace is the leading word, holds the preeminent place and leaves its echo. With Paul all is of grace, "for by grace ye are saved." "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor that ye through His poverty might be rich" (II Cor. 8:9). *That* word he loved and it was his token in every epistle. God is the God of all grace to Paul, "the chief of sinners and not worthy to be called an apostle."

Before we return to the prayers of Paul, we note his thanksgivings. The expressions of gratitude in all his epistles are introduced by two formulas. "Blessed be God" and "I thank God." He gives thanks for the success of the gospel, for the obedience of the saints, for their growth in grace, for the gifts of the Spirit, for the fellowship of believers, for comfort in trouble and for every remembrance of Christian love and friendship. He was ever filled with gratitude to God

for all His gifts and most of all for His unspeakable gift — the Son of His love.

If we would learn to give thanks, to pour out our souls in grateful acknowledgment of all God has done, is doing, and will do for us, we should study these thanksgivings of the great Apostle:

“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God” (II Cor. 1:3-4).

As the eye ranges through the long series of Paul’s epistles we note that without a single exception the doctrinal statements of greatest importance take the form of more or less explicit prayer. The more formal prayers that we are about to consider were actual petitions with which he besieged heaven daily. They were the out-pouring of his deepest desire as missionary-apostle for the early Church and they teach us what such intercessory prayer can be and should be. The five Thessalonian supplications already referred to, are marked by brevity of words and depth of meaning. The first has for its subject prayer for the abounding of love; and then follows, in the same letter, a prayer for entire sanctification, every word and phrase of which is unique:

“The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all men, even

---

as we do toward you: to the end He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." . . . "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In several respects this prayer is peculiar and may be said to stand alone. Its phraseology is unusually individualistic; it suggests the high-priestly prayer in John's gospel (John 17:19); it is addressed to the God of peace Who is the author of reconciliation and the source of all holiness; it implies the doctrine of the Trinity not as dogma but as experience; and then this prayer closes with an unlimited promise based upon God's faithfulness.

The three other brief prayers in the second epistle to the Thessalonians have already been mentioned. At the close of the second letter to the Corinthians we have as it were, the disjointed fragments of a prayer for restoration: "Now I pray God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest . . . and this also we wish, even your perfection" (II Cor. 13:7,9). The context is difficult but the unselfish love of Paul is evident because the cause of the trouble was a disregard of his own apostolic authority. We pass by the brief prayers for Unity and Hope in Romans 15:5,6,13, and turn to the all-embracing prayer for the knowledge of God's



will in Colossians 1:9-14. Paul asks that these young Christians be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that they may walk worthy of the Lord; that they may be fruitful in every good work and be strong with divine power; their wills surrendered, their walk godly, their witness fruitful.

Then he closes this remarkable prayer with a three-fold doxology to God the Father and the Son "in Whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Every word in these compact sentences is weighty and worthy of careful thought. Such comprehensive spiritual insight and intercession is proof of apostolic inspiration. So often our prayers are a multitude of words to hide paucity of thought. Here is just the opposite. It is a wrestling against the very "power of darkness" mentioned by using the panoply of light, and the result is victory in prayer.

A similar intercession, although less explicit, is found in the same epistle (Col. 2:1-4), where the Apostle pleads for a fuller assurance of the knowledge of the mystery of the Gospel. His prayer is for Laodicea and for those whose faces Paul had not seen; yet with what agony of soul he remembers their need. The epistle to the Ephesians has two of the longest prayers of Paul recorded for us. The first (Eph. 1:15-21) deals with the glory of the inheritance, only visible to those whose eyes have been enlightened and who live in the power of Christ's resurrection. Like other prayers of Paul it is Trinitarian — the Father, the

Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation are all mentioned in a personal way. The language is that of experience. These are not mere phrases, they are the throbbing of Paul's heart. The closing sentence on the risen Redeemer is not vivid imagination but calm recollection. On the road to Damascus Paul saw Jesus "raised from the dead and set at God's own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." Paul's prayers, therefore, were full of adoration. He could never forget "the glory of that light" which he saw when he and his companions fell prostrate and when he received his great commission.

The second prayer in Ephesians is the holy of holies among the recorded prayers of the Apostle. Deeper, vaster, more unsearchable in its spiritual riches and the sweep of its universalism than any other utterance of Paul: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named . . ." Then follow five petitions and a matchless doxology. We may gain some insight into at least one portion of this prayer from a letter written by Bishop Edward Bickersteth of Japan at the age of twenty-eight, to his younger brother from Delhi:

"The results in missions will be in proportion to the spirituality of the agents. Increase your central fire, have a stronger hold on verities, live more in

the sense of the unseen, *let Christ dwell in our hearts by faith* (taking these words in their mystery and fulness and blessedness), crush down selfishness and sin, and then, through perhaps only two or three such agents, more good might be done in a short while than by fifty ordinary Christians.”<sup>1</sup>

It was Paul’s prayer-life that helped to produce that kind of Christians in the first century.

There is one more prayer of Paul given at some length in Philippians 1:9-11. He prays that believers may abound in love more and more, that they may approve the right, be sincere and without offense “till the day of Christ.” Here is a collect for the perseverance of the saints and the preservation of the saints until the end. “The day of Christ” is at the heart of this petition. That day is the dawn of eternity, the hope of the redeemed, the climax of all history. Some one has said that Paul only spoke in terms of “today” and “that day.” He knew no other divisions of time because he lived for eternity.

The one perplexing question, as we study Paul’s prayers, is the ungranted petition regarding his thorn in the flesh (II Cor. 12:7-10). This perplexity of unanswered prayer comes in three forms. Sometimes because of our disobedience there is no answer to our prayers. The heavens are dumb as they were to

---

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Letters of Edward Bickersteth*, pp. 83, 84.

Saul at Gibeon. Again the answer is deferred, delayed until persistent and repeated petition brings answer, as to the prophet Elijah on Carmel. And also God gives answer in His own way, but not according to our will. This was the case with Paul. "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

In the eleventh chapter we have Paul's great *apologia pro vita sua*—his defense of his apostleship. Then comes the story of his extraordinary experience of rapture into the glory of the third heaven, only to be followed by this bitter and humiliating account of "the thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me." It little matters in the consideration of this prayer whether the thorn in the flesh was bodily infirmity, spiritual discouragement, carnal temptation, epilepsy, malaria fever or acute ophthalmia. Each of these theories have had distinguished advocates, but no one really knows what Paul suffered or to what he referred. It was a real Gethsemane to him of physical, mental or spiritual agony. He tells us that pride was his spiritual foe and that pain was one of God's allies in the fight. When he prayed the third time, the Lord said to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Paul can *now* say under the continued affliction, "Wherefore I take pleasure in infirmities . . . for Christ's sake: for when I am weak then am I strong."

Here is the patience of unanswered, answered prayer! Here is the victory of faith.

*“Unanswered yet? Faith cannot be unanswered,  
Her feet are firmly planted on the rock;  
Amid the wildest storms she stands undaunted  
Nor quails before the loudest thunder shock.  
She knows Omnipotence has heard her prayer,  
And cries, It shall be done—sometime, somewhere.”*

Paul's silence, as Robert E. Speer says, regarding the particular nature of his thorn in the flesh, “is illustrative of more than his reserve. It introduces us to his clean, heroic grit. When he found that his thorn was to be a part of his discipline and that he was to do his work in spite of it, the warrior joy rose up supreme in him.” Paul had learned not only to pray without ceasing but in everything to give thanks and so the joy of the Lord was his strength.

If your prayers hitherto have been a weariness to you, and your thorn in the flesh a burden and no blessing, if you desire to learn the secret of communion with God and a heart aflame for His glory, read Paul's epistles. Study his prayers and doxologies and adorations and confessions of sin. In such case, to go back to Paul is to go back to Christ. And forward with Christ in the school of prayer.

**XI.**

**THE LORD'S PRAYER**

“‘Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy will be done.’ — *What else can we say? The other night in my sleepless tossings about, which were growing more and more miserable, these words, that brief and grand Prayer, came strangely into my mind, with an altogether new emphasis, as if WRITTEN and shining for me in mild, pure splendour, on the black bosom of the night there. When I, as it were, READ them word by word—with a sudden check to my imperfect wanderings, with a sudden softness of composure which was most unexpected. Not perhaps for thirty or forty years had I once formally repeated that prayer; nay, I never felt before how intensely the voice of man’s soul it is; the inmost aspiration of all that is high and pious in poor human nature, right worthy to be recommended with an ‘After this manner pray ye.’*”

—THOMAS CARLYLE, in a Letter to Erskine.

## XI.

### THE LORD'S PRAYER

**N**INETEEN centuries ago on the mountain-side Jesus taught His disciples for the first time the *Pater Noster*, the most perfect and beautiful of all prayers and which we commonly call the Lord's Prayer. It is the Lord's Prayer because He gave it to the Church, because it enshrines His teaching and is the expression of His spirit. But in a deeper sense it is *not* the prayer of our Lord but the prayer intended for those who are His disciples. He had no sin and needed no petition of forgiveness. There is no record that our Lord ever prayed thus; except one brief portion of the prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. The apostles asked Jesus for a prayer of their own and He gave it to them: "When ye pray say . . . Our Father."

Now there is no part of the gospel which has had a larger place in Christian literature and interpretation than this prayer. When John Knox lay dying in 1572 he repeated the Lord's Prayer with a paraphrase or comment added to each petition: "Our Father Who art in heaven . . . who can pronounce such holy words?"

And who can add anything new to what has been said and written on this universal prayer of the ages? Dante expounded its mystic significance in the eleventh canto of his *Purgatorio*. Bengel imagined that the



whole of Peter's first epistle was a commentary on this prayer! Carlyle said it was "the voice of the human soul, the inmost aspiration of all that is high and holy." St. Francis of Assisi when he stripped himself of his raiment and handed his father his last possessions said:

"Listen all of you and understand well! Until this time I have called Pietro Bernardone *my father*; but now I desire to serve God. This is why I return my money as well as all my clothing and all that I have had from him — for from henceforth I desire to say nothing else than, 'Our Father Who art in heaven' . . ."<sup>1</sup>

This prayer embodies every possible desire of the praying heart; it contains a whole world of spiritual requirements, and combines in simple language every Divine promise, every human sorrow and want and every Christian aspiration for the good of others. It is the shortest, deepest, richest of all prayers ever offered by man and could only proceed from the lips of Him Who knew what was in man because He is the Son of God.

Some have compared it to a precious diamond with many facets reflecting at once the teaching of the gospel, the life and character of our Lord, the discipline of the Spirit, the power of the redeemed life and the very history and final triumph of the Kingdom of God. It is simple yet always novel; infinitely easy to repeat, yet infinitely hard to understand; humble in its phrases, exalted in its high significance; natural yet supernatu-

---

<sup>1</sup> Sabatier, *Life of St. Francis*, p. 61.

ral; the commencement and the climax of all true prayer. When we read it slowly and try to fathom its short sentences, we are reminded of Dimitri Merejowski's words regarding the gospel:

“It is a strange book. You cannot read it exhaustively. No matter how often you read it, it always seems that you have not quite read it to the end, or that you have forgotten, or have failed to understand something; you re-read — and the same thing happens again and again, times without number. It is like the midnight sky: the longer you gaze as it, the greater the multitude of the stars.”<sup>1</sup>

In this brief chapter we would therefore consider two stars only in the vast galaxy of interpretation and ask to *Whom* this prayer should be addressed and in *what spirit* we should pray.

Contrary to the opinion and usage of liberals and humanists, we believe that the Lord's Prayer is wholly Christian and can only be rightly used by those who are such. To whom do we pray and in what spirit must we pray? The very form and language of the prayer gives answer to these two questions.

The Lord's Prayer is generally arranged into three parts: the preface, the petitions, and the conclusion. The prayer has six petitions in two parts: three that look to God and His Kingdom, three that refer to man and his need. In the first trinity of petitions we have the unfolding of God's infinite riches; in the second,

<sup>1</sup> The Unknown Gospel, p. 17.

the poverty of man which only God can supply with His grace.

Tholuck remarks that "the attentive reader who has otherwise learned the doctrine of the Trinity will find a distinct reference to it in the arrangement of this prayer. The first petition in each of the first and second portions of the prayer refers to God as Creator and Preserver; the second to God the Redeemer; the third to God the Holy Spirit." This may not appear at first sight but the longer we study the prayer and analyze it, the more it becomes evident. It is as when you hold a piece of bond-paper to the light and the watermark of the manufacturer appears in every sheet; so the doctrine of the blessed Trinity appears where we do not expect to see it in many a passage of Scripture both of the Old and New Testaments.

Surely the prayer that Jesus taught us may reflect the glory of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit by implication if not by direct expression. And such is perhaps evident from its very form:

PROLOGUE	PETITION		CONCLUSION
Father	Hallowed be Thy Name	Give us this day, etc.	Thine is the Kingdom
Our	Thy Kingdom Come	And forgive us, etc.	Thine is the power
in the heavens	Thy will be done, etc.	And lead us not, etc.	Thine is the glory, etc.

"After this manner therefore pray ye" — conscious of our personal relationship to God our Father, God our Redeemer, and God our Sanctifier. In the prologue

itself the doctrine of the Trinity is implied. God is eternal and unchangeable in His being and attributes. For if He is Father *now*, He always was, and ever will be. The Son of His love was in the bosom of the Father before the creation of the world. His spirit brooded over chaos and that Spirit alone makes it possible for a sinner to say Our Father — Abba, Father.

The first petition is primarily concerned with the ineffable name of Jehovah Who is holy in all His attributes. The second speaks of the kingdom of the Messiah, the Son of God — a kingdom of grace in human hearts, of power in the world and of glory in the world to come. This three-fold kingdom belongs to Christ. It is an everlasting kingdom and a kingdom without frontiers. The third petition is in the realm of the will, the deepest mystery of personality. “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

*“Our wills are ours we know not how;  
Our wills are ours to make them Thine”—*

and that transformation of the rebellious will of man into conformity to the will of God is throughout the Scriptures the work of the Holy Spirit. He kindles the spark of faith, He makes the unwilling heart willing, He overcomes our reluctance and makes us eager to do the will of God.

The same natural sequence occurs in the second division of the prayer. The first petition is to God the Father of mankind. The eyes of all wait upon Him and He giveth them meat in season. He openeth his

hand and satisfieth the desire of every living thing. He gives us our daily bread. The second petition is to the Son of Man who hath power on earth to forgive sins; to Him who prayed for sinners, wept for sinners, died for sinners and made atonement for the sins of the whole world. "Forgive us our debts as we forgive." "Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

The third and closing petition is undoubtedly concerned with the work of the Holy Spirit. "And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." "Then was Jesus led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil," so we read in the Gospel. The Holy Spirit and the spirit of evil find their arena of conflict in the world and in the heart of man. One may, of course, believe in neither God nor devil; but if one believes in a personal God, there is no reason for not believing in a personal devil. If we accept the Scriptures there is every reason to believe in his existence. To quote once more from the recent book by Merejkowski:

"Who could believe in our days as Jesus believed? He believed in demons, but we no longer do," says a very naive Protestant cleric, expressing what almost all *quondam* Christians of today feel. But if a little schoolboy of today could set Jesus right concerning the essence of evil, the devil, what guarantee have we that Jesus was not also mistaken concerning the essence of good, God? And that by itself would suffice to destroy all Christianity.

"Throughout His whole life, Jesus does nothing but battle, not with impersonal, abstract evil, but

---

with His enemy, the devil, who is as personal and living as Himself. The clause of the Lord's prayer, 'deliver us from evil' refers to the devil."

We agree with this interpretation.

And so the sixth petition is addressed to the Holy Spirit, Who alone is able to give us victory over temptation and to guide us into all truth.

And then we note that the triumphant doxology of the prayer is again addressed to the Trinity. For Thine is the Kingdom, O Christ; Thine is the power O Holy Spirit and Thine, O Father, is the glory as it was in the beginning is now and ever more shall be. "When all things have been subjected unto Him," writes Paul, "then shall the Son also Himself be subjected to Him that did subject all things unto Him, that God may be all in all" (I Cor. 15:28).

Whether we accept Tholuck's interpretation or no, in any case the Lord's Prayer surely teaches us that we may address our prayers to each Person of the Divine Trinity separately. All men should honor the Son and the Spirit as they honor the Father. That the early Christians directed worship to each of the three Persons of the Godhead is well known.

Stephen's dying prayer was directed to Jesus Christ. Paul besought the Lord Jesus thrice to be delivered from his thorn in the flesh. The Holy Spirit is addressed in intercession: "The Lord (i.e. the Spirit) direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Jesus Christ." In the ancient *Te Deum* we have the worship of the Father, the Son and the Holy

Spirit blended into one great harmony, even as in the Lord's Prayer. So Christian prayer must be to God through Christ and in the Spirit. Those who accustom themselves to the Trinitarian approach will not fall into the vague use of the pronoun "it" when referring to the Holy Spirit. He is our Comforter, our Guide, our Enlightener, our Teacher and He alone can make Christ real to us. One of the most beautiful of the ancient Latin hymns is to the Holy Spirit and begins *Veni Creator Spiritus*. It was probably written by Gregory the Great (504-604 A.D.) and is a little commentary on the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer. That prayer in its approach to God is wholly Christian; its frequent use, therefore, in gatherings of non-Christians and Jews, as a sort of common denominator, is, we believe, to be deprecated. We have access through Christ to the Father, according to Paul, by one Spirit. There is the Father *to* whom we have access, the Son *through* whom, and the Spirit *in* whom; this open way to the throne of grace is ours. As Archbishop Trench expressed it:

"Prayer is a work of God, of God the Holy Ghost, a work of His in you, and by you, and in which you must be fellow-workers with Him — but His work notwithstanding."<sup>1</sup>

This brings us to our second question; in what spirit can we truly pray this prayer of the ages? We have the answer in the words themselves. They demand a filial, reverent, loyal, submissive, dependent, penitent,

---

<sup>1</sup> Sermons Preached in Westminster Abbey, p. 229.

---

humble, confident, triumphant, exultant and sincere spirit.

*A filial spirit*, for we call God "our Father." We are His sons by creation, by adoption and by the great inheritance. Through Christ our Master we are all brethren. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole human family receives its solidarity and its redemption. We must approach Him in the spirit of sonship.

*A reverent spirit*, for we begin our prayer by remembering that God's name is to be hallowed. We stand on holy ground when we pray. He that cometh to God must believe that He is holy. Therefore our hearts will kneel before Him in adoration and praise. "Hallowed be Thy name."

*A loyal spirit* is the test of all sincerity. We come to our King and pray for His Kingdom. Shall He find us "whole-hearted, true-hearted, faithful and loyal," or are we using idle words? When we pray Thy Kingdom come we must break down every idol and cast out every rival from our hearts so that Jesus may occupy a solitary throne and rule alone.

This prayer also demands *a submissive spirit*; the entire surrender of our own will to the will of God. As in heaven the angels always behold the face of the Saviour and do His will gladly and eagerly, so we on



earth are to yield ourselves to His obedience. Not our willfulness, but our willingness is the key to the calm and quiet of God.

We also come like suppliants in *a dependent spirit*. "Give us this day our daily bread." Apparently one of the smallest yet one of the greatest petitions. We ask for earthly bread and He gives us not only that but the heavenly manna. It is a prayer for moderation and contentment that covers all earthly wants. It is a prayer for neither poverty nor riches, but for food and shelter and home — for all of which we are daily dependent on God. As Maltbie Babcock puts it, in one of his sermons:

*"Back of the loaf there is the flour,  
And back of the flour the mill,  
And back of the mill the sun and the shower  
And the Heavenly Father's will."*

And since all our daily deeds and daily duties and daily anxieties are not free from sin, we must include *a spirit of penitence*. "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." This is not the ground of God's forgiveness nor the measure of His forgiveness, but the condition on which He waits. It is the most heart-searching clause in the Lord's Prayer. He who can not forgive man, can not find forgiveness with God.

*“Forgive us Lord! to Thee we cry;  
Forgive us through Thy matchless grace;  
On Thee alone our souls rely;  
Be Thou our strength and righteousness.*

*“Forgive us, O Thou bleeding Lamb!  
Thou risen, Thou exalted Lord!  
Thou great High-priest, our souls redeem,  
And speak the pardon-sealing word.”*

Then also we shall have *the humble spirit* which knows its own weakness and fears the power of temptation. “Lead us not into temptation.” Pride goeth before the fall, but he who walks lowly and with constant humility is safe against the wiles of the Tempter, and perfect love casts out fear.

The climax of the prayer is in *a spirit of confidence, of triumph and of exultation*. “For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever.” We know that the Kingdom is certain, that God’s power is sufficient for all exigencies, and that if we wait until the end we shall see the glory of God. So the Lord’s Prayer closes with a daily diminutive hallelujah chorus for all believers. And then there is the seal of *sincerity*, “Amen.” If we would fathom the meaning of this Hebrew word, which signifies certainly and truly, we must study its use by Jesus Christ in His daily speech. “Amen, amen, (that is, verily, verily,) I say unto you”

—how often and at what critical times these words occur. And He Himself is the Amen (Rev. 3:14), the faithful witness, to every sincere prayer. “After this manner, therefore, pray ye”—to the Triune God and in the right spirit (II Cor. 1:20).

**XII.**

**THE PRAYERS OF OUR LORD**

*“There are three roads to Bethlehem  
And souls must follow all of them;  
For these roads are a Trinity  
And all are one and all are three  
And they are laid for you and me.  
Through grace of God’s dear courtesy  
By angels working busily  
For travellers to that blest country  
Where reigneth He—the One—the Three.*


\* \* \*

*“The third road is the way of prayer  
And we may find it anywhere;  
And prayer is work and often pain;  
And pain is prayer and then again  
Work should be prayer, and often is  
Set high among life’s sanctities  
By suffering, and we shall prove  
These three roads one, for all are love—  
And He trod every one of them  
Who lay in straw at Bethlehem.”*

—FATHER ANDREW, S.D.C., in *Horizons*.

## XII.

### THE PRAYERS OF OUR LORD

TTO Borchert points out, that, although Jesus is our example in prayer and gave us the Lord's Prayer, yet He stands apart from us all in this, as in everything else.<sup>1</sup> He never prayed together with His disciples, but went apart from them, to pray. He could never use the Publican's petition which He commended to His followers: "God be merciful to me a sinner." No prayer of confession ever escaped His lips. He was always conscious of God's presence and yet He sought that presence in prayer. In Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead, and yet He looked up into heaven when He prayed. He prayed that others might have grace and not fail or fall in temptation: "I have prayed for thee" (Luke 22:32). His relation to God was different from that of all other men. Therefore His prayers were different. He prayed, "Not My will but Thine be done." And He also said in His prayer: "Father I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am that they may behold My glory." This is the constant and recurring paradox in the prayer-life of Jesus because He is truly human and yet very God. He who, until the last, made intercession for transgressors, never had need of the

<sup>1</sup> The Original Jesus, pp. 218-226.

intercessions of others — nor did he ever ask His disciples to pray for Him. How different in this respect is the life of Jesus from that of His great apostle Paul!

The greater part of the prayer-life of our Saviour is shrouded in mystery. A veil of silence covers the thirty years at Nazareth but we know they must have been years of communion with God and intercession for the world, in preparation for His great mission.

Who taught Jesus His first prayer as a child? Which of the Psalms of prayer and thanksgiving in the Jewish ritual were most precious to Him?

Some have imagined that His favorite book in the Old Testament was Deuteronomy because it is most frequently quoted in the Gospel-record of His words. One has only to read the last four chapters thoughtfully to see what a wealth of adoration and intercession is here enshrined in the song and blessing of Moses.

J. P. Lange has a paragraph on the prayers of Jesus that is worth pondering:

“Out of Christ’s divinely rich prayer-life, there emerge, as from an ocean, the pearls of those single prayers of His that are preserved to us . . . He appears as the Prince of humanity even in the realm of prayer; in the manner, likewise, in which He has concealed His prayer-life, exhibiting it only as there was necessity for its presentment. If we regard His work as a tree that towers into heaven and overshadows the world, His prayer-life is the root of this tree; His overcoming of the world rests upon the infinite depth of His self-presentation be-

fore God, His self-devotion to God, His self-immersion in God, His self-certitude and power from God. In His prayer-life the perfect truth of His human nature has also approved itself. The same who, as the Son of God, is complete revelation, is as the Son of Man, complete religion."

The first reference we have to Jesus as engaged in prayer is in Luke's Gospel where we read: "Now when all the people were baptised, it came to pass that Jesus also being baptised, *and praying*, the heaven was opened and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him and a voice came from heaven which said, Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased." Then follows the statement that Jesus was "about thirty years of age." What a life of prayer is hidden in those silent years! What victories of faith and patience and love they must have witnessed in lowly and lonely Nazareth!

*"We saw Thee not when Thou didst come  
To this poor world of sin and death;  
Nor e'er beheld Thy cottage home  
In that despised Nazareth.  
But we believe Thy footsteps trod  
Its streets and plains, Thou Son of God."*

From Luke's Gospel we learn most regarding the prayer-life of our Saviour, while John gives us the most regarding the language of His prayers. After the baptism Luke tells us of the forty days and forty nights of fasting and prayer in the wilderness. Then after proclaiming His mission, we are told that "He



departed and went into a desert place" (4:42), evidently to be alone in prayer. Afterwards He cleansed the leper and "His fame spread abroad so that great multitudes came together to hear," but "He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed" (5:16). In the next chapter, when the Jews "were filled with madness and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus" we read again that "He went out into a mountain to pray and continued all night in prayer to God" (6:12). Jesus, we are told by John, knew from the beginning who should betray Him (John 6:64,70). Therefore just before He chose the twelve, including Judas Iscariot, He spent the whole night in prayer. As Borchert remarks, "the hour demanded an immense sacrifice from Him: He took the serpent into His bosom."

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews had knowledge of such inner prayer-life of Jesus, when he wrote of the "days of His flesh when He had offered up prayer and supplication with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared." Not only at the last, in Gethsemane, but all through His ministry, such prayer must have been His experience. We have glimpses of it in His prayer for Peter when he faced temptation (Luke 22:32). Jesus knew the human heart. Peter's courage failed him, as did his emotions, and his heart and mind; but Jesus was praying and Peter's faith did not die. Such intercession costs agony. Peter stood by the fire warming himself while his Master was spat

---

upon, scourged and blindfolded! "But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not."

If prayer is the burden of a sigh, we have one such prayer, in Luke 9:58: "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head."

*"Lord, stab my soul with visions of Thy pain  
Lest I should shut my door on Thee again,  
And in warm comfort turn upon my bed  
While Thou canst find nowhere to lay Thine head:*

*For I have nests and holes to which I flee;  
Let me be driven from all until to Thee  
At last, at last, in loneliness I come  
To find, sweet lonely Lord, Thy Heart my home!"*

Jesus prayed for little children (Matt. 19:13) when He put His hands on them. He gave thanks, before the miracle of the loaves and the fishes, (Matt. 15:36) and also at the Last Supper (Matt. 26:27). We read that "as He prayed" on the Mount of Transfiguration "the fashion of His countenance was altered and His raiment was white and glistening." No one caught the secret of the mystery of that prayer of Jesus. Peter refers to it in his epistle with awe, but does not record the words. Only four brief prayers and one longer prayer of Jesus are found in the Gospels. The thanksgiving in Matthew 11:25 and another in John 11:41-42; the high-priestly prayer in John 17; the prayer in the garden and the prayer on the cross, "Father

forgive them for they know not what they do.” The two thanksgivings are eloquent in teaching us that Jesus was always conscious of His Father and of His own peculiar relationship to Him. The self-consciousness of this unique relationship puts a gulf between the prayers of Jesus and the prayers of His disciples—the former are *totaliter aliter*. Listen:

“I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.”

Again:

“Jesus lifted up His eyes and said: Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I know that Thou hearest Me always: but because of the people which stand by, I said it that they may believe that Thou hast sent me.”

And Borchert says:

“To Jesus prayer was the necessary answer to the voice of God which He heard everywhere because He lived so much in Him. Prayer went like a divine shuttle backwards and forwards between Him and the Father . . . On the still, dark lake of Galilee, probably for the first and only time, prayer became a loving aloud, full and undisturbed, a transformation of existence into pure subjectiveness — He in the Father and the Father in Him.”

This great mystery of the prayer-life of Jesus we may not probe, but can only stand in awe and worship. The high-priestly prayer is also holy ground. The Gospel of John is the charter of Christian mysticism and he who leaned on Jesus' bosom had the deepest insight into the implications of the incarnation. As Origen says, "No one can fully understand this prayer who has not, like its author, lain upon the breast of Jesus."

Here we have the length and breadth and depth and height of intercession. A few hours before his death John Knox said to his wife, "Go, where I cast my first anchor!" And so she read to him the seventeenth chapter of John. It is good anchor ground for us all, and contains exceeding great and precious promises as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast.

The prayer is addressed to God the Father by the Son and through the eternal Spirit. The word Father occurs six times, twice with the addition of the words, holy and righteous. The prayer is generally divided into three parts: First, Jesus prays for Himself (vs. 1-5), then for His apostles (vs. 6-19), and lastly for the Church (vs. 20-26). In the first part His desire is that God may be glorified in bestowing eternal life through Himself upon all to whom He is sent. He prays for the apostles as instruments in continuing His work in the world. And then the horizon of their world-wide mission lifts and He prays for all believers present and future that they may behold and share His glory with the Father. From another aspect, as Pro-

fessor William O. Carver has pointed out, this great prayer is wholly missionary.<sup>1</sup>

The hour is come, the crucial hour of His atoning death, the supreme hour for Love's manifestation, for sin's ultimate effort and defeat. Because God has given His Son authority over all flesh He can bestow eternal life upon those who believe in His name. To make that name known is to finish the work which Christ has given us to do: "Jesus has set imperishably in human life and knowledge God's nature and message. This is the seed that will grow into a great tree." He prays that the little group of disciples may be kept in faith and in unity in order that the world at large may believe in Him. "As Thou didst send me into the world, so do I send them into the world." They are the projection of Christ's mission. They are to go on His errand in His spirit and make up that which is behind in His suffering. So that finally the prayer includes all who shall believe—the great multitude which John saw in vision and which no man can number.

And now in one final burst of passion all His work, all His longing, all His hopes, all His plans find pregnant expression (verses 25-26):

"O righteous Father, the world did not know Thee; but I knew Thee: (so I came to make the world know) and these came to know that Thou didst send me; and I made known unto them Thy (true) name (and character), and will (continue to) make it known; so that the love wherewith Thou lovedst me may be in them and I in them."<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *Missions in the Plan of the Ages*, pp. 76, 83.

<sup>2</sup> *Missions in the Plan of the Ages*, p. 82.

After offering this prayer, Jesus went out with His disciples to a place on the farther side of the Ravine of the Cedars where there was a garden — and here again we see the Master praying. The triumphal note of the high-priest's intercession, now is changed to the agony of prayer. Paradise was lost through man's disobedience in a garden. It is restored by the Son of man's obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. This is the glory of the garden of Gethsemane to which Rudyard Kipling alludes:

*“Oh, Adam was a gardener, and God, Who made him,  
sees  
That half a gardener's proper work is done upon his  
knees.  
So when your work is finished, you can wash your  
hands and pray,  
For the glory of the Garden that it may not pass away!  
And the glory of the Garden it shall never pass away.”*

Sidney Lanier struck a much higher and clearer note in his interpretation of the agony of Gethsemane. You remember his poem beginning “Into the woods my Master went”? But Luke, the physician and the artist, tells it all in language so vivid that it needs no commentary:

“And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast and kneeled down, and prayed, saying Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will but Thine be done. And there

appeared an angel unto Him from heaven strengthening Him. And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22: 41-44).

Matthew tells us that this prayer was repeated three times and that Jesus fell on His face prostrate while praying; while John is silent regarding the prayer in the Garden. Here began the loneliness of the Passion, the climax in the life of the lonely Nazarene. “All ye shall be offended because of me this night”—that was His warning. And when He began to be sorrowful and very heavy in spirit those who were asked to watch with Him fell asleep. Alone He faced the darkness of that hour; alone He overcame the Tempter; alone He prayed thrice and arose victorious. That is the lesson he would teach us.

*“Go to dark Gethsemane,  
Ye that feel the Tempter’s power!  
Your Redeemer’s conflict see,  
Watch with Him one bitter hour;  
Turn not from His griefs away  
Learn of Jesus how to pray.”*

For the Christian as for Christ, although on a far lower plane and in lesser degree, there may be ecstasy in torment. As Thomas à Kempis put it, “When thou shalt come to this state that tribulation is sweet to thee, and thou dost relish it for Christ’s sake, then think it to be well with thee, for thou hast found Paradise on

earth. To accept the chalice of pain or disappointment with joy is to share the fellowship of Him who prayed 'Nevertheless not my will but thine be done' . . . 'And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.' "

One more brief prayer is recorded of our Saviour before His cry on the Cross "My God, my God, why" . . . followed by his confident, "Father into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

When the soldiers and the Jewish mob led Him to the place called Calvary and began their cruel task of nailing the three victims to their crosses, Luke tells us that Jesus prayed: "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do." The first of the seven words from the cross is the last word on the love that passeth knowledge, the forgiveness that knows no bounds, and the divine omniscience of man's blindness and ignorance and sin, but which embraces all in its mercy. Where man's sin abounded, nay went beyond all bounds, grace did much more abound. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and mercy of God in this brief prayer for pardon! At the beginning and at the end of the crucifixion, Jesus addresses God as Father. He who had power on earth to forgive sins, prays for the forgiveness of those who sinned against Him by the perpetration of the most hideous crime of all history. For they knew not what they did, nor to whom they did it, else they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. (1 Cor. 2:8)

Two more, of the seven last words from the Cross,



may be considered as sentence prayers. The first, when, (as Mrs. Browning tells us in the last stanzas of her poem on Cowper's grave)

“ . . . *Adam's sins swept between the righteous Son and  
Father;*  
*Yea, once, Immanuel's orphaned cry His universe hath  
shaken, —*  
*It went up single, echoless, 'My God I am forsaken!'*  
*It went up from the Holy's lips, and for His lost  
creation,*  
*That of the lost, no son should use those words of  
desolation.”*

And shortly after *that* bitter cry, which none of us will ever fathom, came the last word: “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”

And so ended the prayer-life of the Son of Man who, (after his glorious resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father) ever lives to make intercession for us. And who, because He partook of our flesh and blood, knoweth our frame, remembereth that we are dust, and can have compassion on the ignorant and those who are out of the way.

*We* know not how to pray as we ought, but His Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. Only in the light of the prayer-life of Jesus can we rightly examine our own ways of prayer. If we do not take time for worship, if the greatness of God's love and glory do not hold us, let us learn of Christ and amend our ways.

---

If we are without moral passion and do not hunger and thirst for righteousness among men, let us learn of Christ. If our prayers for others are perfunctory or casual; if we care too little for others or for mankind to be able to give time to intercession, let us remember Christ's midnight hours of prayer. If the circle of those for whom we pray is narrow and does not grow with the years, let us learn of Jesus Christ and study once more His high-priestly prayer for the universal Kingdom. We shall run the way of His commandments when He enlarges our hearts, through intercession. "Lord, teach us to pray."

*“Father, I scarcely dare to pray,  
So clear I see, now it is done,  
That I have wasted half my day,  
And left my work but just begun.*

*So clear I see that things I thought  
Were right or harmless were a sin;  
So clear I see that I have sought,  
Unconscious, selfish aims to win.*

*So clear I see that I have hurt  
The souls I might have helped to save,  
That I have slothful been, inert,  
Deaf to the calls Thy leaders gave.*

*In outskirts of Thy kingdom vast,  
Father, the humblest spot give me;  
Set me the lowliest task thou hast;  
Let me, repentant, work for Thee!”*

—Helen Hunt Jackson’s last poem.

## A DEVOTIONAL SERVICE OF MEDITATION ON THE TRINITY

*(Arranged from various sources)*

“Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”

HYMN: “O God, our Help in Ages Past.”

I. LET US MEDITATE ON THE PRESENCE AND POWER OF GOD  
THE FATHER ALMIGHTY.

Who, before the foundation of the world, ordained salvation for us:

Who created us in Christ Jesus, that we should be holy and without blemish before Him in love:

Who, in the fulness of time, spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, and freely with Him gave us all things:

Who now shines in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURE: (Various renderings of II Cor. 9:8)

“God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that ye, having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work.”

*Revised Version.*

“God is able to make every grace overflow in you, so that in everything and at all times, possessing complete content, you may prosper in every benevolent work.”

*Farrar Fenton.*

“And God is able to give you an overflowing measure of all good gifts, that all your wants of every kind may be supplied at all times, and you may give of your abundance to every work.”

*Conybeare and Howson.*

“And God is able to bestow every blessing on you in abundance, so that richly enjoying all sufficiency, at all times, you may have ample means for all good works.”

*Weymouth.*

“God is able to bless you with ample means, so that you may always have quite enough for any emergency of your own, and ample besides for any kind act to others.”  
*Moffat.*

“God has power to cause every kind of favor to superabound unto you, in order that in everything, at every time, having every sort of sufficiency of your own, ye may be superabounding unto every good work.”  
*Rotherham.*

“God has power to shower all kinds of blessings upon you, so that having, under all circumstances, and on all occasions, all that you can need, you may be able to shower all kinds of benefits upon others.”

*Twentieth Century New Testament.*

## II. LET US MEDITATE ON JESUS CHRIST OUR SAVIOUR:

**HYMN:** “Jesus the Very Thought of Thee . . . ”

**CONFESSION:**

“Father forgive me, for I knew not, truly I knew not,  
what I did in sinning against Thee.  
Lord, remember me  
When Thou comest into Thy kingdom.  
Lord, lay not mine enemies’ sins to their charge;  
Lord, lay not my own to mine.  
By Thy sweat, bloody and clotted, Thy soul in agony,  
Thy head crowned with thorns, bruised with staves,  
Thine eyes a fountain of tears,  
Thine ears full of insults,  
Thy mouth moistened with vinegar and gall,  
Thy face stained with spitting,  
Thy neck bowed down with the burden of the cross,  
Thy back ploughed with the weals and wounds of the  
scourge,  
Thy pierced hands and feet,  
Thy strong cry, Eli, Eli,  
Thy heart pierced with the spear,  
Thy water and blood thence flowing,  
Thy body broken, Thy blood poured out,  
Lord, forgive the iniquity of Thy servant, and cover all  
his sin.”

“I believe that Thou hast created me: despise not the work of Thine own hands; that Thou madest me after Thine image and likeness; suffer not Thy likeness to be blotted out.”

### III. LET US MEDITATE ON THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THANK HIM.

HYMN: “Spirit of God, Descend Upon my Heart.”

THANKSGIVING:

“O Lord, my Lord, for my being, life, reason, for nurture, protection, guidance, for education, for civil rights, religion, for Thy gifts of grace, nature, worldly good, for redemption, regeneration, instruction, for my call, recall, yea many calls besides; for Thy forbearance, long suffering, long, long suffering toward me, many seasons, many years, even until now; for all good things received, successes granted me, good deeds done; for the use of things present, for Thy promise, and my hope of the enjoyment of good things to come; for my parents honest and good, teachers kind, benefactors never to be forgotten, fellow-ministers who are of one mind, hearers thoughtful, friends sincere, domestics faithful; for all who have advantaged me by writings, sermons, conversations, prayers, examples, rebukes, injuries; for all these, and all others which I know, and which I know not, open, hidden, remembered, forgotten, done when I wished, when I wished not, I confess to Thee and will confess, I bless Thee and will bless, I give thanks to Thee and will give thanks, all the days of my life.

Who am I, or what is my father’s house, that Thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?

What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?

For all things in which He hath spared and borne with me until now.

*Holy, holy, holy,  
Thou art worthy,*

O Lord and our God, the Holy One, to receive glory, honor and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created." Amen.

*(Bishop Andrewes' Private Devotions)*

IV. LET US MAKE INTERCESSION FOR ALL MANKIND.

HYMN: "*Saviour Sprinkle Many Nations.*"

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who hast made of one blood all nations, and hast promised that many shall come from the East and sit down with Abraham in Thy Kingdom:

We pray for all Thy prodigal children who are still afar off, that they may be brought nigh by the blood of Christ.

Look upon them in pity, because they are ignorant of Thy truth.

Take away pride of intellect and blindness of heart, and reveal to them the surpassing beauty and power of Thy Son Jesus Christ. Convince them of their sin in rejecting the atonement of the only Saviour. Give moral courage to those who love Thee, that they may boldly confess Thy name.

Strengthen converts, restore backsliders, and give all those who labor among men the tenderness of Christ. So that bruised reeds may become pillars of His church, and smoking flaxwicks burning and shining lights. Make bare Thine arm, O God, and show Thy power. All our expectation is from Thee.

O Hope of all the ends of the earth, remember Thy whole creation for good, visit the world in Thy compassion.

O most merciful Saviour and Redeemer, who wouldest not that any should perish, but that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, fulfill Thy gracious promise to be present with those who are

---

gone forth in Thy Name to preach the Gospel of Salvation in distant lands. Be with them in all perils by land or by water, in sickness and distress, in weariness and painfulness, in disappointment and persecution. Bless them, we beseech Thee, with Thy continual favour, and send Thy Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth. O Lord, let Thy ministers be clothed with righteousness, and grant that Thy word spoken by their mouths may never be spoken in vain. Endue them with power from on high, and so prosper Thy work in their hands, that the fulness of the Gentiles may be gathered in, and all Israel be saved.

Especially we beseech Thee to look, O most merciful Father, on our missionary brethren. Draw out our hearts toward them more and more; and while they are bearing the burden abroad, give us grace to help and succour them by our sympathy and prayers at home. Bless every letter written to them and by them to those at home, and all our intercourse with them. We pray for them that they may be filled with Thy Spirit. Grant that the same mind may be in them which was also in Christ Jesus. Let them never lose their first love. Raise them above the cares of this world. Help them to deny themselves and to endure all things for the elect's sake. Give them the tongue of the learned. Clothe them with humility. Teach them to follow peace with each other, and with all men. Support them under spiritual distresses, temptations of the adversary, bodily sickness, domestic anxieties, and hope deferred. And so confirm Thy word from their lips by the power of the Holy



Ghost, that through them multitudes may be turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

HYMN: *"Ten Thousand Times Ten Thousand."*

DOXOLOGY

## SELECTED LIST OF BOOKS ON PRAYER

(Those marked with one asterisk are specially commended; the books marked with two asterisks are by Roman Catholic writers, and are also of value.)

AINSWORTH, P. C.—*The Threshold of Grace.*

AUGUSTINE, ST.—*Confessions.*

BARNES, W. EMERY—*Early Christians at Prayer*, London, 1925.

BICKERSTETH, E.—*A Treatise on Prayer*, London, 1839.

BIEDERWOLF, W. E.—*How Can God Answer Prayer?* 1913.

\*BUTLER, DUGALD—*Prayer in Experience*, London, 1922.

CARPENTER, W. B.—*Thoughts on Prayer.*

CHADWICK, SAMUEL—*Path of Prayer*, New York, 1931.

\*\*CORDELIER, JOHN—*The Path of Eternal Wisdom*, London, 1922.

\*\*CORDELIER, JOHN—*The Spiral Way: Meditations on the Fifteen Mysteries of the Soul's Ascent*, London, 1922.

CLARK, GLENN—*The Soul's Sincere Desire*, Boston, 1925.

CAMPBELL, JAMES M.—*Prayer in its Present-Day Aspects*, New York, 1916.

\*CAUSCADE DE, JEAN PIERRE—*On Prayer*, London, 1931.

CORNABY, W. ARTHUR—*Prayer and the Human Problem*, London, 1912.

\*COX, ENOS K.—*Where is the Lord God of Elijah?* Chicago, 1929.

DAWSON, M.—*Prayer that Prevails*, New York, 1924.

DICKENSON, HELEN A.—*A Treasury of Worship*, 1926.

FORSYTH, P. T.—*The Soul of Prayer*, London, N. Y.

FOX, S. F.—*A Chain of Prayer Across the Ages*, London, 1930.

FROST, HENRY W.—*Effective Praying*, Philadelphia, 1925.

- GORDON, S. D.—*Quiet Talks on Prayer*, N. Y., London, etc., 1904.
- \*HASTINGS, JAMES—*The Christian Doctrine of Prayer*, New York, 1915.
- HAYES, D. A.—*The Heights of Christian Devotion*, New York, 1930.
- \*HEILER, FREDERICH—*Das Gebet*, 1923.
- \*HEILER, FREDERICH—*Prayer* (translated by S. McComb), London, 1932.
- \*HERMAN, E.—*Creative Prayer*, New York, 1925.
- \*HERMAN, E.—*The Finding of the Cross*, London, 1924.
- \*HERMAN, E.—*The Secret Garden of the Soul*, London, 1923.
- HOLE, CHARLES—*A Manual of the Book of Common Prayer* London, 1887.
- HORTON, R. F.—*In Answer to Prayer*, 1908.
- HORTON, R. F.—*The Prayer-House of God*.
- HORTON, THOS. C.—*The Potency of Prayer*, N. Y., 1928.
- HUTCHINS, W. H.—*The Life of Prayer*, London, 1877.
- \*HYMA, ALBERT—*The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas a' Kempis (New Translation), 1927.
- JAMES, J. S.—*The Prayer-Life*.
- JENKS, DAVID—*A Study of Intercession*, London, 1917.
- \*KENNEDY, G. A. STUDDERT—*The Wicket Gate*, London, 1923.
- KNOX, WILFRED L.—*Meditation and Mental Prayer*, London, 1927.
- LAW, WILLIAM—*Spirit of Prayer* (reprint), London, 1892.
- LAWRENCE, BROTHER—*Practice of the Presence of God*, London, 1908.
- \*LILLEY, A. L.—*Prayer in Christian Theology*, London, 1925.
- "IAN MACLAREN" AND OTHERS—*In Answer to Prayer*, New York, 1898.
- \*MACARTNEY, CLARENCE—*Wrestlers with God*, N. Y., 1934.
- MADAME GUYON—*A Short and Easy Method of Prayer*, London, 1934.

- McCOMB, S.—*Prayer: What it is and what it does*, 1913.
- \*McCOMB, SAMUEL—*A Book of Modern Prayers with Essay The Meaning of Prayer*, New York, 1926.
- McCORMICK, C. W.—*The Heart of Prayer*.
- \*McFAYDEN, J. E.—*The Prayers of the Bible*, 1913.
- McINTYRE, D. M.—*The Hidden Life of Prayer*, 1906.
- McNEILE, A. H.—*Self-Training in Prayer*, Cambridge 1918.
- \*\*McSORLEY, JOSEPH—*A Primer of Prayer*, New York, 1934.
- \*MATHESON, GEORGE—*Moments on the Mount*, 1885.
- MICKLEM, E. R.—*Our Approach to God*, London, 1934.
- MONRAD, D. S.—*The World of Prayer*, Edinburgh, 1879.
- MOODY, DWIGHT L.—*Prevailing Prayer, What Hinders it?* London, 1884.
- MORGAN, G. C.—*The Practice of Prayer*, 1909.
- MOTT, JOHN R.—*The Morning Watch* (Pamphlet) S. V. M. New York.
- \*MURRAY, ANDREW—*With Christ in the School of Prayer*, London, 1886.
- \*MURRAY, ANDREW—*The Ministry of Intercession*, London, 1905.
- \*MURRAY, ANDREW—*The Prayer-Life*, London, 1914.
- \*MOULE, H. C. G.—*Secret Prayer*, London, 1905.
- \*MOULE, H. C. G.—*The High-Priestly Prayer*, London, 1908.
- OLDHAM, J. H.—*A Devotional Diary*, London, 1929.
- \*PATERSON, W. P.—*The Power of Prayer*, New York, 1920.
- PELL, EDW. L.—*What did Jesus Really Teach about Prayer?* New York, 1921.
- PHELPS, AUSTIN—*The Still Hour*, 1860.
- \*\*POPE, HUGH—*Teaching of St. Augustine on Prayer and the Contemplative Life*, London, 1935.
- PRIME, SAMUEL I.—*The Power of Prayer*, New York, 1873.
- \*PUGLISI, MARIO—*Prayer*, New York, 1929.
- PATTERSON, DAVID—*Great Prayers of the Bible*, London, 1927.

- ROBERTS, J. E.—*Private Prayers and Devotions*, 1908.  
SAPHIR, A.—*The Hidden Life*, 1877.  
SADLER, T.—*Closet Prayers*.  
SCROGGIE, GRAHAM—*Method in Prayer*, London, 1916.  
\*STODDART, JANE T.—*Private Prayer in Christian Story*,  
New York, 1928.  
THOMPSON, H. P.—*Worship in Other Lands: A Study of  
Racial Characteristics in Christian  
Worship*, London, 1933.  
\*THOMAS A' KEMPIS—*Imitation of Christ*.  
TORREY, R. A.—*The Power of Prayer*, New York, 1924.  
TRUMBULL, H. CLAY—*Prayer, its Nature and Scope*.  
\*VON HUGEL, FREDERICK—*The Life of Prayer*, London, 1927.  
WATT, L. M.—*God's Altar Stairs*.  
\*WHYTE, ALEXANDER—*Lancelot Andrewes and His Private  
Devotions*, Edinburgh, 1896.  
\*WISHART, JOHN E.—*The Fact of Prayer*, New York, 1927.  
WILDER, ROBERT P.—*Prayer*, (Pamphlet) Cairo, 1934.  
WORLLEDGE, A. J.—*Prayer*, 1902.  
ZWEMER, SAMUEL M.—*Call to Prayer*, London, 1916.

ANSWERED PRAYERS

---

---

ANSWERED PRAYERS

---

ANSWERED PRAYERS

---