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The Lord's prayer









THE LORD'S PRAYER:

A PRACTICAL MEDITATION.

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# THE LORD'S PRAYER:

A PRACTICAL MEDITATION.

BY

NEWMAN HALL, LL.B.

EDINBURGH:

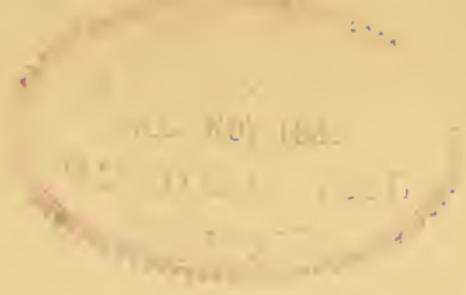
T. & T. CLARK, 38 GEORGE STREET.

1883.



*THIS HUMBLE CONTRIBUTION TO THEOLOGICAL  
LITERATURE IS LAID ON THE ALTAR THAT SANCTIFIETH  
THE GIFT, IN THE HOPE THAT IT MAY AID IN THE  
DEVOUT AND PRACTICAL STUDY OF THE PRAYER OF  
THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL.*





## P R E F A C E.

—o—

My theme is old, but so comprehensive and important that its interest is ever new.

The quarry, however diligently worked, is inexhaustible; but its most valuable treasures are most readily found, and are public property.

A commentary which excluded every topic already discussed would lose in usefulness more than it gained in originality.

Every age is enriched by inheritance. The stream becomes fuller the farther it flows.

Thus, to compensate the lack of novelty in the theme, I have not hesitated to profit by the labours of predecessors, both by quotation, in every case indicated, and by suggestion. My special thanks are recorded to my friend the Rev. Edward G. Cecil for varied and valuable aid in revision.

*NEWMAN HALL.*

*CHRIST CHURCH,  
LAMBETH, October 1883.*



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## THE LORD'S PRAYER.

(REVISED VERSION.)

ST. MATTHEW VI. 9-13.

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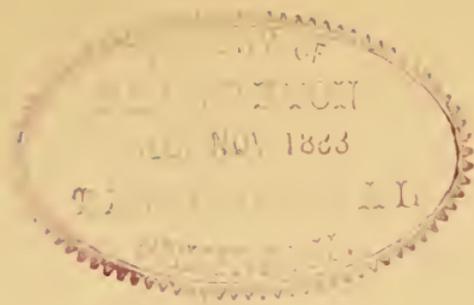
ST. LUKE XI. 2-4.

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Our Father which art in heaven,  
Hallowed be Thy Name.  
Thy kingdom come.  
Thy will be done, as in heaven, so  
on earth.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts, as we  
also have forgiven our debtors.  
And bring us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from the evil one.

Father,  
Hallowed be Thy Name.  
Thy kingdom come.  
Give us day by day our daily  
bread.  
And forgive us our sins; for we  
ourselves also forgive every one  
that is indebted to us.  
And bring us not into temptation.





# THE LORD'S PRAYER.

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## CHAPTER I.

### *INTRODUCTORY.*

**T**HE prayer which our Lord solemnly delivered to the disciples as a model in their approaches to God, and which has been therefore designated 'The Lord's Prayer,' is recorded by two Evangelists, and was spoken on two different occasions.

In the Sermon on the Mount our Lord was re-proving the superstition which regarded the frequent iteration of mere words as acceptable with God; and the pharisaism which made a public parade of prayer in order to obtain the praise of men. Matt. vi. 5-13. St. Luke records that at a later period of Christ's ministry, 'As He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.' This disciple may have forgotten the earlier instruction. Or he may have regarded it as too brief, or designed for the general multitude to whom it was addressed, and so asked for some counsel

specially applicable to the inner circle of the disciples, similar to some teaching so given to the more intimate friends and followers of the Baptist. But our Lord gave no fuller instructions. He added none exclusively for the use of the favoured band of Apostles. He simply repeated the subject-matter of the same Divine model, as containing the essence of all we need to ask, and as showing the spirit and manner of all acceptable prayer. Luke xi. 1-4.

On both occasions the reasonableness and duty of prayer were taken for granted; the Divine authority of our Lord being superadded to that of the older Revelation. To this subject, the reasonableness of prayer, we shall first refer; then, to the manner of prayer; and afterwards, to the origin and general scope of this particular model. May He whose Name gives it such sanctity, help our meditations, and thus, by the Holy Ghost, promote in us 'the spirit of grace and supplication.' 'Lord, teach us to pray.'

#### I.—PRAYER REASONABLE AND USEFUL.

Prayer and piety are inseparable. Religion is the intercourse of the soul with God, of which prayer is the expression. Prayer is not therefore simply one of many other features or duties of religion; but is essential to its existence, and the practice of it has always been co-extensive with anything worthy of its name.

To borrow the words of Guizot: 'Alone, of all living beings on the earth, man prays. There is not

among all his moral instincts a more universal, a more invincible one than prayer. The child betakes himself to it with ready docility; aged men return to it as a refuge against decay and isolation. Prayer rises spontaneously from young lips that can scarcely lisp the name of God, and from expiring ones that have scarcely strength left to pronounce it. Among every people, celebrated or obscure, civilized or barbarous, acts and formulæ of prayer meet us at every step. Everywhere there are living men, under certain circumstances, at certain hours, under certain impressions of the soul, whose eyes are raised, whose hands are clasped, whose knees are bent to implore, or thank, or adore, or appease—with joy or terror, publicly or in the secret of his own heart, it is to prayer man turns as a last resource to fill the void places of his soul, or bear the burdens of his life. It is in prayer he seeks, when all else fails, a support for his weakness, and comfort in his sorrows.'

Account for it as disbelievers in prayer may, the fact remains, that human nature is so constituted that the acknowledgment of a superior Being by adoration and petition, harmonizes with our intellectual and moral capacities and instincts. As Professor H. R. Reynolds says: 'One of the distinctive peculiarities of man is an effort and desire to commune with the mysterious Power in which he lives, and moves, and has his being. The widely-spread belief, that man may draw near to God, that he may transfer his thoughts and wishes to the mind of the Eternal, proclaims his sense of a Divine relationship

between himself and God. As the magnetic needle points to the unseen pole, so the soul, before it is hardened or demagnetized by the rude blows of the world, will point to the home and heart of the Great Father.'<sup>1</sup>

Prayer, as an act of homage, is due to the Creator and Universal Lord. If we are conscious of emotions of awe, wonder, and delight in the presence of natural objects, how much more are such emotions reasonable in the presence of the Author of Nature! And when we know Him as our own Maker and Lord, on whom we are dependent for breath and all things, we feel it befitting that we render Him adoration, extolling His greatness, expressing our dependence, seeking His favour, and thanking Him for His gifts.

## II.—DIRECT BENEFITS OF PRAYER.

The almost universal practice of prayer to the present day is proof of a general belief in its utility. Its reflex benefit to the mind is not disputed; but this is incidental. Men pray, expecting some direct advantage, not because of the wholesomeness of the exercise. The reflex benefit would not exist but for such expectation prompting the petition. Digging a garden may improve the health, but the hope of produce speeds the digging. Such direct and positive benefits in answer to prayer, all Holy Scripture and the authority of Christ, encourage us to expect.

<sup>1</sup> *The Philosophy of Prayer.*

## OBJECTIONS.

(a) *That God knows already whatever we can tell Him.*

Yes, and He knows far better than we do, what we really need. But He would also know our wishes from ourselves. An earthly parent may know many of the child's desires and griefs, but likes to hear them from the child's own lips, because they interest the parent, and the habit of telling them cultivates filial affection in the child. In prayer we are not instructing God but communing with Him, and lifting up our minds into the region of His own.

(b) *That we cannot improve God's methods nor alter His decrees.*

These methods and decrees co-exist with our own moral nature. His Will does not destroy the freedom of our own. The benefit to accrue to us from a certain action on His part, may depend on a corresponding fitness in ourselves. The gift, to be beneficial, needs certain qualities in the recipient. The purpose of God may therefore embrace the prayer of man; the object of which is not to improve His plans, but only to complete their manifestation.

God may, in answer to our prayer, change His methods without any fluctuation of purpose. A sailor alters his tack to reach his port. A father carries out his abiding intention by altering his treatment according to the child's conduct. A physician varies his medicine with varying symptoms, in order to accomplish his unvarying purpose of cure. And so, though

by prayer we cannot improve the Divine plans, prayer may so alter our own moral condition as to render suitable a change of method on God's part, which will bring us the very blessing we ask.

'The sovereignty of God does not override the want, the will, the tears, the cry of His children; but does, in the first instance, express itself through that very want—those tears and those strong desires. It is not that man changes God's purpose, but that man verily and indeed discovers that purpose through his own earnest prayer.'<sup>1</sup>

A practical reply to the objection that we cannot improve the Divine arrangements is given in the daily life of every sane person. Are all God's purposes eternally fixed and unalterably sure? But every one tries to guard his body from accident, improve his estate, and secure the comforts of life. If we think we can improve our condition by exertions of our own, is it foolish to hope God may improve them in answer to our prayer?

*(c) That if God is willing to give all good, asking is superfluous.*

Again we answer that our asking may be a necessary condition of His giving. The seed may be good, but will be wasted unless the soil be prepared to receive it. Without healthy appetite, wholesome food may injure. The soul must 'hunger and thirst after righteousness' before it can be filled; and prayer cultivates as well as reveals this spiritual appetite. So also gifts of Providence may require the receptivity

<sup>1</sup> H. R. Reynolds, D.D.

which prayer cultivates, to render those gifts beneficial. By prayer we come into the Divine storehouse, where God's gifts are waiting for us. 'Those things which God intends for us, we bring to ourselves by the mediation of holy prayers.'<sup>1</sup> God's light is always shining, but into the region of it we must come as He has ordained. 'God is always ready to give us His light, but we are not prepared to receive it when darkening ourselves in the lust of worldly things. Thus prayer becomes the turning of the heart to Him who is always prepared to give, if we will receive what He gives. Unto a fountain so vast, the empty vessel must be moved.'<sup>2</sup>

(d) *No place for prayer in the realm of Law.*

It is alleged that all existing things are subject to definite forces which operate uniformly and irresistibly, so that prayer can have no influence in bringing to pass any desired event.

But among natural forces that of Will cannot be omitted. It is one of the chief motive powers on the earth. It is the force of which we know most, because we know it by our own consciousness. By our will we can influence that of others, through instruction and persuasion, and prompt them to set in motion a train of physical causation which may bring to pass events otherwise impossible. I may by personal influence (call it prayer) induce the crew of a lifeboat to save shipwrecked seamen, whom otherwise the waves, by natural law, would destroy. I may by persuasion (prayer) induce a physician to go

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Jeremy Taylor.

<sup>2</sup> Augustine, Archbishop Trench.

to a man seemingly at death's door, and he, not by miracle, but by working within the sphere of law, may save a life which otherwise, by physical law, would have been the victim of disease. I may, by the exercise of my own will, hold out my arms to catch, when falling from a window, the child whom otherwise the law of gravitation would have killed. If then even I, by the exercise of my will, can interpose to bring about new results in the operation of natural law, and can influence other wills to do the same, it cannot be impossible that God, the Author of Nature and her laws, without any interference with order, may do, in answer to prayer, what my fellow-creature can do on my request, and what I can do myself. Must the Divine order shut out the operation of the Divine will? Shall the uniform working of natural law be consistent with the exercise of freedom on my part, and not with that of freedom on God's part?

We do not believe that the 'Reign of Law' excludes the agency of the 'Lord of Law.' Whence came the laws but from the Divine Mind? 'I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,' and not in eternal forces without thought, emotion, or character. He is free to act in modes novel to us, yet in harmony with law. Seeming changes may be law's developments, and my prayer and His response may be parts of the eternal order; God working according to pre-arranged principles which are developed whenever their appropriate sphere of operation unfolds. Thus our prayers may bring about the very conditions in which the results we ask may come to pass, in harmony with the higher order which includes moral

as well as physical forces. This argument assumes the universal reign of Law. But we believe in the reign of Grace.<sup>1</sup>

Such objections have been current in all ages; yet in all ages prayer has been offered to the God of the Bible; and the worshippers have included the wisest and best of men. The Old Testament abounds with illustrations. Poets, statesmen, heroes, prophets, have prayed. Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel, brought petitions to God, habitually, earnestly, and in full assurance of faith. They have had numberless counterparts up to the present day. Have all men who in all ages and lands have thus gratified the special yearning, and employed the highest faculties of the mind, been mistaken? If so, 'the whole human race has a lie enshrined in its inmost heart; and this lie perpetually emerges age after age, generation after generation, in the child and the philosopher, in the heathen and the Christian. If it be so, the most noble are the most deceived; those who have risen highest, and who have in the largest extent blessed their fellow-men, have been the most entirely baffled and deluded; while, on the other hand, the sensualist, the barbarian with the fewest ideas, the imbecile who is most like the brute that perisheth, has made, in a matter that is fundamental to happiness, honour, and usefulness, the nearest approach to the truth of things.'<sup>2</sup>

O men of science! all honour to you in your own sphere. Show us the beauty, the wisdom, the beneficence of God, by showing us the order that pervades

<sup>1</sup> *Prayer; its Reasonableness and Efficacy.* By Newman Hall.

<sup>2</sup> Reynolds.

His works. But do not shut Him out of His own creation. Do not say that your experiments with microscope and telescope include all the facts of the universe, when the facts of Christianity and the facts of consciousness are not within your induction. There are facts which are incapable of being subjected to scientific scrutiny. God will not, at your bidding, come into your laboratory, cross the field of your telescope, or enter the wing of some hospital which you may choose to designate for experiments upon His handiwork. 'There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your *philosophy*.'

'More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of;  
 For what are men better than sheep or goats  
 That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
 If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer,  
 Both for themselves and those who call them friends?  
 For so the whole round world is every way,  
 Bound by gold chains around the feet of God.'<sup>1</sup>

### III.—REFLEX BENEFITS OF PRAYER.

Belief in the reasonableness of prayer, and its efficacy in obtaining what we ask, is sustained by the influence of prayer on the mind itself.

*Humility*.—Pride is parent of numberless faults and miseries. This is nourished by our supposed superiority over others. But in the presence of the Infinite we feel our insignificance. In proportion as by prayer we have really met with God, we are less disposed unduly to exalt ourselves over our fellow-creatures, since we are all alike but 'dust and ashes' in His sight. When we see God we 'abhor ourselves.' Job xlii. 5, 6.

<sup>1</sup> Tennyson.

*Dignity.*—There can be no greater honour than to be allowed to hold personal intercourse with God. In prayer the human soul converses with the Divine. We are admitted to a private individual audience in the Presence Chamber of the Infinite. We cannot leave it feeling we are worthless atoms, mere grains of sand in a desert, drops in the ocean; unnoticed, uncared for, helpless, and hopeless. No! we are living persons, and are in direct communion with a personal God, who hears our voice, reads our heart, helps our need. This sense of dignity is in perfect harmony with humility—a grand humility, a self-abasing dignity, which will make us respect both ourselves and all our fellows, and should keep us from dragging our nobility in the mud of sinful indulgence.

*Sincerity.*—We are apt to study mere appearance before our fellow-men, to wear a mask, to hide our defects, to magnify our merits, or simulate those we do not possess. We even try to impose on ourselves; and present a portraiture to conscience as a true reflection of our character which will not bear examination. This insincerity, so injurious to our moral nature, can have no place before Him who knows the secrets of all hearts. The mask we sport before our fellow-creatures must be thrown off. The fallacies we plead at the bar of our own consciousness, we dare not utter to God. In prayer we learn to know ourselves, to discover our hidden faults, to test the true nature of our motives and conduct.

*Holiness.*—If the God we worship be the God of the Bible, we shall come from His presence impressed

with such a reverence for His holiness that we must instinctively shrink from contact with its opposite. It is one thing to credit the fact that God is holy ; it is quite another thing to feel that we are in the very presence of that holy God. Thus it is that the habit of praying induces the habit of obeying. It conveys no new truth, but it strengthens holy impulses. We cannot come direct from an interview with the king and violate his laws ; from converse with our Father, and forget the claims of His love.

*Moderation of Desire.* — Longings which may become absorbing and perilous passions, poisoning our whole life, must be checked when we try to bring them before God in prayer. When we wish for some questionable pleasure, some unrighteous gain, the gratification of vanity or revenge, and by the heating of this internal furnace of wrongful desire are in danger of some explosion which might be our ruin, let us try to express such desire in prayer to God, and the effort will reprove and possibly destroy it. There is so much we cannot ask God to give ! We should be ashamed, afraid to ask it ! ‘We cannot take a vile or angry passion, and breathe it out as a prayer to God. There is too much native grandeur, too much of God within us for that. Blessed be God, it is a hard thing to take an unbrotherly thought, and offer it as sacrifice to Him ; to triumph over our brother, and then turn our anger into prayer. There are no wings to raise such thoughts to heaven ; such pleadings would blister and blast our lips as we breathed them forth.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Reynolds.

*Trust and Courage.*—If we have any real faith in prayer, and without some faith there can be no prayer, we shall come from the Divine Presence with some hope, if not assurance, that our prayer is heard, and that needful help will be given. This will enable us to bear our trials more patiently; to brace ourselves anew for difficult duty; to press onward in the path in which we were ready to faint; to continue the fight we were ready basely to surrender.

*Peace and Consolation.*—By the mere telling our troubles to a sympathizing friend, the burden is lightened, the bitter cup sweetened, the wound soothed and half healed. Much more should this be the result of pouring forth our heart-sorrows before a compassionate God who is our Father. If 'by prayer and supplication we make known our requests unto God,' we need 'be anxious for nothing, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding will keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.' Phil. iv. 6, 7.

*Gratitude.*—This is an emotion always pleasurable in itself. Recognition of the giver enhances the gift. Gratitude prompts to willing service of its object. Gratitude to God therefore stimulates obedience, and promotes our own happiness. Prayer cultivates gratitude, by linking benefits with Him from whom they are asked. They who do not pray are not likely to praise. 'In the earnest asking is the needful preparation for receiving with due thankfulness; while, on the contrary, the unsought would often remain the unacknowledged also.'<sup>1</sup> Prayer thus

<sup>1</sup> Augustine, Trench.

elevates earthly benefits into Divine blessings, so that the humblest fare of God's providing yields greater delight than costliest dainties regarded as the result of accident, or of our own unaided efforts.

Does an objector say that all this reflex benefit of prayer is only the natural effect of certain ideas on our minds? Then it is evident that our moral organization is adapted to this exercise, and we infer that our Maker and the Being to whom we pray are one and the same; for He who bids us pray has so constituted us that compliance with His law responds to our moral nature, satisfies, purifies, exalts, and gladdens it.

#### IV.—CHRIST'S AUTHORITY FOR PRAYER.

Christ spoke by His Spirit in the Old Testament, which abounds in commands to pray, examples of prayer, and promises and proofs of answers to prayer. When, in the fulness of time, 'the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us,' He showed by His own practice, as well as taught by His precepts, the duty, privilege, and usefulness of prayer.

Though Divine He prayed, because He was also human, and shared our weaknesses and wants. He prayed for a blessing on the bread He broke, for help in the miracles He wrought, for comfort in the sorrows He endured. He retired to mountain solitudes for prayer. Luke vi. 12. He prayed in the upper chamber for His disciples, John xvii.; in the garden and on the cross for Himself, Luke xxii. 39-44, Matt. xxvii. 46; and for His murderers. Luke xxiii. 34.

He has gone up to heaven to pray, and sitteth on the right hand of God to intercede. Rom. viii. 34.

If He, without stain of sin, and in perfect accord with God, needed to pray, how much more must we! And this He enjoined on His followers by precept and promise. 'Ask, and ye shall receive.' 'If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him!' Matt. vii. 7-11. It was when He had been praying that the disciple said, 'Lord, teach us to pray.' And Jesus said, 'When ye pray, say, Our Father.'

His great work was to help man's approach to God. His mediation was to remove the obstacle of our guilt. His Spirit was to remove the disinclination of our hearts. He was 'the Way;' and He said, 'No man cometh unto the Father but by me.' Acceptance of His salvation brought men at once into the presence of their Father. Faith in Him was life; and the evidence and exercise of the Divine life in the soul was prayer. He brought men into a condition in which prayer was a necessity. He so guided the stream that it must fall into and flow along with the great river. He taught His disciples 'always to pray, and not to faint.' If they are to conquer in the strife with sin, the armour of God will not avail unless they 'cry day and night unto Him.'

When our Lord gave this prayer, He ignored all objections. There was no question as to whether the disciples prayed or not. Of course they did. All devout Jews did. The only question was as to the

matter and manner of prayer. 'When ye pray.' Our Lord knew all the objections that ever had been, that ever could be, raised against prayer, yet He said, Pray! He was the Author of Nature, the Creator of the worlds, the Head of the universe of Law, knowing the operation of all forces, yet He said, Pray! He was from eternity in the bosom of the Father, sharing the Father's counsels and eternal purposes, yet He said, Pray! And therefore, whatever doubts may remain unsolved, we still will pray. We believe in Him who died and rose and ascended to glory. He who conquered death and the grave can, should He so please, suspend the order of Nature in answer to prayer. Nothing is impossible with Him to whom is given 'all power in heaven and earth.' And with full assurance we may pray, when He, who is the only-begotten Son, Himself pleads with the Father on our behalf. 'From the lowest to the highest, from the inarticulate cry of the child to the very midst of the throne, prayer is the sign of life, the measure of progress, the necessity that is laid upon immortal souls.'<sup>1</sup>

## V.—THE METHOD OF PRAYER.

### I. *Form or Freedom?*

Our Lord, in reproving vain and superstitious repetition, said, as recorded by St. Matthew, 'After this manner therefore, pray ye.' And on the other occasion recorded by St. Luke, 'When ye pray, say,' etc. The desires of the heart are to be expressed.

<sup>1</sup> H. R. Reynolds.

We must not be content with inward meditation, which is liable to pass off in frivolous thoughts or mental drowsiness. 'When ye pray, *say*.' It is true that God regards fervent desire as prayer, and that no words avail without it; yet our Lord teaches us to *express* the desires of the heart, which are increased and made definite by utterance. 'Take with you words, and turn to the Lord; *say* unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.' Hos. xiv. 2.

An enthusiastic admirer of nature, or one capable of much abstract thought and deep emotion, may sometimes have been conscious of a sublimer worship than any capable of expression.

'In such access of mind, in such high hour  
Of visitation from the living God,  
Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired.  
No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request;  
Wrapt into still communion that transcends  
The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,  
His mind was a thanksgiving to the Power  
That made him; it was blessedness and love.'<sup>1</sup>

And there are times when the believer is conscious that 'the Spirit maketh intercession within him with groanings which cannot be uttered.' Yet these are exceptional seasons. If all prayer were to be denied vocal utterance, little prayer would be left. Our Lord Himself, holding ineffable Spirit-communion with His Father, expressed His divinely-human longings in human words.

This our Lord taught us to do. But in what words? Surely sometimes in the very form pre-

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth, *The Wanderer*.

scribed. But did He mean that we should be restricted to the use of this alone? Were this so, the two versions would be identical. But they vary. In the Revised Version of St. Luke we have simply 'Father,' instead of 'Our Father which art in heaven.' 'Thy will be done' is omitted. Instead of 'give us this day,' *δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον*, we have 'give us day by day,' *δίδου ἡμῖν τὸ καθ' ἡμέραν*. Instead of debts, *ὀφειλήματα*, we have sins, *ἀμαρτίας*; and instead of 'as we also have forgiven our debtors,' *ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν*, we have 'for we ourselves also forgive every one that is indebted to us,' *καὶ γὰρ αὐτοὶ ἀφίεμεν παντὶ ὀφείλοντι ἡμῖν*.

If this one particular prayer had been intended to be used always in the Church, it would surely have been given in one form alone. These variations show that the mere form was not prescribed, but the substance. No stereotyped uniformity was imposed; no rigid rule was laid down. Ours is the dispensation not of the letter but of the Spirit. In the words of the Dean of Llandaff, 'We may read here the correction of an error which has been the plague and pest of the Church of later times—the idolatry of the letter.'<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, we have no instance of its use in the New Testament, nor in the times immediately following the Apostles. Dean Alford says: 'It is very improbable that the prayer was regarded in the very earliest times as a set form delivered for liturgical use by our Lord. The variations are fatal to the supposition of its being used liturgically at the time

<sup>1</sup> Vaughan.

when these Gospels were written. Add to this, that we find very few traces of such use in early times. Tholuck remarks: "It does not occur in the Acts, nor in any writers before the third century. In Justin Martyr we find that the *προεστώς* prays, according to his power. Cyprian and Tertullian make the first mention of the prayer as an *oratio legitima et ordinaria.*"<sup>1</sup>

Yet this very prayer, though not imposed as an obligatory form, must ever be specially dear to Christian hearts, as directly indited by Christ. We feel encouraged when we use a petition drawn up by Himself. No wonder that from very early times the Church should have employed it in public worship. But to regard it as of itself efficacious, as though the mere utterance would bring down some blessing; and to repeat it many times as if the reiteration would more effectually win regard, is to debase what was intended to cure superstition, as an instrument for promoting it.

But the question arises, whether, by giving this prayer, our Lord enjoined or sanctioned the use of forms of prayer, in preference to free utterance.

There are two extremes on this subject, as on many others. Some persons advocate the exclusive use of forms of prayer in public worship; others condemn them altogether.

In regard to private prayer, it will be generally admitted that the spontaneous expression of desire is most natural, and best fitted to promote devotion. Prayer should begin in the heart and find utterance

<sup>1</sup> Notes to Greek Testament.

by the lip. In the 'chapel which every man can build in his breast, himself the priest, his heart the sacrifice, and the earth he stands on the altar,'<sup>1</sup> there is no need to regard any other mind than our own. No form ever composed can meet all the wants of any one soul. When alone before God there are sins to confess, sorrows to utter, desires to express, constantly new and fresh. The heart cannot be satisfied with mere generalities when the child is alone with its father. The most stammering petition which is the genuine utterance of the heart, is better in private devotion than the most perfect composition of another mind.

We speak here of public prayer, and in favour of this being according to a prescribed form the following arguments are urged :—

1. The wants of the congregation as a whole are more likely to be expressed by a form carefully prepared by the concurrence of many minds, than when one individual prays according to his own feelings and circumstances.

2. There is less intellectual excitement when the language is familiar, than when it comes as a novelty, possibly startling by strangeness, bewildering by obscurity, provoking criticism, and suggesting wandering thoughts.

3. There is less of human performance when prayers previously prepared are simply read, than when the leader in worship has to exercise his own powers of conception and utterance. He is less tempted to obtrude himself and to consider what others may think of him, than when originating

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Jeremy Taylor.

prayers which, though addressed to God, are listened to and judged of by men.

4. The people are better able to take their part in responses when they know what the prayers will be, than when they have to listen and judge before they can intelligently say, Amen.

5. The psalms were inspired forms of prayer and praise, used by the Jews in the temple-worship.

Against the use of forms, and in favour of free prayer, it may be urged :—

1. Forms are apt to promote formalism.

2. Familiar expressions are heard listlessly. The lip may utter the words unconsciously, while the thoughts may be wandering far away.

3. Forms cannot express the varied wants of the people; nor can be applicable to constantly changing circumstances.

4. Forms confine the thoughts, repress the feelings, and restrain the motions of the Divine Spirit. 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.'

5. There are many examples in Scripture of free prayer being offered according to the special circumstances and wants of the worshipper.

As it is sincerity of desire and not mode of expression which constitutes true prayer, the real question is, which mode is most helpful to the heart. 'The soul panting after the grace of God and the pardon of sin, regards not in what terms it be uttered, whether new or old: yea, though it be in those words it hath heard and uttered a hundred times, yet, still it is new to a spiritual mind. Mistake it not; the spirit of prayer hath not its seat in the invention, but

in the affection. The work of this Spirit is not mainly in furnishing new supplies of thought and words; no, it is mainly in exciting the heart anew at times of prayer, to break forth itself in ardent desires to God, whatsoever the words be, whether new or old, yea, possibly without words; and then most powerful when it words it least, but vents in sighs and groans that cannot be expressed.'<sup>1</sup>

There is force in both sets of arguments. Either Form or Freedom is objectionable when one is prescribed to the exclusion of the other. In Christ's religion of liberty, things in themselves lawful, become unlawful when what was left optional by the Master, is made obligatory by His servants. He sanctioned the liturgic use of the Psalms by His own example at the Passover; and how can every form of prayer be consistently condemned by those who habitually employ prayers artistically arranged in verse, and sung to elaborate tunes? It is also to be borne in mind that every free prayer is a form except to the person speaking it. If he utters it from the fulness of his heart at the moment, it is only his own spontaneous prayer. To all who listen, it must be a form; as regards the speaker, the emotions prompt the words; but as regards the hearer, the words precede the desires, and do not necessarily produce true prayer in others, though St. John or St. Paul were the speaker. For the exclusion of forms it has been said, that 'a hungry beggar does not ask alms by a set form.'<sup>2</sup> This is true; but it is also true that a community, presenting

<sup>1</sup> Leighton.

<sup>2</sup> Spring.

a united request to Government, agree together on the wording of their petition. 'We cannot be certain that the forms used were inspired by the Spirit of God.'<sup>1</sup> 'We may not be any more certain that the spontaneous utterance is so prompted.

A Dean of the Episcopal Church says: 'Christ prohibits not other forms. He forbids not to pray without forms. All that is from the heart is audible, is acceptable, is welcome in heaven. But unquestionably He silences here the silly tradition that nothing can be prayer but that which is extemporaneous and sudden. Neither with regard to prayers nor to sermons does the question lie between written and unwritten, but between formal and spiritual.'<sup>2</sup> An Archbishop says of forms: 'We are not to be bound to their continual use in private or in public; nor is there anything in the word of God, or any solid reason drawn from the word, to condemn their use.'<sup>3</sup> A learned and devout Principal of a Nonconformist College says: 'God does not listen to our words at all, but to our spirits. There is nothing in a form, when rightly used, inconsistent with the spirituality which is the indispensable condition of acceptable prayer. Sympathy with the blessed dead, communion with those who have passed within the veil, and holy fellowship with all who claim this rich inheritance of the Church, is possible in the use of hallowed, time-honoured forms of praise and prayer; but the refusal to any man of the right to pour out his heart to God in words, fresh-coined there by his own personal sense of infinite need, seems like deliberately

<sup>1</sup> Spring.

<sup>2</sup> Vaughan.

<sup>3</sup> Leighton.

quenching the Holy Spirit, and resisting His mightiest operation in the heart of man.'<sup>1</sup> The author of the *Pilgrim's Progress* says, 'In prayer it is better to have a heart without words, than words without a heart.'

While some take extreme views on either side, forbidding any freedom or any form, others will admit that each method has its advantages, and therefore that neither should exclude the other. To make human forms binding on the Church which Christ has left free; or to bind the Church not to use forms which He has not forbidden, is equally a restriction of Christian liberty. Forms, exclusively used, may degenerate into formalism, and repress spiritual life. The absolute forbiddal of all forms may deprive the Church of much help from the piety and wisdom of past ages, and of the special advantages furnished by concerted prayer, as well as concerted praise. Why should not the Church of God avail itself of all the help both methods may afford, and rejoice that 'all things are ours'?

How well it had been if much of the power spent in the controversy regarding the method of prayer, had been devoted to cultivating its spirit! Our Lord, who gave this form of words, emphatically taught that mere words were vain. In reproving the Pharisees, He applied to them the words of Isaiah: 'This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.' Matt. xv. 8, 9.

<sup>1</sup> Reynolds.

And equally in vain do we pray, whether in words of our own, or in forms composed by the holiest men and sanctioned by centuries of worship, or in these very words taught by Christ Himself, unless the heart ascends to God. Alas! how often we have to confess :

‘My words fly up, my thoughts remain below ;  
Words, without thoughts, never to heaven go.’<sup>1</sup>

## 2. *Brevity.*

Another question arises. Our Lord gave us, as a model, a prayer characterized by brevity. Did He mean that no prayer should be longer than this model? His own example is opposed to such an idea. We read on one occasion of His continuing ‘all night in prayer to God.’ Luke vi. 12. In the garden He spent a long time in prayer—again and again returning from His disciples to hold communion with His Father, often ‘saying the same words.’ Matt. xxvi. 44. After His ascension the disciples ‘continued with one accord in prayer and supplication.’ St. Paul exhorts Christians to ‘pray without ceasing,’ and to ‘continue instant in prayer.’

The Scribes were liable to ‘greater condemnation,’ not for prolonged devotion but because, to cloak robbery, they ‘*for a pretence* made long prayers.’ Mark xii. 40. The Lord warned His disciples not to imitate the heathen who thought their gods would hear them for ‘much *speaking*’ in prayer. Matt. vi. 7. He censured mere verbal utterances in place of heart-desires; prayers to be noticed by man instead of to

<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare.

be accepted by God ; prayers never intended to reach heaven ; but accomplishing their end on the earth, from which they had no wings to soar. The reproof of 'long prayers' has relation, therefore, rather to public prayer, where other men are listeners, than to those which are heard by God alone. When our Lord was very long in prayer, it was in private, as on the mountain ; and with His chosen few, as in the upper room and in the garden. A speaker with abundance of matter and freedom of utterance, should consider that others may not have the leisure or disposition to follow him, and should be on his guard not to utter, in the audience of men, personal prayers which should be reserved for his inner chamber. 'It is a bad sign when the prayers made before men are longer than those heard only by God.' 'God is in heaven, and thou upon earth ; therefore let thy words be few.' Eccles. v. 2. Every prayer, however few the words, is long if it comes not from the heart ; no prayer is long which is the soul's true expression. 'Men judge a speech to be long or short, not so much by the quantity of words, as by the sense : thus, as men judge by the sense of speech, God judgeth by the affection of prayer, which is the true sense of it ; so the quality is the rule of the quantity with Him. There is no prayer too long to Him, provided it be all enlivened with affection ; no idle repetition, where the heart says every word over again as often, and more often than the tongue.'<sup>1</sup> 'He that speaks without desire is long, though he speak but two syllables.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Leighton.<sup>2</sup> Jeremy Taylor.

## VI.—THE LORD'S PRAYER.

This title might more accurately be given to the prayer of intercession recorded by St. John. That was the expression of our Lord's own desires to His Father. In it there is no mention of sin to be forgiven. This is the disciples' prayer, not the Master's. But as it was emphatically and solemnly given to them on two occasions by their Lord, as His own ideal of the prayer of sinful and frail men, the Church, from early times, has loved to designate it as specially His own.

1. *Its Authorship.*

Some critics have said, that as the several petitions may be found in Jewish writings, the prayer is not original, and therefore not 'the Lord's.' For the assumed proofs of this, the reader is referred to Tholuck's exposition. He says that the collection of Jewish prayers 'contains many excellent ones, borrowed both in thought and expression from the Old Testament. Supposing such prayers to have existed in those days, why should not the Saviour, in order to nurture His disciples in the good which they already possessed, have delivered the best petitions they contained, worked up in His mind to a beautiful whole? So far from a believer taking offence at this, the circumstance would suggest a still deeper reflection, such as is expressed by Grotius: "So far off is the Lord from all affectation of unnecessary novelty." . . . The supposition, however, must nevertheless be rejected, and rejected on the ground that the agreement which has been asserted

between this prayer and prayers of the Rabbis is wholly null. This has been already perceived by Kuinöl, Fritzsche, Henneberg, Gebser, Olshausen, so that one might look upon the opinion as almost antiquated.'<sup>1</sup> Dean Alford says: 'If pious Jews had framed such petitions, our Lord, who came πληρῶσαι everything that was good under the Old Covenant, might in a higher sense and spiritual meaning have recommended the same form to His disciples. But such does not appear to have been the fact.'<sup>2</sup>

Our Lord expressly said that He had come, not to destroy the older revelation, but to fulfil; not to ignore any portion of truth already known, but to supplement it. Accordingly, His teaching abounded with allusions to the Old Testament. He often quoted its words as expressive of His own feelings. He died with them on His lips. It would indeed be strange if the petitions in a form solemnly given as being specially in accordance with the Divine will, had no parallel whatever in the thoughts and devotions of the Old Testament Church. Thus, although the character of God as Father was not prominent, yet it was known. 'Doubtless Thou art our Father,' etc., Isa. lxiii. 16; 'If then I be a Father, where is mine honour? saith the Lord of hosts.' Mal. i. 6. The hallowing of the name was commanded through Moses: 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain;' illustrated by David: 'From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, the Lord's name is to be praised,' Ps. cxiii. 3; and guaranteed by Jehovah: 'I will sanctify my great name.' Ezek. xxxvi. 23.

<sup>1</sup> Tholuck, *Sermon on the Mount*.

<sup>2</sup> Notes on Greek Testament.

The kingdom was portrayed and prayed for in Ps. lxxii., and predicted by Daniel. The doing the will of God was the subject of frequent petitions: 'Teach me to do Thy will;' 'Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies.' Agur prayed: 'Feed me with food convenient for me.' Prov. xxx. 8. Forgiveness was assured when the Lord passed by before Moses, and proclaimed: 'The Lord God, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity.' Ex. xxxiv. 5, 6. And for it the Israelites were encouraged to pray by Isaiah and all the prophets: 'Let the wicked return unto the Lord, and He will abundantly pardon.' Isa. lv. 7. To be delivered from temptation and saved from evil was the burden of many of David's prayers: 'Oh, let me not wander from Thy commandments. Remove from me the way of lying. Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity. Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.' Ps. cxix. And this was answered by the Divine promise: 'The Lord will preserve thee from all evil. He will preserve thy soul.' Ps. cxxi. 7.

There was no need therefore for our Lord to search the writings of Jewish Rabbis in order to compile this formulary. Its truths were already revealed by His own Spirit through the prophets. What He did was to gather into a focus the scattered rays; to bring out into clearer light what had been indistinctly seen; to give prominence to what had been in the background; to arrange in progressive order what had hitherto existed in disjointed fragments. It is this combination, this concentration of

so much into a space so small, this taking up of gems which had lain about amid the general stores of the Church, and setting them all together in this circlet of purest gold; it is not only what is included but what is omitted; it is not the separate petitions, invaluable as they are, but their combination in a prayer unrivalled not only for its substance, but for 'the full brevity, the deep plainness, the comely simplicity of expression;'<sup>1</sup>—it is all this which constitutes its superiority to all mere human utterances of devotion. 'The Lord's Prayer, for a succession of solemn thoughts, for fixing the attention upon a few great points, for suitableness to every condition, for sufficiency, for conciseness without obscurity, for the weight and real importance of its petitions, is without an equal or a rival:'<sup>2</sup> these features entitle it to be called 'The Lord's Prayer.'

## 2. *The General Scope.*

As the Ten Commandments are a summary of our duties, so the Lord's Prayer is a summary of what ought to be our desires. Both relate first to God, and then to man. The Decalogue begins with duties we owe to God, and passes on to those we owe to one another. The prayer begins with desires for God, and ends with desires for ourselves. The first four commands, to have no other God, to worship no image, to reverence the Name, and to observe the Sabbath of God, correspond with the prayers that His name may be hallowed, His kingdom come, and His will be done.

<sup>1</sup> Isaac Barrow.

<sup>2</sup> Paley.

The next command and the next petition may be regarded as transitional in order. The claims of God are illustrated in those of parents; and our duties to parents have their origin and highest illustration in the honour we owe to God. The Command to honour earthly parents suggests the title of God in the Prayer, reminding us both of duty and privilege. The parental relation is Divine, and involves mutual functions; and the bread we ask is the gift of God in heaven for His children's wants on earth. Thus both in the Code and the Prayer we are here brought down to the human level. The rest of the commandments forbid the sins to which our lusts expose us. The rest of the petitions seek deliverance from the evils into which sin brings us. We ask God first for His own good things, and then for deliverance from our own evil things. And as the Decalogue is prefaced by a statement of His claims on the obedience of the Israelites as their Deliverer from Egypt, so the Prayer is prefaced by the comprehensive plea of the invocation: 'Our Father which art in heaven.' Ex. xx. 1-17.

It might be expected that there would be resemblances between the Prayer, and the Beatitudes which had just been pronounced. The Prayer teaches that God is our Father, and the Beatitude declares that 'peacemakers shall be called the children of God.' His name is hallowed by the humble and 'meek.' The privileges of the kingdom belong to 'the poor in spirit;' for even now, 'theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' The will of God is done only by 'the pure in heart.' The prayer for daily bread has a spiritual

as well as physical application, and they realize it who 'hunger and thirst after righteousness.' Sorrowing for sin, we pray that our trespasses may be forgiven, and are assured that 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.' We profess that we who ask forgiveness, practise it towards others, and we are taught that 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.' We ask to be delivered from temptation and all evil, and are assured that, even though persecuted for righteousness' sake, we shall not only be preserved from harm, but that 'great shall be our reward in heaven.' Matt. v. 1-12.

Some have found in the first three petitions, an illustration of the Holy Trinity. We pray that the Name of the Father may be hallowed; that the Kingdom, administered by the Son, may come; and that such obedience as is rendered in heaven, and can only result from the influence of the Holy Spirit, may be rendered on earth.

The prayer is not formally in the name of Jesus. He had not yet fully developed His mediatorial character and work. Subsequently, on the eve of offering Himself as the sacrifice for sin, He distinctly taught His disciples to pray in His name. '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.' John xvi. 23, 24. It is not only in accordance with His teaching that we should thus come before God, but it would be difficult for any one who loved Him as Saviour, to omit His name in any prayer to the

Father. Yet much more than the mere use of the word is required if we would pray in His name. We must come to God relying on His mediation, asking what He has taught us to desire, seeking His glory, and to be aided by His Spirit, else the formula alone will not fulfil the condition. Thus the Apostles prayed. Some of their petitions were offered directly to Christ. See Acts vii. 59, 60, ix. 13, 14, xxii. 18-21; 1 Cor. i. 2; 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9; Rev. xxii. 20. Other prayers, without the formula at their close, contained the name of Christ, expressing reliance, homage, service, adoration. Prayer and praise to God, as 'the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,' was offered in this name. See 2 Cor. i. 3, ii. 14; Eph. i. 17; Phil. i. 9-11; Col. i. 9-20; 1 Thess. i. 2, 3, iii. 11-13; 2 Thess. iii. 5; Heb. iv. 14-16, xiii. 20, 21, etc. That this method of appealing to God was uniform and constant, we may gather from the words of St. Paul: 'Through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.' Eph. ii. 18.

From these examples it is evident, that it is not so much the mention of Christ at the end of the prayer, as the breathing through the whole of it of faith and love towards Christ, which constitutes praying in His name. It is this reliance on Him while we pray, and this blending of our will with His in our petitions, which, without the customary clause, render a prayer more truly Christian than any number of repetitions of the mere name in the absence of this spirit. And therefore this prayer, because taught by Himself, as the very essence of what we should ask for, is eminently a prayer in His name, when, without the

formula, we offer it in obedience to His teaching, and relying on His mediation.

Although our Lord, in giving this prayer, neither forbade nor commanded forms of devotion in general, nor confined His disciples to this in particular, we may regard it as a complete summary of all lawful petitions. 'After this manner' means, if not by this very form, yet in this spirit, and for these benefits. Adoration of every kind, prayer for the Divine glory, for the spread of truth, holiness, and happiness, and for help to do and suffer the will of God, are embraced in the first portion of it. Supplication for every real necessity of our nature, the satisfaction of every pure instinct, bodily, mental, social, is involved in asking for daily bread; the confession of all sin, and the plea for all pardon, are in the prayer 'Forgive;' grace to bear with and to forgive others, in the condition annexed; succour in all temptations, trials, sorrows, and final deliverance from every form of evil, in the closing petitions. Whatever it is lawful to pray for is embodied here; and therefore at all times, and under all circumstances, all mankind may pray 'after this manner.'

The Lord's Prayer is thus a centre of Christian unity. They who use liturgies never omit this. They who repudiate the pre-composed prayer of men, with few exceptions avail themselves of this prayer of the Lord Jesus. (Whatever the difference of Church government, whatever the variation of creed, all blend their voices harmoniously here.) Surely they must be really united, however seemingly divided, who from the heart send up to heaven

such requests. In the words of the Dean of Llandaff, 'They who can pray together the Lord's Prayer in spirit and in truth, must be substantially one. The Church of all space and of all time meets and is one in the Master's prayer.'<sup>1</sup>

Thus is the Lord's Prayer a Divine bond of brotherhood for all who use it. It is a fulfilment of the condition joined to the promise, 'If two of you agree as touching anything ye shall ask, it shall be given.' It may be urged with full confidence, inasmuch as we are assured, 'If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us;' and the prayer He Himself taught must be according to His will, when offered in the true spirit of it. We may be sure that His intercession in heaven blends with our prayers on earth, when we pray 'after this manner.'

It is a prayer capable of ever varied amplification. We may crowd a volume into each clause. We may, in protracted supplication, 'continue all night in prayer to God,' and yet keep within its limits and be guilty of no vain repetitions. It is suitable for seasons of safety and peril, joy and sorrow, health and sickness, festival and funeral. We may offer it amid the activities of life, and when drawing near to the gates of death. It is suited to all ages and all minds. There are depths in it which the most thoughtful intellect cannot fathom, and shallows where little children may lave their feet: heights which the strongest climber cannot scale, and valleys where the weak and wounded may rest and be refreshed. It was given for the Church universal,

<sup>1</sup> C. J. Vaughan, D.D.

in every stage of development, both as a whole and in each member. The new-born child of God may acceptably present it, though he only understands as a child; the matured believer finds increasing help in it as he puts away childish things. What the poet so beautifully says of prayer in its various utterances, may be said of this one particular prayer, this one and the same utterance, according to the different thoughts and emotions of those who offer it:

‘Prayer is the simplest form of speech,  
That infant lips can try;  
Prayer the sublimest strains that reach  
The Majesty on high.’<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Montgomery.

## CHAPTER II.

### *THE INVOCATION.*

‘OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN.’

#### I.—THE DIVINE FATHERHOOD.

WE look back with loving remembrance to our first conscious acts of prayer. We think of the kind father who told us of our other Father above the blue sky : or we recall the time when we knelt at our mother’s knee, and felt her soft hand hold ours, as she taught our child-lips to say, ‘Our Father which art in heaven.’ So, when the Church was in its infancy, the Saviour, acting towards His disciples as to ‘one whom his mother comforteth,’ taught that infant Church to pray. And now, in its maturity, that Church recalls the early lesson, and treasures those sweet words, and with no epithet so loves to approach God as with this : ‘Our Father which art in heaven.’

He is a Spirit, invisible, infinite. No one hath seen or can see God. Yet we may in some measure know Him by His works. ‘The invisible things of Him are clearly seen by the things that are made ; even His eternal power and Godhead.’ Rom. i. 20.

But the heart yearns for more knowledge of God than these things can give. In our own nature there are emotions as well as thoughts. Our relationships

and the instincts connected with them are more to us than what we possess or can do. Of these instincts none are stronger than the parental. Children know the treasure of a father's, a mother's tender affection; and the happiness of trustfully confiding to them every sorrow or desire. And parents know how musical to them is the voice of the loving child, and how great is their delight to listen and to help.

Can such feelings be shared by Deity? Not if He be a mere abstraction, a principle, a force, a formula: or if, being a Person, He is only calm thought and inexorable will. But why may I not regard Him as Father, if He is known by His works? The noblest of these works within our knowledge is man: and we are taught that He made man in His own image. Therefore in man's intellect, conscience, and will; in his benevolence, pity, and affection; in all that we most admire in human nature we may surely trace the Creator as much as in the flowers of the field and the stars of heaven. But these parental affections are inseparable from humanity, and are the most worthy its Divine original. If man is made in the Divine image, these must exist in the model. We may then infer a real, substantial resemblance in the Divine nature to this fatherliness in human nature; the faultless ideal of the copy which, though sin has defaced it, is yet so beautiful.

We are not left to speculation. He has Himself come to earth to make His nature known, in the person of the man Christ Jesus. Not in the form

of some grand archangel, but in human nature, He has revealed His heart to men. What other form could be so appropriate if man himself was made after the image of God—an image existing therefore from eternity? What if God did not only adopt our nature, but also manifest to men the Eternal Type from which man was originally moulded; so that Christ was the very Image of God, because perfect man?

And now, God 'manifest in the flesh,' He who could say, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,' is asked by men how they may best approach God, by what title address Him, by what name know Him, what relationship claim with Him. And God, incarnate in the man, speaking to men, some of whom felt the tenderness of parental love, all of whom knew the trustful love of children, replied: 'When ye pray, say, *Father*!' Not 'Great Creator,' 'Majestic Ruler,' 'Omniscient Judge.' He is all these. But the idea of Him we are habitually to cherish, the title we are chiefly to use, is one which assures us that our prayer will certainly be heard, for God Himself teaches us to call Him 'Father.'

Some say it is only a figure of speech. They may give it a grand name, and call it an anthropomorphism. But suppose, in using a term adapted to our nature, God employs the exact term adapted to the model on which that nature was framed; so that, instead of borrowing from human paternity, human paternity is only an imperfect copy of His own?

How they err who deem they exalt the Divine

Majesty by depriving it of such emotions as this term suggests ; 'who would make heaven clear by making it cold, and would assert the dignity of the Divine Essence by emptying it of its love, and reducing it into nothingness.'<sup>1</sup>

Figures of speech are not facts, but may mean much more. Earth's facts must be infinitely inferior to heaven's glories, yet may help us to conceive of them. A figure used by God is not a fiction, but a gracious method to assist our infant powers to attain some faint idea of what exceeds all power of language fully to explain. He who made the father's heart, and knows what is in man, adopts the title 'Father,' and bids us so think of and address Him.

Indistinctly seen by Old Testament saints, this truth, which is life and immortality, was brought into clearer light by the gospel. The title 'Father,' feebly felt, was seldom uttered by the lips of worshippers who adored the great, the terrible, the Almighty God, the infinite 'I AM.' Now we know that amongst all other titles there is none so dear to Himself, none He so loves to hear from His children, as this. Thus approaching, we recognize His power without trembling at it, and adore His holiness without shrinking from it ; we can exult in all His perfections as children who share in His honour, and while bowing before Him with reverence may rejoice with confidence.

Atheism says there is nothing but what we perceive by our senses ; and that all things are the result of law that has no author, and forces that

<sup>1</sup> F. D. Maurice.

have no originator! Pantheism, with a web of words, would entangle God in His works, and blend the soul itself with Deity. Paganism, admitting personality, represents Him, one or multiform, as a Being whom it is necessary to placate by offerings, and whom we must approach with dread. But the soul, divinely taught, rejoices to recognize in the Creator and Ruler of the Universe a personal God who is not wrath, but love, and who bids us approach Him with child-like confidence as we say, 'Our Father which art in heaven.'

Agnosticism has searched the universe and has found many things, but cannot discover God. It says, if such a Being exists, He hides Himself from most diligent search of geologist, chemist, and astronomer. He is not to be found in the depths below, nor the heights above, nor among the living things on the earth. If existent, He is unknown and unknowable. How blessed they who are as certain He is their Father as they are that He exists; who by faith see His face, hear His voice, feel His hand, and respond to His love; who have daily intercourse with Him; and ever coming forth anew from such communion are more sure of His Being than they are of that of any earthly friend! He is not to them an 'Unknown God;' He is their Father.

The little child, shrinking timidly from every stranger, flies to its father's open arms. He may be gigantic in form and solemn in feature; and as he returns from field of toil or scene of strife, may be to strangers an object of fear; but his own little one, as his step is heard on the threshold, runs to clasp his

knee and be folded in his arms. And so the mighty God, before whom angels veil their faces, encourages us to run and meet His advance, to appeal to Him, to trust Him, to love Him as 'Father.'

## II.—THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD BY CREATION.

To Him we owe our existence. Our earthly parents are only links in the chain of dependent causation; but He who made all things is God. Whatever the methods of formation in the material universe, whether by a separate fiat creating each distinct species in its full maturity, or whether by slow process of evolution from lower forms, a Primal Originator there must be, adequate in power and wisdom to form a universe replete with evidences of strength and design, the Creator of the heavens and the earth. In all things we trace

'The unambiguous footsteps of the God  
Who gives its lustre to an insect's wing,  
And wheels His throne upon the rolling worlds.

Nature is but a name for an effect,  
Whose cause is God. . . . Not a flower  
But shows some touch in freckle, streak, or stain,  
Of His unrivalled pencil.'<sup>1</sup>

Strange, that in an age of scientific discovery there should be any who fail to recognize the Maker and Designer of works which, the better they are known, inspire the more admiration in the beholders. Lord Bacon said he would rather believe all the fables of the Talmud or Koran, than that this universal frame of nature was without a God.

<sup>1</sup> Cowper, *The Task*.

Of all the evidences of a wise Creator none are more impressive than those nearest to us—in man himself. Every advance in anatomical and physiological science only demonstrates more clearly that we are ‘fearfully and wonderfully made.’ Any single organ should suffice for proof: the hand so fitted for multiform service, the feet for walking, the ear for hearing, the eye for seeing; the marvellous mechanism within—for breathing, nutrition, and all other functions necessary for life; the adaptation of these to each other; the intellectual and moral nature in harmony with the physical; and all in harmony with the external world;—these so distinctly speak of their Divine Original, that even heathen writers, such as the poet quoted by St. Paul, confessed, ‘We are also His offspring.’ Acts xvii. 28.

I see a portrait and admire the outline, the colouring, the mind and character revealed, the expressive eye, the meaning in the mouth. I contemplate a statue, so perfect in its representation of the human form, that the marble seems to breathe. Should any beholder suggest that no painter had drawn skilful brush across that canvas, that no sculptor, with cunning chisel, had shaped that marble, but that both picture and statue had come into existence without any personal agency or exercise of thought, such a critic would be regarded either as joking or as insane. And can I look on the human artist who produced those works, possessing the life of which those productions only wear the semblance, and refuse to recognize in him the handiwork of the Divine Artist, the Father of men?

III.—THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD BY  
REDEMPTION.

Although, as Creator, God is the Father of all men, yet, as 'all men have sinned,' they have forfeited the higher privileges of sonship, our restoration to which was the object of the mission of Christ. 'The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.' The nature of His mediation it is not the purpose of these pages to discuss; but the result is stated by the Evangelist: 'As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name:' John i. 12: and by St. Paul: 'God sent forth His Son, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son.' Gal. iv. 4-7.

Sonship is here restricted to believers in Christ. They obtain remission of guilt through His atonement, and renewal of nature by His Spirit. The sentence of banishment is annulled, and their unfitness for dwelling in God, as their Home, is removed by regenerating and sanctifying grace. All others remain under condemnation, and are in a state of alienation from God. This distinction is plainly set forth by Christ and His Apostles. To the Jews who rejected Him, but boasted, 'We have one Father, even God,' He replied, 'If God were your Father, ye would love me: ye are of your father the devil.' John viii. 41, 44. In the parable of the sower, 'The good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one.' Matt. xiii.

38. St. Paul distinguishes between those who being 'in the flesh cannot please God,' and those who 'are in Christ Jesus.' These alone in the highest sense can call God Father. 'For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.' Rom. viii. 14. They alone receive 'the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.' The children of God are described as having been 'dead in trespasses and sins,' and therefore not children of God, prior to their being 'quicken'd,' but 'the children of wrath, even as others.' Eph. ii. 1-3. And the distinction is again clearly drawn by St. John: 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! Who-soever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil.' 1 John iii. 1, 9, 10. It was only to disciples Jesus said: 'I ascend to my Father and your Father.' John xx. 17.

If then all men are children of God, they cannot be so in the same sense. Between them there exists the difference of light from darkness, of life from death. It cannot therefore be scriptural to speak of the unregenerate as needing only to see and recognize a relationship already existing. They are in a state of death, and need to be 'quicken'd' before they can truly say, 'Abba, Father.' Our Lord declared with solemn emphasis, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' John iii. 3. Without this new birth he cannot therefore be a child of God. 'For ye are

all the children of God by faith in the Lord Jesus.' Gal. iii. 26. The 'all' is here limited to the possession of faith. In the absence of conversion, repentance, forgiveness, filial obedience, there is no evidence that any one belongs to 'the children of God' rather than to 'the children of the devil.' No one should be buoyed up with the false hope of being saved by virtue of relationship to the Father, while discarding His love and violating His laws.

May we not then appeal to sinners in *any* sense as His children, or encourage them to call Him Father? Yes; even as the prodigal, who, far from home and feeding on the husks of his own wickedness, still claimed the relationship, saying: 'I will arise and go to *my father*.' He knew that his father loved him still, and he hoped to be received back as a servant, if not as a son. But he would not obtain the allowance of even one of his father's 'servants' if he remained away in guilty rebellion against him. So long he must expect nothing better than swine for company and husks for food. There is a vital difference between the dutiful child at home and the rebellious profligate in self-chosen exile, although both may have one father.

God's children by creation become living children only by grace. 'This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' Luke xv. 24. Sinners are 'lost' until they return to God: they are 'dead' until by believing in Christ they live anew. God is still their Father, inasmuch as He created them, has provided a way for their return, and invites them home. 'Return, ye backsliding children, saith

the Lord.' Sinners may be appealed to as having in God a Father who has not ceased to care for them, and who, if they return, will see them when far off, and welcome them home ; so that none are excluded from the privilege of thus addressing the Most High : ' Our Father which art in heaven.'

#### IV.—THE BLESSINGS INVOLVED IN THE DIVINE FATHERHOOD.

##### I. *Love.*

This is all-comprehensive. From the fatherly heart of Deity, as from a fountain, all benefits flow to men. That ' God is Love ' is a grand revelation : that God is 'Father' is grander still. This comes nearer home to the human heart, and should not fail of being understood. For, as already shown, it is not a mere figure of speech, but a great reality, having more beneath it and not less than our loftiest conceptions can picture, and our strongest yearnings crave. Earthly parents, the tenderest and best, do not fully realize the Divine ideal of fatherhood, and therefore our highest conceptions, based on human experience, inadequately represent what God is to His children. How great then is the encouragement given us to pray when we address God as Father ! All pleas are blended in this one opening word.

A Father ! Earthly parents love their children before those children love them : they love those children in spite of very inaccurate knowledge on the children's part, very feeble affection and imperfect obedience, in spite of undutifulness and even rebellion ;

they love them unselfishly, hoping for nothing but the response of love, their delight in any act of service rendered by those children arising from the love that prompts it. And so our Father loves us with all the love the word can suggest, and is able to do for us all that such love desires to do.

We are encouraged by fatherly love to expect

2. *Sustenance.*

An earthly parent provides for the child, which, at least in its early life, would otherwise perish. So our Father in heaven cares for us. 'No good thing will He withhold.' He who made us is well acquainted with our necessities: 'He knoweth our frame.' We are not left to ourselves, or treated as if we could do without the necessaries of existence. 'Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.' Matt. vi. 32. He feeds the fowls of the air; much more will He feed and clothe the children of His grace. Only during childhood do we absolutely depend on an earthly parent: but we never cease to need, and shall never cease to experience, our heavenly Father's care. In the person of Jesus He appealed to the heart of earthly fathers. Matt. vii. 7-11. Though degenerate and selfish, yet they give their children the good things needed. How much more will God, the perfectly righteous and loving Father, act in accordance with His name, and supply His children's wants! If He gives the greater gift of His Spirit, whereby we say 'Father,' He will not deny those lesser gifts required for the body in which that Spirit dwells. Rom. viii. 15-32.

### 3. *Protection.*

An earthly parent is the guardian of the child, employing all his strength and resources, if need be, to protect it from harm. So the eye of God is on every child of His. His omniscience keeps watch, His omnipotence shelters, His providence directs. 'The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.' 'God is our refuge and strength; therefore will not we fear;' for this refuge is '*Our Father.*'

### 4. *Education.*

No wise father neglects the drawing forth, the educating of the bodily and mental faculties of his child. He will never allow mere fondness and petting, the pleasure of the hour, to supersede the training which is needed to fit for the long future of life. The earthly author of that life is bound to develop it. So our heavenly Father trains His children for His service here and His glory hereafter. He instructs them by His word and by His Spirit, and exercises them in all godliness. Many a difficult lesson must be learnt, many a hard task performed. Like children at school, we sometimes question the utility of the lesson, and murmur at the difficulty of the task. Very much that a father insists on in the education of his child, can be understood and appreciated only in its relation to the enlarging capacity of the child for the work of manhood. And so with our Father in heaven, who is not merely interested in our present comfort, but seeks our permanent wellbeing. He is training us for immortality.

' The ills we see,  
 The mysteries of sorrow, deep and long,  
 The dark enigmas of permitted wrong,  
 Have all one key;  
 This strange sad world is but our Father's school,  
 All chance and change His love shall grandly overrule.

' How sweet to know  
 The trials which we cannot comprehend  
 Have each their own divinely purposed end :  
 He traineth so  
 For higher learning, ever onward reaching  
 For fuller knowledge yet, and His own deeper teaching.

' What though to-day  
 Thou canst not trace at all the hidden reason  
 For His strange dealings through the trial season,  
 Trust and obey.  
 In after life and light all shall be plain and clear.'<sup>1</sup>

Such education, as the poetess so sweetly sings,  
 must involve

### 5. *Discipline.*

This no wise parent neglects. Greater injury cannot be done to a child than to spare reproof and correction when needed. Of course it is painful to the parent, more so than to the child; but it would be unkind clemency and pernicious selfishness to withhold it. A child without discipline grows up to be a misery to itself and a plague to others. So our heavenly Father will suffer no child of His to perish through neglect, on His part, of needful chastisement. 'Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth. God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?' Heb. xii. 6, 7.

If even the 'Captain of Salvation' was 'made perfect through suffering,' much more is it necessary for God, 'in bringing many sons unto glory,' to

<sup>1</sup> F. R. Havergal.

appoint for them the 'tribulation that worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope.' Of sorrows which He sends we may be assured that they are among the 'all things' that 'work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose;' because He who ordains them is 'Our Father.' Heb. ii. 10; Rom. v. 3, 4, viii. 28.

'A Father, whose authority, in show  
When most severe, and mustering all its force,  
Was but the graver countenance of love :  
Whose favour, like the clouds of spring, may lower,  
And utter now and then an awful voice,  
But has a blessing in its darkest frown,  
Threatening at once, and nourishing the plant.'<sup>1</sup>

### 6. *Consolation.*

This idea is bound up in the very words *Father*, *Mother*. How tender our memories of the time when we buried our childish griefs in their embrace! What earthly comforter can be compared to a mother? Bearing her little one in her bosom, shielding it from the cold, supplying its wants from her own life-stream, soothing its griefs by her tender caresses and the gentle murmur of her voice, 'dandling it on her knees' (as the divinely-directed prophet graphically depicts); then, when grown older, entering into all its childish griefs and troubles, not despising them because trifles to her, but patiently listening and earnestly consoling, because to that little one those troubles are real and great: afterwards, when the child has become the man, so making his sorrows her own that the heart, locked

<sup>1</sup> Cowper, *The Task*.

up perhaps to all besides, can unburden itself on that bosom where in infancy it first found solace : never wearied by the long enumeration of woes, and by what to others would be the tedious repetition of the same sad tale ; cheerfully sharing the trouble even when there may be little hope of lightening it ; never treating it with levity or indifference ; advising, but at such a time never rebuking ; and even when that child may have been the cause of her bitterest grief—when his troubles have come on him by his own folly or wickedness—when he has forsaken his childhood's home, and scorned the love of his parents, yet, when he comes to her with a heart bursting with anguish, forgetting all his faults in the contemplation of his sorrows, and with undiminished tenderness, folding him to her breast, wiping his tears, palliating his errors, pleading his cause—O how a mother comforteth !<sup>1</sup>

And God who inspired that maternal tenderness, and who gave the father's heart its pity, says : ' Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him ; ' and, ' As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.' How fully assured may we be that the compassion of any earthly parent is surpassed by His who says : ' Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb ? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee.' Isa. xlix. 15. All this, and much more than this, was revealed by Him who, as the Word, came to express in His spirit and conduct as man, the tender

<sup>1</sup> Newman Hall, *Antidote to Fear*.

compassion of 'the God of all consolation,' whom we address as 'Our Father.'

### 7. *Intercourse.*

A father does not treat his children as strangers or visitors; but is on terms of loving familiarity with them. They are not kept at a distance, as courtiers by a stately monarch, but are 'at home' with him. Even so, we may draw near to God; not merely on stated occasions of solemn worship; but in the retirement of our chamber, and also amidst the varied cares and toils, the sorrows and joys of daily life. Not only may we bring to Him our greatest necessities and bitterest griefs, but may pour out to Him as children to an earthly parent, all our little cares, purposes, hopes and fears, and know He loves to listen.

### 8. *Inheritance.*

A father wishes to lay up in store for his children's use when he shall himself be no longer with them. This may be carried to excess, so as to encourage in the child neglect of all self-exertion. Many a rich heir has been ruined in character by excess of wealth for which he did not work. And at the best, the inheritance bequeathed by earthly parents lasts but for a little while, and must in turn be left to others. But God provides for His children 'an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away'—wealth which we could never secure by our own exertions; yet the hope of which stimulates to all holy industry, and makes us rich indeed. If we are

'children, then heirs; heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ.' Thus are we assured of needful parental provision, protection, education, discipline, consolation, intercourse and inheritance, by this first word, 'Father.'

V.—UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD IN THE DIVINE FATHERHOOD.—'OUR.'

As the word 'Father' indicates our relationship to God, the word 'Our' indicates the relationship that binds us together as members of His family.

We must first, as individuals, learn to say, 'My Father.' Many use the word 'Our' thoughtlessly, forgetting that it implies the individual acceptance of God in this relationship. It is easy to say, 'We are all sinners;' but it is difficult to confess, with no attempt to lessen our guilt by sharing it, 'I, myself, am a sinner.' And so it is comparatively easy to recognize a general fatherhood in God, without yielding the heart in solemn surrender as an individual, saying, '*My* Father.'

The Father appeals to us severally—'My son, give me thy heart. Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, "My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth"?' And so the prodigal said, 'I will arise and go to *my* Father.' Thus all sinners must return one by one. Thus every believer makes his personal confession and yields his personal allegiance: 'O God, Thou art my God;' and with adoring faith exclaims, 'My Lord and my God.' So our Lord teaches in this very discourse. 'Thou, when *thou*

prayest, enter into thy closet, and pray to *thy* Father which is in secret; and *thy* Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward *thee* openly.' Matt. vi. 6.

It is the truth embodied in 'Our' which, in my first approaches to Him in prayer, encourages me to say 'My.' For how do I know God is willing to be Father to me, except because He is Father to all besides? What special qualification do I possess, what merit, what Divine call, what internal assurance, that emboldens me thus to appeal? I shall utterly despair if I am to establish such a special personal plea. If I could persuade myself of such peculiar right to-day, such persuasion, resulting from my own mind, might disappear with to-morrow's clouded sky. It is only as one amongst mankind that I can begin to call God '*my* Father.' He has made, His Providence sustains us all. More than this; He has revealed Himself in Christ as the Saviour of all. He 'so loved the world,' as to give His Son to save it. Because 'whosoever believeth' may cry, 'Father,' I so cry. Because Christ is the 'propitiation for the sins of the whole world,' I approach with confidence the throne of grace. I put in my claim simply as a human being and a sinner. Because God is 'Our Father,' I claim Him as 'My Father.'

And now, knowing Him as 'My Father,' I recognize with new emphasis my relationship to others with whom I shared the qualification, and now share the blessing. 'If faith utters the word *Father*, love, without which faith cannot be, immediately associates it with *our*, that all its prayer may go into the quiet fellowship of supplication, and all its petitioning be

*intercession* also.<sup>1</sup> We are thus taught human brotherhood, while appealing to the Divine fatherhood. 'When thou prayest alone, *shut thy door*, says our Saviour here, shut out as much as thou canst the sight and notice of others, but shut not out the interest and good of others.'<sup>2</sup> In the very act of asking help from God for ourselves, we are reminded by the Author of the prayer, of the sympathy and succour we owe to one another. We are forbidden to ask blessings exclusively for ourselves. We cannot pray acceptably if we pray selfishly. We cannot truly call God 'Father' unless we cherish the spirit that would call every man 'brother.'

Besides special intercession for special persons and on special occasions, we are thus taught in every offering of this prayer, and in the very title of God which we are encouraged to prefix to all our petitions, to think of others. 'Christ says: Bear others upon your heart all through—pray for yourself and them in one—say, "Our Father," and prayer is intercession at once. Take your friend with you, take your pastor, take your Church, take your people,—yea, take your enemy too, and your slanderer—in recollection and in intention, and kneel with them, as one, in your own prayer and in your own confession. So, at the very spring and fountainhead of your life, you will have cast in the salubrious tree which shall make every Marah of your converse sweetness.'<sup>3</sup>

If thus we are reminded of the duty of praying for others, we are reminded of a corresponding privilege also; we share in the prayers of our brethren. What

<sup>1</sup> Stier.<sup>2</sup> Leighton.<sup>3</sup> Vaughan.

a blessed community of goods! This is indeed the 'Communion of saints.' All true prayers from filial hearts to 'Our Father' bring ourselves into the tide of their benedictions, and help to bear us onward to God. 'The most private prayer of the godly is a public good. Every believer has a share in all the prayers of all the rest; for he is a partner in every ship of that kind that sets to sea, and hath a portion of all their gainful voyages.'<sup>1</sup>

How delightful is the realizing of this fellowship when the whole household—parents, children, servants—gathered round the family altar, seek daily blessings from their Divine Head, and the voices of young and old blend as they invoke the common 'Father.' How impressive is it, when a ship's company—officers, seamen, passengers—one family, alike dependent on the care of Him who rides upon the storm, send up from the wide waste of waters this invocation—'Our Father'! And what more impressive part of any service in any congregation, however imposing or however simple the ceremonial, than the blending of the accents of rich and poor, minister and people, in this first word!

This recognition of brotherhood should be extended beyond any one assembly, and should include all who invoke the one Father. The special interest we feel in '*Our Church*,' or '*Our Congregation*,' should not close our eyes from seeing, nor our hearts from embracing, those who, in other organizations, and with other forms, call upon 'Our Father.' Exclusiveness in religion was long ago reproved by St. Paul: 'While

<sup>1</sup> Leighton.

one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, all are yours.' 1 Cor. iii. 4, 23. How often 'Our Creed hath devoured our *Pater Noster*, and Faith hath shut Charity out of doors!'<sup>1</sup> By whatever denominational term distinguished, all congregations of believers belong to each; and each should regard as brethren 'all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.' 1 Cor. i. 2. Varieties of outward form, and of the expression of important truth, there must ever be; but while holding our own convictions with loyalty to conscience, we should ever cultivate the spirit of brotherhood with all who invoke this Fatherhood.

To narrow this brotherhood by artificial limits of human authority, of sectional jealousy, or personal antipathy; to cut ourselves off from the sympathy and fellowship of any who, in the name of Christ and by the Holy Ghost, call God '*Father*,' is the schism against which St. Paul warns us, and which this prayer condemns. How different from the mind of Christ, who said, 'Whosoever doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.' 'There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.' Eph. iv. 4-6.

This brotherhood in '*Our Father*' extends to the various conditions of social life. Rich and poor,

<sup>1</sup> Farindon.

master and servant, prince and peasant, queen and cottager, unite in one and the same confession of a common Fatherhood. How this should abate pride in the lofty, and envy in the low! How this should prompt us to 'bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ'! An ancient father eloquently says: 'This shows how far the equality reaches between the king and the poor man, if in things the greatest we all of us are fellows. No one hath aught more than another: neither the rich more than the poor: master than servant: ruler than subject: philosopher than barbarian: scholar than unlearned. For to all He hath given one nobility, having vouchsafed to be called Father of all alike.'<sup>1</sup> This is the only real equality, the true Christian Socialism; not a bringing down of any, but a levelling up of all; when all alike are lifted into the relationship of the sons of God. The writer can never forget the exclamation of a negro woman, amidst a congregation of recently emancipated slaves at Richmond, Virginia, to whom he had been preaching from the words, 'Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted'— 'When I feel de lub of God in my heart, I know I belong to de royal family of heaven.'

This word 'Our' embraces nations. 'Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously, every man against his brother?' Mal. ii. 10. The limitation of the Divine Fatherhood by the Jews to the exclusion of the Gentiles, and the haughty disdain of the Greeks towards barbarians, were grandly rebuked by St. Paul

<sup>1</sup> Chrysostom.

on Mars Hill, when he told the Athenians that 'God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth.' Acts xvii. 26. All nations! coloured and white: Caffres and Zulus, Boers and Basutos, Hindoos and Chinamen, Indians and Negroes; all are children of the one Father, and all are included in the command to each member of the one brotherhood: 'All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.' Matt. vii. 12.

How would the recognition of this brotherhood influence the foreign policy of so-called Christian nations! There is but one law for us as individuals and as members of communities. We do not cease to be under the law of Christ when our responsibility is shared in a committee, or a corporation, or a senate, or an executive government. Whatever we counsel to be done, should be under the influence of the fact, that it is done towards those who may equally with ourselves appeal to the one Father. As all the inhabitants of the globe, however different their longitude, are lighted by the same sun in the course of every twenty-four hours; so, all men who use this prayer, though as regards nationality, station, culture, at the antipodes of each other, fix their eyes upon the same throne of grace, and invoke the same God as Our Father.

What a bond to our otherwise dissevered humanity is this word 'Our'! It ignores conventional exclusiveness; overleaps sectarian barriers; disregards social distinctions; knows nothing of crowns and coronets, titles and decorations; disdains the boun-

daries of mountains and rivers; sets at naught varieties of hue and language; and sees only, springing from the one Fatherhood of God, the one Brotherhood of man. Thus the gospel, by drawing all men to the Father, draws all men to one another.

## VI.—THE MAJESTY OF THE FATHER.—

### ‘IN HEAVEN.’

‘The Heidelberg Catechism replies to the question, Why is this added? “*In order that there may not be anything earthly in our conception of the heavenly majesty of God.*” To make the pure, the silent, the changeless, the immeasurable ether, exalted as it is above all the pollution and troubles, the mutability and limitations of this earth, the dwelling-place of the Divine Being, belongs to those spontaneous symbols which have a foundation in the consciousness of all mankind.’<sup>1</sup>

The visible universe is frequently laid under tribute by the sacred writers to furnish symbols of the invisible. The word ‘heaven’ is therefore not to be explained in a merely literal sense, as if referring to some definite locality in the region above the earth to which Deity is confined as a dwelling-place. He who is a Spirit, everlasting and infinite, cannot be localized: He inhabiteth eternity. ‘God is within all things, but is shut up in nothing; outside all things, but excluded from nothing; beneath all things, but not depressed under anything; above all things, but not lifted up out of the reach of anything.’<sup>2</sup> ‘Do not

<sup>1</sup> Tholuck.

<sup>2</sup> Augustine.

I fill heaven and earth?' 'Behold, the heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain Thee.' 1 Kings viii. 27. 'Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in Hades, behold, Thou art there.' Ps. cxxxix. 7, 8.

This does not forbid us to conceive of some region where God is specially manifested. Christ has ascended from the earth, and His glorified body is beheld and worshipped by angels and saints. 'The Lord was received up into heaven.' 'Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things.' 'Christ is entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.' Mark xvi. 19; Acts iii. 21; Heb. ix. 24. In heaven always, as once on earth, by Him the Father is revealed. 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.' The inhabitants of heaven 'see His face.' Consistent with the truth of His illimitableness, is the idea of some place of special manifestation of His presence. 'Hear Thou from heaven, Thy dwelling-place.' 'Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of Thy holiness and of Thy glory.' 2 Chron. vi. 30; Isa. lxiii. 15. But we sorely miss the purpose of these words if we dwell on ideas of mere space.

As by the term denoting relation, so by this denoting locality, we are taught that God is not a vague abstraction, or unknowable force, but an actual Personality, existing somewhere, distinct from ourselves. We look in thought beyond this earth, to the immeasurable regions above us. We soar beyond the clouds and

the blue sky; beyond the sun, the planets, and the stars; and we believe that everywhere in that immensity is God our Father. His works we see, but He is not His works. We are His creatures, but we are not God. Between Him and ourselves there are personal and distinct relations. We are His creatures, He is our Creator; we His children, He our Father; we on earth, He in heaven.

As Agnosticism would ignore God altogether, and Pantheism would confound Him with His works, Paganism would bring Him down from the boundless heaven, and limit Him to this visible universe as the God of the sun, or the moon, or the ocean, or the dry land. This word teaches that while we address Him on earth, He is still in heaven. We need not despair of finding Him because throned above: we need not wish to bring Him to earth and detain Him here, in order at all times to approach Him. In the person of His Son He satisfied the yearnings of the race that God should visit man: but in the resurrection and ascension we see Him no longer of the earth; nor do we worship the Incarnate One any longer in the cave of the Nativity, nor on the cross of Calvary, but 'on the right hand of the Majesty on high.' Heb. i. 3. Thus we are taught to look out of and above ourselves for the help we need, even to the sublimest heights of Divine glory; without despairing of succour on account of what seems to us the vast distance between heaven and earth, for though He is in heaven, He is our Father, and we, though on the earth, can hold filial intercourse with Him.

1. The term is suggestive of *Dignity*.

The measureless expanse helps us to the conception of infinity. The beauty of the blue ether; the radiant glory of the sun, the mild majesty of the moon, the varying splendours of the countless stars, —all impress the mind with sentiments of admiration and awe, in harmony with the attributes of Deity. His word by the prophet, 'Heaven is my throne,' was confirmed by His Son, 'Swear not by heaven, for it is God's throne.' 'Is not God in the height of heaven?' 'Thou hast set Thy glory above the heavens.' 'Canst thou by searching find out God? It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do?' 'Our God is in the heavens,' and He is our Father. Isa. lxvi. 1; Matt. v. 34; Job xxii. 12; Ps. viii. 1; Job xi. 7, 8.

2. *Power*.

The resistless winds, the rolling clouds, the lightning's flash and thunder's peal, the revolution of such mighty masses as the heavenly bodies, on their axes and in their orbits, by forces so stupendous and which nothing can impede, suggest ideas of Omnipotence. 'The heavens declare the glory of God, the firmament showeth His handy-work.' 'He meted out heaven with the span.' 'By His Spirit He hath garnished the heavens.' He bindeth the sweet influence of Pleiades, and looseth the bands of Orion; He bringeth forth Mazzaroth in his season, and guideth Arcturus with his sons. Ps. xix. 1; Isa. xl. 12; Job xxvi. 13, xxxviii. 31, 32. Our Father is at the centre of the universe, on the seat of supreme dominion. He is above all circumstances, and can control them; He is stronger than

all the forces of nature, and can make them serve His fatherly will; He is mightier than the enemies of His children; His love as Father moves the arm of Omnipotence. Earthly parents often have the desire, but lack the ability to help their children. But our Father is in heaven, and therefore 'mighty to save'!

### 3. *Knowledge.*

Standing on the surface of the earth, on a plain or in a valley, we see only a little way. But as we climb a tower or a mountain we extend our view. Still wider is our range of vision, if in a balloon we float through our lower heavens. So the idea of knowledge is suggested by the word 'heaven.' 'The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand.' Ps. xiv. 2. We are reminded that our Father, who is in heaven, sees and knows all things. He looks through the eternity past and the eternity future. He knows the end from the beginning. From Him no secrets are hid. He knows the secret purposes, the passing thoughts, of all men. He knows all we are, all we do, all we need; and we are therefore sure our Father can never be unmindful of one of His children, nor fail to listen to their cry, nor err in any of His dealings with them; 'for God seeth under the whole heaven.' Job xxviii. 24.

### 4. *Purity.*

The perfect clearness of the atmosphere above the region of the clouds is a fit emblem of the spotless purity of the character of God. 'He covereth Him-

self with light as with a garment; 'dwelling in light which no man can approach unto.' 'God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.' Ps. civ. 2; 1 Tim. vi. 16; 1 John i. 5. No thought of evil can taint His nature. None of the moral imperfections which often deprive children of the help they need from earthly parents, can for a moment overshadow Him whom angels adore, saying, 'Holy, holy, holy!'

### 5. *Mystery.*

The measureless expanse of the heavens, the number and motions of the stars, the phenomena of meteors and comets, the impossibility even now, with all the progress of science, of foretelling and explaining the varied influences which affect our lower atmosphere, producing calm or storm, sunshine or rain; these mysteries in the heavens suggest our ignorance in reference to much in the Divine government. Order pervades the physical universe notwithstanding the mystery; and so we are sure that though 'clouds and darkness are round about' our Father, yet 'righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne.' Ps. xcvi. 2.

'The ways of heaven are dark and intricate;  
Our understanding traces them in vain,  
Lost and bewildered in the fruitless search,  
Nor sees with how much art the windings run,  
Nor where the regular confusion ends.'<sup>1</sup>

### 6. *Constancy.*

Whatever the mystery of the heavens, order and regularity are unceasingly conspicuous with every advance of astronomical science. There is no hurry-

<sup>1</sup> Addison, *Cato*.

ing and no delay. No efforts of man can interfere with the working of those forces, so sublime both in might and minuteness. And our Father is stedfast in His loving purposes. Earthly parents may be swayed by current opinions, the influence of others, their own caprice; they may become impatient, self-indulgent, or weary of forgiving and assisting; but our Father, because He is in heaven, like the unchanging stars, abideth ever. 'I the Lord change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.' Earthly parents die — but 'when my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.' 'Our fathers, where are they?' — but 'the Lord liveth;' for He is our 'Father in heaven.'

### 7. *Nearness.*

However distant the utmost limit of the heavens, we are at their very threshold. Our littleness always touches the infinite that reaches beyond the stars. We feel its influences, we see its light. And this is the same in every part of the globe. And so we are taught that if God is in the heavens, He is always near to us, and we to Him, and all mankind to Him, and therefore to one another in Him; and so we again are reminded of our Brotherhood in the Fatherhood.

Every tiny dewdrop sparkles with the sun's own light. In its smaller sphere it reflects the whole circle of the sky, and brings heaven down to earth :

'And the clear region where 'twas born,  
 Round in itself encloses :  
 And in its little globe's extent,  
 Frames, as it can, its native element.'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Marvell.

So each individual soul may appropriate the blessings of this heavenly relationship, and shine in the light of its native Home and Father, God. He is reflected in every filial heart. And as the dewdrop equally portrays the heavens, whether radiant from wayside hedge or castle-slope, so, wherever we may be and whatever our earthly station, we may shine in the light of God and rejoice in 'heaven begun below.'

#### VII.—PRACTICAL LESSONS.

The character of God as 'Our Father' should be responded to by corresponding qualities and conduct in His children. They should therefore cultivate

##### 1. *Filial Confidence.*

We should trust Him as cherishing towards us all the love which the word 'Father' can suggest. We should absolutely rely on the representation He gives of Himself. Throughout the Bible names express qualities: they are descriptions, not mere designations. As 'Jehovah' means the *Self-existent*; and 'Jesus' means *Saviour*; so 'Father' is an assurance of what God actually is. He who cannot lie will prove Himself to be all He thus expresses, more than all we can conceive. May we not therefore 'come with boldness to the throne of grace,' when He who sits there is 'Our Father'?

We should believe that as 'Our Father' He must desire to give us all that is good for us, and that being 'in heaven,' He is able to embody in action all

the yearnings of His fatherly heart. To those who can in faith say 'Father,' the Apostle says, 'All things are yours.' 'What will not the Father give to sons seeking Him, who has already bestowed this—that they are His sons!'<sup>1</sup> Never should we doubt the love that prompts, the power that executes, or the wisdom that directs.

It is related of three little children, that during a thunderstorm they were asked each to choose a favourite text. One selected 'The Lord of glory thundereth,' and being asked her reason, said, 'I once heard a great noise when I thought I was all alone in the house; and I was so frightened, I screamed, and father's voice called out, *Don't be afraid, little Margie, it's only father.* And now when it thunders very loud, it always seems as if I heard God say, "Don't be afraid, little Margie, it's only Father;" and I don't feel a bit frightened.'<sup>2</sup>

With confidence a loving child tells everything to a loving parent. Nothing is kept back. If for a time there is any concealment, the secret is a burden till revealed. Joys and sorrows are alike poured forth to the listening ear of love. Does some unexpected pleasure present itself, the child says, 'I must tell father!' Does some danger threaten, is some pain felt or difficulty experienced, the ready instinct is at once to tell father. He will soothe the pain, protect from the peril, explain the difficulty, rejoice in the joy. 'God's children in all their troubles should run to their heavenly Father as that sick child (2 Kings iv. 19) who cried, "My head! my

<sup>1</sup> Augustine.

<sup>2</sup> *Nettie's Mission.*

head!" So pour out thy complaints to God—  
 "Father! my heart! my heart! my dead heart—  
 quicken it! my hard heart—soften it in Christ's  
 blood! Father, my heart! my heart!"<sup>1</sup>

So let us confide in God. Let our filial trust respond to His paternal love. O for more of the childlike intercourse which He invites! O for more simplicity in prayer; more habitual, trustful, happy, all-embracing, nothing-withholding outpour of the heart as to 'Our Father'!

Let us not fear that such confiding intercourse will ever be checked or reproved. If an earthly father loves such signs of filial affection, He who has given us the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, 'Abba, Father,' will never be deaf to this appeal. There are times when it is the only word we are able to utter. When we cannot put our desires into speech, when we are unable to define to our own mind what we feel and want, and we can only say 'Father!' we utter a word He never fails to hear. There may be more real prayer in that one word than in a whole liturgy. Let us utter it in the full assurance that He already says, 'My child!' No imperfection in method will nullify its efficacy. A loving earthly father will never refuse the letter that breathes affection, because blotted or mis-spelt. 'What blottings are there in our holy things! Yet our Father in Heaven accepts us. Saith God, "He is my child; and he will do better."<sup>1</sup> A prince might stand on ceremony and reject the petition incorrectly drawn up, but no child of God need fear that the imperfec-

<sup>1</sup> Watson.

tions of sincere appeals will ever hinder their entrance to the Father's heart.

What words can adequately set forth the blessedness of those who can thus, in the spirit of children, call on God as their Father! However poor, they have a wealth beyond earth's arithmetic to reckon, who can look up from humblest hovel or stony pillow and say, My Father! However sick, theirs is a solace beyond all that medical skill, or tenderest nursing, or boundless stores can furnish. However unknown in the world, theirs is an honour no earthly prince could confer, in the lustre of which all the splendours of royalty pale. The glimpses sometimes gained within the magic region of earthly greatness, make us feel how paltry are the prizes some spend their lives and wear away their hearts to win, compared with the real nobility, the deep abiding peace of the humblest of those who can say, 'Our Father which art in Heaven.'

Does my cup flow over with gladness? I know who fills it: nor less when it is filled with woe. Amid the roaring of the winds and waves I hear Him say, 'My child,' and I respond and say, 'My Father;' no less than when there is a great calm. His reproofs are blessings. His blows are boons. His withholdings are conferrings. He delays only to augment. He impoverishes to enrich.

## 2. *Reverence.*

The word 'Father' brings us near Him; the word 'In Heaven' causes us to bow before Him with godly fear. 'O come let us worship and *bow down*, let

us *kneel* before the Lord our Maker.' It would be monstrous to abuse His kindness in permitting this confidence of approach, by any forgetfulness of His majesty, by any irreverence of thought or demeanour. If we are encouraged to approach as children, we are at once admonished that we are also His subjects. 'Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth.' Eccles. v. 2. The unfallen angels who need not say, 'Forgive us,' veil their faces with their wings as they stand before Him. Isa. vi. 2, 3. The Elders described in the Revelation 'fall down before Him that sitteth on the throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever.' Rev. iv. 10. Surely sinners on earth, though privileged to call Him 'Father,' should not be less reverential than glorified spirits. It is only the humble who can truly say 'Father.' They who are learning more and more of the meaning of this word, become increasingly humble thereby. It is only in such hearts that the voice of God is heard; it is only in such children that the Father dwells. '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 humble and contrite spirit.' Isa. lvii. 15. How wonderful that God should have these two homes—'Eternity' and the 'Contrite Spirit'! 'The highest Heaven is the habitation of His glory: the humble heart hath the next honour: to be the habitation of His grace.'

And this reverence is not in spite of the confidence, but is caused by it. Instead of saying, '*Notwithstanding*

ing our privileges,' we say, '*In consequence* of them.' It is thus even with our fellow-men. The more intimate we become with some person of eminent wisdom and goodness, the more we find reason to respect as well as love him; the more by nearness we are able to detect faults, we become the more impressed with the absence of them. In such a case, familiarity, instead of breeding contempt, increases reverence.

It was said of Augustus Cæsar that they who feared to address him did not know his goodness; while they who presumed on his familiarity did not know his power. But it is the goodness itself, even more than the power, which often produces reverence. How emphatically true this is in the case of some earthly parents! They are so compassionate, tender, pitiful; so sympathetic; they make such tender allowance for the weakness and ignorance and childishness of their children, that these have no hesitation in coming to them on all occasions, opening their inmost hearts, and rejoicing in the unconstrained interchange of affection: and this very closeness of intimacy and sweetness of love so reveals to them more and more the beauty of the character of those parents, that with the tenderest love there grows an ever-deepening reverence, so that whatever the endearing intimacies, any act of discourtesy, any omission of dutiful respect, would be almost an impossibility.

So will it be with the children of God. To love and trust Him as Father helps us the more reverently to worship Him as God. When Our Lord encouraged Thomas to handle Him and see; to place his finger

on the print of the nails, and to thrust his hand into the wound in His side, this wonderful condescension on the part of Christ did not produce irreverence on the part of the servant, but called forth the adoring homage—'My Lord, and my God.' The beloved disciple who was permitted to lean on the Saviour's breast at supper, was more than all the rest imbued with a sense of His Divine majesty, and left an enduring record of the homage He receives in Heaven. St. Paul rejoiced in saying, 'Abba, Father,' but He said, 'I bow my knees unto the Father, of whom the whole family in earth and heaven is named.'

### 3. *Gratitude.*

'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!' Surely we should 'love Him, because He first loved us.' The reason why we should 'love the Lord our God with all our heart,' is this—He is 'Father;' and the reason why we should 'love our neighbours as ourselves,' is this—we may all say the same '*Our* Father.' Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift! even Himself. What gratitude should be ours to Him who, having given Himself, will surely give us all things else! Filial confidence and gratitude will prompt to obedience; a subject which will be considered more appropriately under the petition, 'Thy will be done.'

### 4. *Resemblance.*

A child often reminds us of its parents by its

features, manner and tone of voice. So we should be 'Followers (imitators) of God as dear children.' Much of a child's obedience is half-unconscious, because spontaneous. He naturally conforms to the wishes of the parent, the usages of the home. And the more we cultivate filial communion with our Heavenly Father, breathe the atmosphere of His Presence, and listen to His voice, the less shall we be alive to external and contrary influences; the more we shall reflect His image, echo His words, think His thoughts, and, as children, become 'partakers of the Divine Nature.' 2 Pet. i. 4.

We are taught that we must strive to be 'perfect, even as our Father who is in Heaven is perfect,' by imitating the broad beneficence of Him who 'maketh His sun to shine on the evil and on the good.' We are to be peacemakers, and so obtain the fulfilment of the promise: 'They shall be called the children of God.' We should 'walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called.' We should, as children of a king, not degrade ourselves by stooping to anything unbecoming our high birth. Is our Father in Heaven? We should set our affections on things above. Does He dwell in 'the light that no man can approach unto'? Let us 'walk as children of light.' From His lofty throne does He behold every child of His? Let us 'do always those things which are well-pleasing in His sight.'

##### 5. *Assurance.*

These filial characteristics constitute the best, the only valid evidence of sharing the filial relationship.

Confidence in God as our Father, loving reverence for Him, cheerful obedience to Him, admiring endeavours to resemble Him, prove that we are His children. St. John said : ' Let no man deceive you : he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.' 1 John iii. 7. So we may say, ' He that feels and acts as a child of God, is a child of God, even as He is Father to such children.'

It is often an anxious question, Have I the witness of the Spirit testifying to my adoption? What is meant by 'the witness of the Spirit'? St. Paul teaches : ' The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.' Rom. viii. 16. This cannot be a mere persuasion of our own minds. It is fanaticism for persons to think all is right between their souls and God, while their lives show that all is wrong. There are here two witnesses—the Holy Ghost and our own spirit, and these concur in their testimony. What do they witness? That we are children of God. But the Spirit so witnessing is 'the Spirit of adoption.' 'For ye received not the Spirit of bondage, again unto fear; but ye received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.' Rom. viii. 15, 16. Father! dear Father! the repetition of the name expressing tenderness of affection. Do we thus cry to God? Do we in penitence say, 'I will go to my Father'? Do we in submission say, 'My Father, Thy will be done!'? Do we pour out our wants and woes to our Father, and is it our desire to do His will because He is our Father? If so, we do cry, 'Abba, Father;' 'dear Father!' This is our own spirit thus crying out;

but it is inspired by the Divine Spirit who is the Spirit of adoption, producing such a temper of mind.

If therefore we do actually look up to God as His children, it is a proof that we have received the Spirit of adoption. Our own spirit, expressing sonship in its prayers and praises, responds to Him who is the Spirit of sonship, and who testifies within us that we are the children of God. He testifies not that we shall become so at some future period, but that we are so now. We need not wish to read our names written in the Lamb's book of life; if 'Abba, Father,' is written on our hearts, *that* is the seal of the Spirit testifying that 'Now are we the sons of God,' because now, actually, we think of Him, and feel and act in reference to Him as to 'Our Father.'

#### 6. *Hope.*

This assurance of present sonship, arising from the consciousness of possessing the Spirit of sonship, awakens in us those hopes of the future which the sons of God may reasonably cherish. 'If children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.' Rom. viii. 17.

Children naturally claim what is their father's. They speak without presumption of his property as their own: 'our garden,' 'our carriage,' 'our house;' and if God is our Father, there is a sure sense in which all that is His, belongs to every child of His. Every one of them, however poor in this world, is thus possessor of the universe, and may apply to himself the words of the apostle, 'All things are yours.'

‘ His are the mountains, and the valleys his,  
 And the resplendent rivers. His to enjoy  
 With a propriety that none can feel,  
 But who, with filial confidence inspired,  
 Can lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,  
 And smiling say, “ My Father made them all ! ” ’<sup>1</sup>

Therefore the heaven where his Father dwells, is his also. Jesus said: ‘ In my Father’s house are many mansions ; I go to prepare a place for you : where I am, there ye shall be also.’ John xiv. 2, 3. Let us keep this home in view as we journey towards it. Amid the toils and trials of the way, let us be encouraged by thinking of the repose, safety, purity and joy of that heaven toward which its God, our Father, is guiding us. Jesus said: ‘ I go to my Father and your Father.’ If He is ours, we also shall go to Him, and we are sure that ‘ in His presence there is fulness of joy, and at His right hand there are pleasures for evermore.’

### 7. *Prayerfulness.*

In the new Law Courts recently opened by the Queen in London, there is a grand central hall out of which, all around, are entrances to the chambers where suits of various descriptions are tried. And so, having entered into the meaning of this appeal, ‘ Our Father who art in Heaven,’ we are provided with free access in the presentation of every petition. To fix the mind on God as our Father, and in heaven, is the best remedy for wandering thoughts and depressing doubts. We may well pray that such a Name may be hallowed ; that the kingdom of such a Monarch may come ; that the will of such a Father may be done ;

<sup>1</sup> Cowper.

we may with confidence ask daily bread, and forgiveness, and succour in temptation, and deliverance from evil, at the hands of a God who has taught us to call Him 'Father.' 'This is the golden thread on which all the precious fruits are strung.'<sup>1</sup> This is the key to every door in the prayer. This is everywhere a ladder up which our petitions may climb to the highest heaven. We can always scale the skies with this one word.

These are but suggestions. This storehouse of lessons is inexhaustible. The whole prayer is condensed in the first invocation and bears its name—the 'Our Father.' This is a word easily uttered, but never fully known. 'The Pater-Noster is not, as some fancy, the easiest, the most natural of all devout utterances. It may be committed to memory quickly, but it is slowly learnt by heart.'<sup>2</sup> How deep its significance! How it enfolds all the promises! It is the very gospel itself; and means pardon, reconciliation, favour, holiness, blessedness, heaven!

What encouragement is here held out to every sinner! If God, being a Father, shows us in the light of His love how great our sin must be, His being a Father encourages us to repent and seek forgiveness. We have not to think about inducing Him to be kind and willing to receive us. He has not to be turned from being an angry Ruler into a gracious Father. He is this already. As such He is calling us home. Before we return as penitent children, He waits for us as forgiving Father. 'Before

<sup>1</sup> Saphir.

<sup>2</sup> Maurice.

you call I will answer.' However far we have wandered, if only we desire to come back, 'Thus saith the Lord, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears.' Isa. xxxviii. 5. 'Christ says, When ye pray—when ye first begin to pray—when the thought first comes to you, I am not happy, I am not at peace, I am far from home—say, at once, without waiting for fitness, without raising the question of a satisfactory repentance, without investigating your "evidences" whether of Christian faith or godly sorrow—begin by saying, "Father," begin by going straight home.'<sup>1</sup>

Return by the one and only way, Christ Jesus. Plead the merits, the command, the promise of Him who, having taught this prayer, died for our sins, and rose, and ascended to 'make intercession for the transgressors.' Do you find it difficult to return to the Father? 'If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven, give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him!' By Him the Spirit of Adoption is given, and our response, 'Abba, Father,' brings us home. Do we seem to dwell in the black shadow of His displeasure? It rests only on the region of alienation; let us leave it, by returning to God, and we are at once in the sunshine. Do we dread the thunderbolt of justice? let us come nearer to Him who holds it: He will cast it away, and hold out to us the golden sceptre of mercy. No soul of man desiring to live as a child of God need despair while this word 'Father' is inscribed on His throne. No love is so comprehensive, tender, enduring as His.

<sup>1</sup> Vaughan.

He is in heaven, and 'as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.' Ps. ciii. 11.

'There is no place where earth's sorrows  
Are so felt as up in Heaven :  
There is no place where earth's failings  
Have such kindly judgment given.  
Oh, if our love were but more simple,  
We should take Him at His word ;  
And our lives should be all sunshine,  
In the sweetness of our Lord.'

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<sup>1</sup> Faber.

## CHAPTER III.

### *THE FIRST PETITION.*

‘HALLOWED BE THY NAME.’

#### I.—THE PLACE OF THIS PETITION.

AT first sight it seems strange that we commence our supplications with a prayer for God, the All-sufficient, instead of for ourselves, the all-dependent. It would be most natural to begin by asking for the supply of some of our most pressing needs. The requirement at once suggested to us as living creatures, needing supplies to maintain animal life, is food. The first prayer would thus be, ‘Give us bread.’ If more enlightened, and conscious that we have not merely an animal but a moral nature, we feel that we are sinners, needing pardon; and, because such pardon for the soul is a more urgent need than bread for the body, our first petition would be, ‘Forgive us our trespasses.’ Yet in this model for prayer we are taught to defer all petitions for ourselves till we have prayed to God for Himself—‘Hallowed be Thy Name.’

This is totally opposed to mere human nature. Man’s worship, apart from Revelation, has been uniformly characterized by selfishness. We come to God either to thank Him for benefits we have already

received, or to implore still further benefits: food, raiment, health, safety, comfort. Like Jacob at Bethel, we are disposed to make the worship we render to God correlative with 'food to eat and raiment to put on.' This style of petition, in which self generally precedes and predominates, if it does not altogether absorb our supplications, is not only seen in the votaries of false systems, but in the majority of the prayers of professed Christians. For; though in this Divine model the petition 'Hallowed be Thy Name' comes first in order, too often the words are used only as a formal introduction to the real desire of the heart—food, pardon, deliverance. 'Our prayers are like the Parthian horsemen, who ride one way but look another; they seem to go towards God, but indeed reflect upon ourselves. And this may be the reason why many times our prayers are sent forth like the raven out of Noah's ark and never return. But when we make the glory of God the chief end of our devotion, they go forth like the dove and return to us again with an olive branch.'<sup>1</sup>

This order in our petitions is the same as that which Jesus prescribed in relation to our exertions. Matt. vi. 33. In both instructions we are taught that the glory of God should have a higher place in our prayers and efforts than our personal wellbeing; and also that this will not thereby be endangered. We are not required to desire His glory in *opposition* to our own welfare. This is a subtlety we are not called to consider, a test we are not expected to

<sup>1</sup> Farindon.

apply. The opposition is impossible. God is Love, and His highest glory is the good of His creatures ; so that to desire His glory can never be to surrender our own real welfare.

Nor are we taught to be indifferent to what is subordinate. We cannot be so if we try. The attempt would be a warfare against Nature ; and success, if not a mere sham, would be only temporary, because won by repression of God's own work in us. We do not hallow His Name if we ignore the nature He has given us. He does not ignore it Himself. 'Your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things,' and therefore we are divinely taught to pray for bread.

Nor is it to be understood that no prayer is acceptable which the heart does not present in this order. Our Father has children of every age. He listens to the infant's cry and the sufferer's moan, as well as to the full-toned voices of those who, by His Spirit, already offer worship not out of harmony with that of cherubim and seraphim before the throne. 'He heareth the ravens that cry : ' will He not listen when His hungry children say, 'Give us bread' ? He hearkens when the sick and the storm-tost call upon Him in their trouble ; will He not listen when returning prodigals can only pray, 'Forgive us our trespasses' ? But such prodigals, when at home again, grateful and glad, soon learn to say, 'Father ! hallowed be Thy Name.'

This will now be their *chief* desire. They do not cease to feel their dependence for daily bread, because at home ; they feel it more than ever. They

have not forgotten their need of pardon ; they are more deeply conscious of their unworthiness than ever. But above all this is their delight in God, who not only gives both bread and pardon, but, as they now see, has given Himself ; so that they rejoice in the Giver more than in His gifts, and seek His glory above their personal good.

‘ O Thou bounteous Giver of all good,  
Thou art, of all Thy gifts, Thyself the Crown.  
Give what Thou canst, without Thee we are poor,  
And with Thee rich, take what Thou wilt away.’<sup>1</sup>

Although at first sight the order of the petitions may seem unreasonable, yet what more natural, supposing we have truly said, ‘ Our Father which art in heaven ’ ? Let us revert to the fundamental idea, the relation between parent and child. When very young, the child first of all asks food and protection ; but as it grows in enlightened love, and in the fullest sense honours father and mother, what is the very highest desire of such a filial heart ? Not benefits to be obtained from the father, but honour to be rendered to him. Those personal wants are merged in filial longings for the good of those parents. ‘ Let their interests be promoted, their character esteemed, their reputation vindicated. My own special advantage is quite a secondary matter. I am identified with them. Their interests and glory are mine also. Let them be honoured first : then, and not apart from this, care I to ask from them any benefit to myself.’ This is the true sentiment of all who fully, in the earthly relationship, use the word ‘ father ’ !

<sup>1</sup> Cowper.

And so it must be with those whom the Spirit of adoption enables to cry, 'Abba, Father.' He is infinitely great and holy and good; and I am His child, and as such I glory in His greatness. O let that greatness be known and honoured. 'Make mention that His Name is exalted.' In calling Himself my Father, He has guaranteed to me all things, for He has given me Himself. I need not anxiously hurry to bring special petitions for myself to Him who, as Father, cares for His children. The more He is glorified, the more my best desires are gratified. Important as those desires may seem to myself, they are swallowed up in what appertains to His honour. It is that which will give me greatest confidence when I come to pray for myself. It is that which will make me willing to be denied in my personal requests, for I shall know that such denial will be for His glory, and therefore for my good. 'Father, hallowed be Thy Name.'

It may be said that such a prayer is unsuited for those who are but 'babes in Christ:' that a sinner, newly awakened, naturally and necessarily asks for pardon, and cannot therefore enter into the feelings suggested by the precedence of this petition. This is true. But are not many lessons given to a scholar which cannot be fully understood at once? Are not objects presented to the eye of the infant which a whole life of study will not enable him fully to appreciate? The first book of Euclid contains principles capable of being developed in a way which the boy cannot even conjecture; yet, up to his capacity, he can study and delight in that which,

to a mature mathematician, furnishes methods for measuring the heavens. The very words we employ in our simplest talk to children, and which are familiar to their baby lips, have meanings beneath the surface, which will dawn on them gradually with clearer and intenser light. Yet it is well, it is necessary, that those words should be used, though so imperfectly understood. Thus our Divine Teacher has given us a perfect model, though we can only imperfectly employ it. But with this high standard before us, we may always be approaching nearer towards it; not making what we now do the measure of our duty; but seeking to be increasingly conformed to the perfect model of our Lord.

And, after all, what are our most advanced attainments here, compared with those we hope for in the future? The very A B C of the Christian religion, contains mysteries at which we now can only guess. The words are familiar to our lips, but there are hidden meanings we have never imagined. We speak as children, we understand as children, we know but in part. Yet we would not be deprived of the imperfect vision because it comes so far short of the full perception of the day when 'we shall see face to face.' Even so our Lord gave His infant Church and gives each infant disciple an example to copy, by which the very youngest and feeblest may profit, but which will present to expanding knowledge and increasing holiness ever new incentives to effort, and treasures for enjoyment. The words grow to our apprehension with our own growth in grace, so that although as children we

chiefly asked for daily bread, when 'of full age' our desires go with our words when we give precedence to the petition, 'Hallowed be Thy Name.'

This precedence harmonizes with the older Revelation. As 'the first and great commandment' was to love the Lord God with all the heart, so the first and great petition is that the Name of God may be hallowed. As that commandment embraced all the rest, for 'love is the fulfilling of the law;' and he who loves God is prepared to obey His laws; so the hallowing the Name of God involves the coming of His kingdom in our hearts and the doing of His will; it involves also trust for bread, pardon, and deliverance from evil.

We are taught that these blessings are not independent of God Himself. A citizen of an earthly State cannot be secure in the enjoyment of personal wealth and safety apart from the security of the government: and that cannot be secure unless it is held in honour. And so with the government of God. It is the mark of true devotion and filial love to desire first the Divine glory: but it is also the highest prudence, though when offering such homage we are not thinking of this. Food, pardon, protection, cannot be secured to us apart from God.

Nor would these be sufficient if they could be secured: God alone can satisfy man. The world with all its vast resources was made for man; but man, with his intellectual and moral nature, was made for God, in whose image He was created. The soul is a wanderer till it finds its true home with its Father. Then, being at home, it possesses all the

resources and security of home. To hallow the Name of God, is to reverence Him as Father, and this is to possess Him who feeds, forgives, and saves. If the fountain is in honour, the streams cannot fail. If God is ours, 'all things are ours.' If we 'seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,' He who gave us this prayer, with this precedence of the petition for the Divine Name, assures us that 'all these things shall be added unto us.' Matt. vi. 33.

The place of this petition being thus so unlike what unassisted human nature would have given it, and yet a place so reasonable in relation to the revelation of God as Father, and so advantageous to ourselves, is one of the evidences of the Divine authorship of the prayer. It is not such a prayer as Paganism has ever offered, or Philosophy has ever suggested. It has internal evidence of its Divine original. It is 'The Lord's Prayer.'

## II.—THE MEANING OF THE PETITION.

By 'Name' we understand that which enables us to know an object. It may be simply a designation, such as Number One, Two, etc. It may be also, with more or less comprehensiveness, a description. The names recorded in the Bible are chiefly of the latter kind. Emphatically this is the case with the names of God. The Name by which He is revealed to us in this prayer, and which we ask may be hallowed, is '*Father*.'

God Himself is infinitely holy, and cannot be made more holy. We pray not for this, but that what

is revealed of Him may be better known, and that the Name embodying such revelation may be more revered. We add no honour to His intrinsic excellence; but we may add to the honour we cherish towards Him, and may pray that this rendering 'the honour due unto His Name' may become universal. God blesses *us* by increasing our bliss: we bless God by acknowledging perfections which are incapable of increase. 'His *benedicere* is *benefacere*. He blesseth us really, as the Giver of all blessings and of blessedness itself; and our blessing Him, is no other than the acknowledgment of this, that it is He who blesseth us, and praising Him for it. Thus He sanctifies us by His Spirit, and we sanctify His Name when we acknowledge that He is holy.'<sup>1</sup>

The meaning of the prayer is in short this, that God would so order events in His Providence, and would so influence the minds of men by His Spirit, that His Nature as revealed in His Name may be universally known and revered.

The truths contained in this name 'Father' as applied to God had been dimly revealed before the coming of Christ. When Moses said, 'I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory,' the Lord replied, 'I will proclaim the Name of the Lord before thee.' Then we read that 'the Lord proclaimed the Name of the Lord: The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.' Ex. xxxiii. 18, 19, xxxiv. 5, 6.

<sup>1</sup> Leighton.

In this Name are embodied the two attributes of righteousness and mercy: righteousness that must require obedience to a holy law and will punish sin; yet mercy to forgive all who repent of and forsake sin. So in the Name prefixed to the prayer. 'Heaven' tells of purity, law, power, purpose, to maintain righteousness: while 'Father' tells of compassion and love; mercy not only to pardon rebels, but to receive them as children.

The great object for which Christ came was, by revealing God, to save men. The chief glory of His teaching was the doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood. The knowledge and reception of this revelation by men was necessary to secure their salvation. If 'Our Father in Heaven' is the Name of God, which it was the great purpose of the Son to proclaim, no petition can be more important than the one which seeks that this Name may be understood and adored by men.

This is a prayer addressed to the Divine Being for Himself. It indeed embodies praise of the highest order; but it is here a request that God would cause His own Name to be revered, His Nature as revealed in His Name to be understood and responded to. The Name of God was proclaimed at the Creation by all the works of His hand, manifesting as they do His power, wisdom and goodness. His Name was hallowed at Sinai in the worship of the tabernacle and the temple, by the lips of prophets, but chiefly by the Advent of Christ, who, as the 'Word,' came specially to reveal and hallow the 'Name.' He said, 'I am come in

my Father's Name;' and He thus described His work, 'I have manifested Thy Name.' He was Himself 'the Image' of God; 'God manifest in the flesh.' His whole life was a portraiture of the Invisible. The better we comprehend His combined purity and gentleness, holiness and compassion, the better we understand the meaning of the Name, 'Our Father which art in Heaven.' He said, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.' Jesus is Himself the exponent and manifestation of the Name of God.

'O unexampled love,  
Love nowhere to be found, less than Divine!  
Hail, Son of God! Saviour of men! Thy Name  
Shall be the copious matter of my song  
Henceforth; and never shall my harp Thy praise  
Forget, nor from Thy Father's praise disjoin.'<sup>1</sup>

### III.—WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THIS PETITION.

#### *1. Honour to Jesus as revealing the Name of the Father.*

This necessarily results from the truth set forth in the preceding section. We are taught in the New Testament not to exalt the Name of Jesus above that of the Father; but to read the Name of Father in the light thrown on it by the Name of Jesus. Refusal to hallow the Name of Jesus, is refusal to honour Him by whom the Fatherhood of God is revealed. 'He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him.' John v. 23. We should not have known the Fatherhood in its fulness of glory if Jesus had not revealed it. 'No man hath seen God

<sup>1</sup> Milton.

at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.' John i. 18. 'God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' 2 Cor. iv. 6. If then we would hallow and make known the Name of the Father, we must hallow the Name of the Son as revealing and interpreting it.

It has often been asked what there is in a name. 'There is much, nay almost all, in names. What mystic influences does not a name send inwards, even to the centre, especially in those plastic first-times, when the whole soul is yet infantine, soft; and the invisible seed-grain will grow to be an all-over-shadowing tree!' <sup>1</sup> A name has established a throne, maintained a dynasty, roused a nation's enthusiasm, turned the tide of battle, convulsed a continent, dictated a history. A name has been the charm of a life that would otherwise have been dark and dreary; it has roused to noble exertion, it has given perseverance in toil, courage in peril, solace in sorrow, and comfort in death. The name of the lover, husband, wife, how it has thrilled human hearts! The name of the brother, sister, friend, what a talisman it has been! In those plastic first-times of childhood, what is the whole world compared with the name of 'Father,' 'Mother'! and how deep and abiding its influence through all the after-life!

And when the soul is new-born, and by faith becomes a partaker in the salvation of the Son of

<sup>1</sup> Carlyle.

God; when the eye that was blind first beholds the Redeemer, and the ear that was deaf first listens to His voice, how precious becomes the Name of Jesus when the penitent sinner first learns to invoke it! The heart is then again 'infantine;' the Name thrills to its centre, and the seed-grain ceases not to grow till it becomes a great tree which overshadows, beautifies, enriches, gladdens the whole life. 'Whatsoever' the believer does, 'in word or deed,' he does 'all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.' Col. iii. 17. With this Name on his lips he approaches the throne of grace, relying on the promise: 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name, that will I do.' John xiv. 13. In every assembly of Christians, at any time or place, it assures him of the real presence of his Lord, who said: 'Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them.' Matt. xviii. 20. If 'reproached for the Name of Christ,' 'happy' is he. 1 Peter iv. 14. In this Name he goes forth to heal the diseases and cast out the devils of sin that afflict and enslave human souls. Mark xvi. 17. This Name he publishes to the heathen abroad; with this Name he goes to the bedside of a dying sinner; this alone he utters as the symbol of salvation for prince or peasant, for philosopher or little child, because 'there is none other Name under heaven whereby we can be saved.' Acts iv. 12. It is in and by this Name that the kingdom of God will come and the will of God be done on earth as in heaven, because 'God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name, that at the Name of Jesus every

knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' Phil. ii. 9-11.

Thus the Name of the Father becomes hallowed to us by the Name of Jesus, through whom alone we know, approach, and love Him. The joy of sonship is experienced by those alone to whom the Name of Jesus is thus dear. The multitudes of believers whose hearts have thrilled while their blended voices have celebrated this Name, have ever felt that in thus 'confessing Christ as Lord' they were singing to the glory of God the Father!

'Thy mighty Name salvation is,  
And keeps my happy soul above;  
Comfort it brings and power and peace,  
And joy and everlasting love:  
To me, with Thy dear Name are given  
Pardon and holiness and heaven.'<sup>1</sup>

## 2. *Appropriate thoughts of God.*

We pray that He may be known as being all that is implied in the Name 'Our Father in Heaven:' that all false notions of Him which have lured men to wickedness or driven them to despair, may give place to the understanding of the Name which represents Him to be the righteous Ruler and the tender Father in One: that so the true Light, the Divine Revealer of God, may enlighten the world; showing all men that they may take refuge in the Fatherhood of God; inviting all men to come home to the enjoyment of His love; and in hallowing the Name of

<sup>1</sup> C. Wesley.

the one Father, to become united to each other as brethren.

### 3. *Suitable emotions towards God.*

We pray that the thoughts, feelings and conduct already shown to be implied in our invocation of Him may be actually experienced and exhibited : that as *Father* He may be trusted and loved ; that as *Heavenly* He may be worshipped and obeyed ; that as *Holy* He may be admired and imitated ; that instead of wishing His purity could be debased to suit our sinfulness, we may be lifted up into the region of that purity ; that all men may be prepared to acknowledge His kingdom and obey His will, by hallowing His Name. (See chap. ii. sec. 7.)

We pray that we ourselves who offer the petition, may be more profoundly impressed with the majesty, holiness and love of God : that instead of priding ourselves on our imperfect knowledge of Him and of His works, we may bow with reverence before His Infinite Glory ; that we may cultivate a more reverential trust, a more unquestioning obedience.

‘ Let knowledge grow from more to more,  
But more of reverence in us dwell ;  
That mind and soul, according well,  
May make one music as before,

‘ But vaster. We are fools and slight ;  
We mock Thee when we do not fear ;  
But help Thy foolish ones to bear ;  
Help Thy vain worlds to bear Thy light.’<sup>1</sup>

### 4. *Reverential use of the Name.*

This petition has sometimes been limited to a

<sup>1</sup> Tennyson.

narrow literalism. It deprecates much more than taking 'the Name of the Lord our God in vain' by profane language which should disgrace those who use it, in the estimation of all who hear it. Irreverence to this Name is not confined to vulgar swearing. Whenever we introduce the Divine Name in our speech uselessly and triflingly; when we employ it to turn a sentence or give emphasis to a statement or piquancy to an anecdote; when we make the Divine Word the subject-matter of joke, punning on solemn truths of Revelation, and quoting passages of Scripture with ludicrous adaptations to provoke mirth; thus—and even when we take this great Name on our lips in worship without any endeavour to feel the homage it demands—we violate ✓ the spirit of the prayer.

##### 5. *Confession of the Name.*

If the wicked use this Name too much, do not the people of God sometimes use it too little? When we express our joy in the possession of health, in the comforts of life, in the beauties of Nature, might we not hallow the Name by a grateful recognition of the Maker and Giver? If we find ourselves in company where the Name is dishonoured, should we not vindicate it, at whatever cost of ridicule or charge ✓ of impertinence? If we would not remain silent ✓ in case an earthly parent were spoken of with contempt, should we by silence seem to consent when the Name of our Heavenly Father and King is dishonoured?

In the sincere public profession of being dis-

ciplcs of Christ, we hallow the Name. God has a chosen family on earth of those who reverence Him as Father. They are called by the Name of His Son. They have 'come out from the world and are separate.' They are 'a chosen generation, a peculiar (purchased) people.' 'They are not of the world.' They are the 'sons of God,' and are to be 'without rebuke in the midst of an evil and adulterous generation.' They are named after their Father: 'In whom the whole family in earth and heaven is named.' Every one who really and openly joins this family helps to hallow the Name before the world.

The Church is God's great instrument for making known and hallowing His Name. Those who believe are to 'confess with their mouth the Lord Jesus.' Rom. x. 9, 10. The question is not of belonging, by any special method, to some special denomination, but of confessing Christ in any society of believers, and so becoming an avowed member of the Church Universal. They who shrink from this and ostensibly remain outside the fold, surely fail, in this respect, to hallow the Name.

In other times such confession cost liberty and life, yet was not withheld. The martyrs who, rather than cast a little salt on the pagan altar, were thrown to the lions or roasted at the stake, hallowed the Name in the presence of all who witnessed or heard of their sufferings. In our own time there have been hundreds of believers who but recently had heard the Name, who, rather than disavow it, were speared to death or thrown from the precipices. Among these martyrs of Madagascar were tender women and

mere boys and girls, who went to death singing the praises of the Name; and by so hallowing it did more than by their lives to make it known and revered. Surely none who sincerely offer this prayer should withhold a confession of Christ, whatever sacrifice it may require.

6. *Private and public worship of the Name.*

We hallow it in our own chamber when we 'pray to our Father who is in secret.' We hallow it in our families when in domestic worship we acknowledge Him as the Guardian and Sanctifier of the home. In the public worship of the Church, 'when we assemble and meet together to render thanks for the great benefits that we have received at His hands, and to set forth His most worthy praise,' we hallow it by commending it to the veneration of the world.

Too often this purpose in worship is forgotten. We go to witness a ceremony, to enjoy music, to hear a sermon. Perhaps we excuse ourselves from attendance because of the 'dull service,' the 'bad singing,' the 'poor preaching.' It is desirable that there should never be occasion for such complaints. But we should not forget that public worship is for the honour of God as well as for our own benefit; and that in seeking the former we are sure to gain the latter. Whether or not the ear may be charmed by harmony or the intellect by eloquence; even though our devotional taste may be offended, we should not forget that we go to worship; to testify to an unbelieving world that we 'believe in God the Father Almighty and in Jesus Christ His only Son our

Lord;' and that in such union with fellow-believers in acts of prayer and praise, we hallow the sacred Name.

If we bear this in mind we shall not be indifferent to the outward expression of reverence. If in the case of an invitation to the house of some one held in great honour we should take pains to be punctual, surely we shall not, by our late arrival at church, and by thus disturbing the devotion of others, let it be supposed we are less respectful towards God. Attitude is nothing in His esteem; the heart is everything. Prayer may ascend to Him as swiftly and surely when we are walking by the way, sitting at our table, lying on our bed, as when prostrate in adoration. But attitude and manner are not unimportant as regards men. If an attitude of reverence is impossible, there is no irreverence in the absence of it. But when, being possible, it is omitted, the effect may be injurious both on ourselves and others. There are few whose piety is of so exalted a nature that when they 'enter their closet and shut the door' to pray, they can feel as devout while lolling in an easy-chair, as when, like Daniel, kneeling on their knees. Such worship will be likely to degenerate into lazy rumination, and then the pretence may as well be given up. We are in danger of ceasing to hallow the Name in our hearts when we disregard all outward expressions of reverence.

And in public, the effect on others will be equally injurious. A stranger looking on when a congregation are uniting in worship, will be impressed in proportion as the sincerity of the heart is shown in

outward expression. If there are no visible signs of reverence, if the demeanour of the worshippers is such as they would not dream of showing when addressing any fellow-creature of rank above their own, or even when addressing one another; if while prayer or praise is being offered to God they are looking about, or lounging on their seats, though it is possible the heart may be devout in the sight of God, yet men cannot know it and therefore cannot be impressed, as they otherwise might be, by the honour paid to God. The Name is not, as regards them, hallowed.

Tongues in the church of Corinth, though a miraculous gift, were, as the Apostle taught, worthless, as regarded strangers, without interpretation. 'When thou shalt bless God with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?' And so, if reverence is only felt in the heart and not shown in the demeanour, strangers cannot be favourably influenced and God's Name is not hallowed in their minds. But if 'the whole church be come together into one place, and all prophesy' or teach by evident signs of reverence, 'and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest,' and, impressed by the evident earnestness of the worshippers, he may be himself led to reverence the Name, 'and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is in you of a truth.' 1 Cor. xiv. 16, 24, 25.

7. *Observance of special institutions.*

Under this head are the Sacraments. Baptism is ordained 'in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.' Whatever the view taken of the proper mode of Baptism or the proper subjects for Baptism, the ordinance itself should be honoured; nor is the superstitious and dangerous abuse of it any excuse for neglecting thus to hallow 'The Name' of the Triune God.

Still more important is this consideration in regard to the 'Lord's Supper;' because Baptism is performed only once; whereas the Supper is enjoined for our frequent observance. In this service we meet in the Name of its Founder; and 'we show forth His death till He come.' It is the most emphatic testimony to the fact that God is known to us by the Son, whom He sent to be the propitiation for our sins. Besides all the spiritual comfort and strength we may hope to receive by this means, we should observe this holy Sacrament as the most solemn of all methods of hallowing the Name.

The Sabbath day is also associated with the Name. It is emphatically 'the Lord's day.' We need not plead for Jewish interpretations of the sabbatic rest. We need not bind heavy burdens on the consciences of those to whom the gospel has brought freedom. 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.' But *it was made* for man: for man therein to hallow the Name. It is the day of the Lord's resurrection, and so of the believer's hope. From the first, His followers met on this day to

worship Him. From the first, this day has been observed as distinguished from all the other days of the week; a day of rest from usual toil, a day of united worship in the Name of the Lord. The observance of this day is one great mark of Christian profession. The world ignores it except for pleasure and denies its sacredness. Let those who offer this prayer observe this day as linked with the Name they adore; let their children, domestics, workpeople, friends, and neighbours know that without dictating to others, they, as Christians, hallow and love it; and so will they, before the world, hallow the Name it bears.

#### 8. *Subjection to the Name.*

This subject will be more fully illustrated under the third petition. Hallowing the Name involves obedience to the will of God. 'We will walk in the Name of our God.' Mic. iv. 5. It is a gross inconsistency to extol the character and authority of God while breaking His laws by wickedness of life. 'Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ depart from iniquity.' 2 Tim. ii. 19. Otherwise we practically show that we ourselves do not reverence it, and thus hinder others from doing so.

'Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the Name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you.' Rom. ii. 23, 24. On the contrary, when professed children of God obey His commandments, this is the best evidence of their own true homage, and this most tends to honour Him in the

esteem of others. Thus the Author of the prayer  
 ✓ taught those to whom it was given: 'Let your light  
 so shine before men, that they may see your good  
 works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.'  
 Matt. v. 16.

'This is the most effectual sanctifying of His  
 Name by way of declaring it holy, when His people  
 walk in holiness. Though you tell the world that He  
 is holy, they know Him not; they can neither see  
 Him nor His holiness; but when they see that there  
 are men, taken out of the same lump of polluted  
 nature with themselves, and yet, so renewed and  
 changed, that they hate the defilements of the world,  
 and do indeed live holily in the midst of a perverse  
 generation; this may convince them that there is  
 a brighter spring of holiness, where it is in fulness,  
 from whence these drops are that they perceive in  
 men: for seeing that it is not in nature, there must be  
 another principle of it, and that can be no other than  
 ✓ the holy God. Thus is His Name hallowed, and He  
 known to be holy, by the holiness of His people.'<sup>1</sup>

Real godliness has always been the most effectual  
 method of promoting reverence towards God in  
 others who witness it. Purity amidst allurements to  
 vice, temperance amidst incentives to excess, patience  
 under provocation, persevering kindness to the  
 ungrateful or hostile, blessings given in exchange for  
 curses and boons for blows, resignation amid grievous  
 sorrows, self-sacrificing labours for others, such fruits  
 of godliness have often induced the careless and even  
 the profane to reverence the Name in which such

<sup>1</sup> Leighton.

features of character have been exhibited and such works of benevolence have been done. As the Jewish rulers when incensed against Peter and John, 'beholding the man which was healed standing with them, could say nothing against it,' Acts iv. 14, so the moral cures continually wrought on the spiritually lame and blind and dead, have been the most convincing arguments in favour of the Name in which they are wrought. 'Many believed on Him when they saw the miracles which He did.'

The writer recently heard a most zealous and useful missionary relate how a notoriously wicked Chinaman had been converted by the simple message of the gospel. From being infamous, even in China, for excess in every kind of wickedness, he became a consistent Christian. After some months' instruction and oversight he went by his own desire to his native village. So marvellous was the change in his whole disposition and conduct, that many of his relatives and former acquaintances took a journey to the mission-station to investigate the cause, and the result was the conversion of nearly the whole of that village. Thus Christianity has ever propagated itself.

Thus it is in our own land. Men turned from the power of Satan to God are living evidences of the might of the Name. Unbelievers who would never grow weary of logical disputation concerning religion are silenced when they 'behold the man that was healed.' The more Christians illustrate their religion in daily life, the more powerful is their profession of the Name, and the more is it hallowed in the estimation of the world. When they are 'living

epistles of Christ, known and read of all men,' all men are induced the more to revere Him whose epistles they profess to be; and the more rapid is the advance of the day when 'in the Name of Jesus, every knee shall bow.' O that all who name this Name had more of the spirit of the Apostle who counted all things but loss that he might hallow it; saying, 'According to my earnest expectation and my hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or death. For to me to live is Christ.' Phil. i. 20. The believer's chief end in life and hope in death is to hallow this Name.

9. *Making known the Name.*

This topic will recur under the petition for the coming of the kingdom. How shall men hallow a Name of which 'they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher?' If it is the duty of all the subjects of the kingdom to promote its full coming, it is their duty to publish the Name of the King, to make known the character of 'Our Father who is in Heaven.' If we sincerely ask God to cause the Name to be hallowed, we profess that we are willing to exert ourselves in the use of means for that purpose.

It is a prayer that atheists may learn to bow before the Creator; that pagans may cast away their idols and worship the true and living God; that the superstitious may come forth from the mists of ignorance and, without terror, adore the Father; that all who are living in practical ungodliness, what-

ever their creed, may respond to His love and revere His Name. This petition as we present it constantly reminds us of His glory. The Macedonians are said to have carried round in procession, once a year, a jewelled picture of Alexander, that the beholders might be reminded of his former deeds and fame.<sup>1</sup> So in this petition let us not once a year, but every day, be reminded of the power, holiness, love, of our Father in Heaven; that we ourselves may reverence and adore, and that others, by our means, may also become illustrations of the promise that encourages the prayer; 'From the rising of the sun even to the going down of the same, my Name shall be great among the Gentiles.' Mal. i. 11.

#### IV.—REASONS FOR OFFERING THIS PETITION.

Our Lord's authority is of itself a sufficient sanction. But as this is a petition which men would not naturally make prominent in worship, it may be well to consider its reasonableness.

##### 1. *The welfare of the world.*

The character of a nation must be influenced by that of the God they worship, even more than by that of the men they honour. A people bestowing their chief admiration on warriors, will be warlike: on philanthropists, will be philanthropic. It is true that in the first instance their own disposition will prompt them to honour those who exhibit it: but this will react on themselves in encouraging such

<sup>1</sup> Watson.

disposition. This will especially be the case in connection with the highest of all honours, Divine worship. In pagan lands, both in ancient and modern times, the people have reflected the character of their gods. If cruelty, lust, revenge be worshipped, these qualities will surely be cherished in the worshippers. Let righteousness, purity, kindness, characterize the Deity, in proportion as worship is sincere they who render it will cultivate those qualities.

If therefore the only true God, revealed to us as our Father in heaven, is known as He really is and His Name hallowed, in that proportion will the world which hallows it become just and holy, merciful and good. We therefore pray for the welfare of the world when we pray that the Name may be hallowed.

2. *For the good of ourselves.*

Our own *holiness* is promoted by our honouring that of God. If the general diffusion of the knowledge of God's true character has a tendency to elevate that of the people, for the same reason, but in a still greater degree, this effect will be produced on those who themselves offer this prayer. If I habitually ask that God's Name may be hallowed, His attributes of holiness and love are constantly before me, and must influence me. 'As a man thinketh in his heart so is he.' Living in the light of God by habitually praying that His Name may be hallowed, we must ourselves reflect that light. 'We, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' 2 Cor. iii. 18.

Our *happiness* is promoted. There is no joy more pure and profound than that which is produced by the revelation of God to the soul. 'Thy Name is like ointment poured forth.' Too often we hear and utter words which describe Him, while they convey no Divine influence to the heart. But when the clouds that hid the Sun are lifted and the heavenly rays penetrate mind and soul, revealing God as our Father, so that we experience as a reality what we before knew only as a theory; when we thus see His face and hear His voice, although with the bodily eye 'we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.' 'Let them that love Thy Name be joyful in Thee.' Ps. v. 11. The more we truly offer this prayer and hallow this Name, the more we shall experience this joy.

To know God in His true nature as our Father; to understand, to feel, the meaning of His Name; to behold Him as revealed to us by the 'Word' who was from the beginning 'in the bosom of the Father;' to rejoice that He is 'ours' and thus know Him to be mine; this revelation of His Name to the soul is salvation. We may well, like the patriarch, wrestle in prayer 'till the breaking of the day' in order to obtain it. Gen. xxxii. 24-30. A holy boldness is amply justified when we ask, 'Tell me, I pray Thee, Thy Name.' We need not fear to say, 'I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me.' We are blessed indeed when this Name is revealed to the soul by the Holy Ghost. Any place, any occasion of such manifestation we may designate Peniel, 'for we have seen God face to face.' Then indeed the night-

shadows flee ; then indeed the day breaks ; and we may go on our way rejoicing as we sing :

‘ The Sun of Righteousness on me  
 Hath risen with healing in His wings ;  
 Withered my nature’s strength ; from Thee  
 My soul its life and succour brings ;  
 My help is all laid up above ;  
 Thy nature and Thy Name is Love.’<sup>1</sup>

‘ The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever.’<sup>2</sup> The glorifying and the enjoying are inseparable. It is true of the present life as of the future. The more we place God first in thought, affection, desire and aim, the more we shall enjoy Him ; and in that enjoyment of God we shall find the highest happiness for ourselves. [ No one ever found happiness in seeking it as a direct object. ] A resolution to be happy on any one day is almost sure to defeat its purpose. We are most happy when we lose sight of self in cherishing some lofty idea, in pursuing some worthy object, in promoting the honour, welfare and happiness of others. There can be no higher or more comprehensive aim in life than this of hallowing the Name of God.

Herein we have illustrious examples to imitate. The Apostles of Christ, when reviled and scourged, ‘ rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for His Name.’ They honoured it by enduring stripes received for vindicating it ; and this made suffering an honour and a joy. They were thus followers of Him who was the supreme example of the prayer He taught. Amidst deep mental anguish and the anticipation of the crushing agony, He thus prayed : ‘ What

<sup>1</sup> Wesley.

<sup>2</sup> Assembly’s Catechism.

shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy Name.' John xii. 27. This was His consolation: 'I have glorified Thee on the earth.' John xvii. 4.

Let this sublime desire possess the soul, and a thousand petty cares about ourselves will vanish. Whatever becomes of our property, health, comforts, reputation, life, only let God be glorified, let Jesus Christ be praised, and our chief desire is fulfilled. How would such a master-passion elevate the lowliest, enrich the poorest, gladden the saddest! We shall never ask the question, 'Is life worth living?' if we value life chiefly as giving opportunities to glorify God, and if at all times from the heart we pray, 'Hallowed be Thy Name.'

### 3. *For the glory of God.*

He deserves that His Name be hallowed. Earthly honours are often given to men whose great titles accentuate their own littleness. The Divine perfections infinitely transcend all our ascriptions of praise. We can never adequately 'give unto God the glory due unto His Name.' Ps. xxix. 2.

Why do we honour an earthly parent? Why speak the praises of a true friend? Why express admiration of some noble character? It is sufficient to say, 'Because they deserve it.' We do not think of rendering them any service or securing for ourselves any advantage in such spontaneous homage. It is fitting to render it. He is worthy whose name we exalt. And so will every true child

of God feel towards Him. Because He is all that the Name 'Our Father in Heaven' can suggest, we pray, 'Hallowed be Thy Name.' Let us seek the aid of the Spirit of adoption to rise to this higher level of devotion: asking God not merely to bestow on us some benefit, but to promote His own honour; praising Him not merely for gifts bestowed on ourselves, but for what He is in Himself. 'We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.'<sup>1</sup>

This will help to make us 'meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,' whose happiness and glory is to hallow His Name. Many of the prayers we offer now will be unheard then. No longer shall we need to ask bread for the mortal body or pardon for the guilty soul; but we shall never cease to desire that the Name of God may be hallowed. This is the all-comprehensive employment, the supreme consummation of bliss. Cherubim and Seraphim 'rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.' Rev. iv. 8. The noble army of Martyrs, and all who have 'gotten the victory over the beast, sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of Saints; who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy Name?' Rev. xv. 3. The innumerable hosts of the redeemed unite with 'the many angels

<sup>1</sup> *Gloria in Excelsis.*

round about the throne, saying with a loud voice, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.' Rev. v. 13.

'Hallowed be Thy Name' is earth's response to heaven. It is a faint but true echo of the Hallelujah Chorus of the skies. By it we take our part in the liturgy of the celestial temple. 'Therefore with Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious NAME; evermore praising Thee and saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory; glory be to Thee, O Lord most High.'

## CHAPTER IV.

### *THE SECOND PETITION.*

‘*THY KINGDOM COME.*’

‘**T**HREE words, weighty, instructive, monitory words; characteristic of the Prayer—characteristic also of the Author. The first lifts the thoughts upward: reminds us of the presence, of the relationship, of the Name: corrects the selfishness which spoils and drags downward the prayer even of the regenerate: bids us think of God, and lose ourselves in Him. The second reminds us of a great system, a magnificent organization, as of some vast empire of lives and souls, of ages and universes, of eternities and infinities, high above us, deep beneath us, before us and behind, in which we are nothing, yet which is everything to us, in which to have a place is glory, for which to be allowed to pray is the highest honour and the highest dignity of the creature. The third bids us exercise this honour, this dignity, at once. Here, as we kneel, as we utter the petition in church, or house, or chamber, we are doing an act which implies Divine worship, we are putting the hand to a work which is all God's, we are claiming a franchise, and a citizenship, and a priesthood, not of earth, but of heaven.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vaughan.

## I.—THE KINGDOM OF GOD SPIRITUAL.

The 'kingdom of God' in this petition refers, not to His government of the whole universe, nor to the final perfection of the kingdom in Heaven, but to a recognition by men of His authority in this world; and its meaning is further unfolded in the next petition,—'Thy will be done on earth.' The coming of the kingdom is the progressive recognition of this rule until at length all mankind shall either willingly accept it, or unwillingly submit to it. In the sphere of physical nature the kingdom has already come, has never ceased to be. It is the moral government of God for the triumph of which we pray; His rule in the region of mind, heart, and will; the establishment of His authority where it has been ignored and resisted; the final victory of God's righteousness and love over every form of wrong and hate; when He shall reign on the earth.

Once this reign was undisputed. But there were angels who 'kept not their first estate.' Yielding to their malign influence, man also revolted. But still the kingdom was not subverted. Satan disturbed but never supplanted it. He is not lord of men or the world, and is king only by usurpation. God has never ceased to be the rightful and actual Ruler, though His authority has been defied. In the rewards and penalties of physical and social laws He has given indications of His moral rule and foreshadowings of His future judgment. In every land He has had His witnesses, in every conscience His vicegerent. From eternity it was in the Divine

purpose to cure man's revolt and overrule its evil for still greater good. No sooner had sin brought ruin than the remedy was announced, and the final victory over the usurper assured. Man had now to be dealt with no longer as a loyal subject, but as a guilty rebel. Pardon was to be offered consistently with righteousness, and moral means instituted to bring man's moral nature into harmony with the Divine kingdom.

Thus the kingdom was no longer one of mere rule and obedience, but of mercy to the disobedient. In relation to fallen man it is a kingdom of Grace. A kingdom still; asserting the supremacy of God and the sanctity of law; but providing pardon for the transgressor and help for his recovery. The foundations of it were laid from the beginning. It was proclaimed when man sinned. As years rolled on, its principles and claims were more fully developed. By Enoch, Noah, Abraham; by Moses on Sinai, by the ceremonial Law, by the trumpet-notes of prophets, by the harp-songs of psalmists, the majesty of this kingdom was asserted and its triumph foretold. David prayed for it — 'Give the king Thy judgments, O God; and let the whole earth be filled with His glory.' Ps. lxxii. Isaiah exulted in beholding afar off the day when 'the government shall be upon His shoulder,' when men shall no longer 'hurt nor destroy, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.' Isa. ix. 6, xi. 9, xxii. 22.

As among heathen nations there was an expectation of the coming of some great benefactor and ruler of

men, it is no wonder that with such Divine promises, the Jews were expecting their long-predicted Messiah, and listened eagerly to the clarion blast of the Baptist, 'Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Matt. iii. 2. Thus heralded, Jesus began His own ministry by the proclamation of the kingdom, as its special Ambassador, saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel.' Mark i. 15. The kingdom long expected, portrayed on the glowing canvas of prophets, extolled by the inspired rapture of poets, prepared for by a long series of providential arrangements, was now proclaimed, and all men were summoned to submit themselves to Jehovah and His Christ.

But the Jews mistook the nature of this kingdom. They expected a warlike monarch who would deliver them from the Romans, and establish a worldly kingdom which should more than reproduce all the glories of David and Solomon. There was nothing in our Lord's teaching to encourage such an idea.

The blessedness He announced was not that of successful ambition, of the wealth, fame, power of earthly courts, but of 'the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven;' not of those who can compel compliance with human laws, but of those who are 'persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' Matt. v. 3, 10. When the disciples, ambitious of worldly dignities and eager for precedence, disputed as to which of them should be greatest in the kingdom, their Lord taught that unless such notions of greatness, suited to earthly courts, were

laid aside, they could have no part in it. 'Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.' Matt. xviii. 3. Not outward grandeur, but inward renovation was the qualification: 'Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.' John iii. 3. Instead of wealth being essential for securing it, He taught 'how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God.' Mark x. 23. No opportunity for self-indulgence was to be expected by the subjects of this kingdom, but only of costly self-sacrifice: 'It is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire.' Mark ix. 47.

The oft-repeated preface to parables explaining its nature, 'The kingdom of heaven is like unto,' was followed by no description of worldly thrones, with armies, pageantry and pomp. It was a kingdom of quiet growth from the smallest to the greatest, like a grain of mustard seed; of silent influence, like leaven in meal; of unseen yet priceless treasure, which to purchase, men might well renounce all worldly wealth. 'The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven' were illustrated by the various kinds of soil on which the good seed fell; the highest rewards of which are not for successful fighters but for attentive listeners, who 'hear the word and understand it, and bear fruit.' Matt. xiii.

Thus when the Pharisees, desiring a worldly monarchy, asked Him 'when the kingdom of God should come,' He replied, 'The kingdom of God

cometh not with observation.' It is not to be known by the outward signs of this world's kingdoms. 'Behold, the kingdom of God is within you,' or *in the midst of you.* Luke xvii. 20, 21. It had already appeared, but being spiritually discerned it was not perceived by their worldly minds. When accused by them of doing the very thing they wanted Him to do, His refusal to do which so exasperated them, He replied to Pilate, 'My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.' John xviii. 36.

Developing such instruction, the Apostles proclaimed the kingdom as one of spiritual virtues, not of outward forms; 'the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost,' Rom. xiv. 17; a kingdom to be entered not by a career of worldly triumph, but of patient suffering: 'we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.' Acts xiv. 22.

We are thus taught that the kingdom of God signifies His rule in the hearts of men, a rule based on eternal righteousness, not destroyed though assailed by man's sin, adapted by grace to his fallen state, asserted ever in man's moral nature, vindicated and its future perfect manifestation predicted by inspired prophets, proclaimed by Christ, sealed by His blood, attested by the Resurrection, ratified by the Ascension, confirmed at Pentecost, published to the world by the Apostles, illustrated in the character and conduct of every believer born again as a subject

of it. The Church is its embodied witness; the Word its authorized code; Christian fellowship and the Sacraments, its outward and visible signs; holiness its test of loyalty. This kingdom is to grow till Christ Himself shall return with power and great glory to vindicate His authority, to give victory to His faithful ones, to overwhelm incorrigible rebels, to perfect His church. Then the gospel of love shall universally prevail over every form of ignorance, superstition, wrong, and misery; and the glad chorus break forth, 'The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.' Rev. xi. 15.

## II.—ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD.

A candid consideration of Christ's own words must show that though the word Kingdom is used, the rule of God essentially differs from worldly monarchies. Disregard of this distinction has often hindered the progress of the kingdom; real strength having been exchanged for external show, inward purity for outward pomp, spiritual freedom for worldly bondage, and self-denying zeal for false security and dignified repose. Let us consider some of these differences.

### I. *The Ruler.*

In an earthly kingdom the ruler, though receiving homage on account of his office, may be selfish, proud, tyrannical, odious, contemptible. But the Head of

this kingdom is the Infinitely Holy and Good. Man's autocracy, owing to man's faults, from which even the very best are not free, is generally to be dreaded. It is the glory of this kingdom that the will of the Sovereign is supreme. Every invasion of His authority, every attempt to share it, is injurious to the subjects of it. Earthly kings reign through their delegated officers; here, God rules personally in every heart. Earthly rulers and their agents have power only where they are present; but this King, though invisible, is in every place and searches every heart. Earthly rulers can only control the conduct, but this King reigns over the thoughts, affections, and will.

## 2. *The laws.*

Earthly laws insist on obedience and exact penalty for disobedience; but God's kingdom is a rule of Grace. What kingdom of this world could proclaim pardon to all transgressors? What judge could commence an assize with offering to acquit all criminals pleading guilty? But this kingdom restores rebels to allegiance by first forgiving them, even the very ringleaders. The rulers of this world must be content with the observance of the letter of the law; but this kingdom secures a homage which scorns such limitation, arouses a loyalty which cannot be restrained in its expression, creates an enthusiasm which no mere code can satisfy. And the wonder is that by this very proclamation of pardon it secures this fervour of obedience; by this Grace it vindicates Law!

### 3. *The subjects.*

Earthly kingdoms claim all who dwell within territorial limits. A river, a chain of hills, an imaginary line, may determine the question who are the subjects of its rule. But in this kingdom all are enrolled as subjects who voluntarily submit to it, and none else. Within the same township, the same household, may dwell those who, while members of the same nationality, are on opposite sides in relation to the kingdom of heaven. And such subjects are to be sought for irrespective of geographical boundary. Their relation to earthly rule is not altered by their surrender to Christ. No prince nor republic need be jealous of this kingdom or alarmed at its progress. Monarchs lose none of their subjects by the enrolment of them in the kingdom of heaven. Evidently there cannot, in any strict sense, be such a thing as a Christian *country* or a Christian *nation*, except so far as the individuals who compose it are members of Christ. To be born in a certain parish can make no one a part of the congregation of His faithful people. To be a subject of a so-called Christian country constitutes no one a citizen of the heavenly kingdom. The rule of God extends wherever a heart yields its homage, and includes no heart not thus surrendered.

### 4. *The objects.*

Earthly kingdoms levy taxes; to maintain their regal state, to defend or extend their territory by fleets and armies, and to protect the persons and

property of their subjects. The object of the kingdom of God is to win hearts to Him as their Father in Heaven, to promote repentance and faith, and so to prepare the will of man to obey all the Divine laws; to instil a love for righteousness, to cultivate spiritual worship, and incite to the promotion of the Divine glory and preparation for the perfected kingdom on earth and in heaven. Its subjects may possess worldly wealth and pursue worldly interests; but the object for which the kingdom is founded is to set before them a higher aim and inspire them with a nobler motive.

The object of earthly kingdoms is their own safety, wealth, glory. Who ever heard of one of them making its great object the prosperity of other nations? But the kingdom of God is intended to promote the happiness of all mankind, irrespective of territory or race, by reconciling all to God and so to each other.

##### 5. *The methods.*

Earthly kingdoms are based on force. The revenue is not dependent on the option of individuals. The army is in the rear of the tax-collector. Opposition is punished by confiscation, imprisonment, or death. Attacks from without are met by armies prepared to slaughter tens of thousands rather than surrender one acre of land. Extension of domain is sought sometimes by discovery or by purchase, more frequently by violence, under pretext of civilization, commerce, science, self-defence, and even religion.

How different are the methods of this kingdom! It is upheld by spiritual agencies alone; truth enlightening the conscience, love constraining the heart. To resort to bribery of any sort, whether the vulgar bait of money or the more refined allurements of fashion, status and worldly dignities, may multiply professed adherents, but cannot extend a kingdom which scorns all allegiance but the spontaneous homage of the heart. To advocate torturing the body in order to secure the affections is a contradiction in terms. Our Lord said that if His kingdom were of this world His servants would do what every earthly government must be prepared to do for its preservation. But 'the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;' not castles or earthworks, not earthly governments or dynasties; but 'casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.' 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

Such a kingdom wages no warfare but of Truth, wields no sword but that of the Spirit, scorns all homage but that of love. Can it stoop to imitate the ambitions of earthly courts, the rivalries of worldly kings? Can it condescend to ask alms from the treasury of governments, to invoke the patronage of parliaments, by surrendering any of its heavenly prerogatives? Can it fetter its freedom by chains which crafty politicians have forged for their own purposes, and hug them because those chains are gold? Can it limit its own internal freedom by

imposing a yoke on itself which its Lord never sanctioned, crippling its activities under the plea of order, and restricting to a community or a province that which is intended for all men, of all classes and all climes? Shall it become an institution only for the rich, or only for the poor, or only for the white man, or only for the coloured, instead of realizing its Divine ideal, a kingdom for rich and poor, princes and peasants, Englishman and Hottentot, bond and free?

It is a question of great importance as regards loyalty to the Divine Head of this kingdom, and its spiritual, which are its true interests, how far help can be accepted from political governments consistently with the scriptural idea of the kingdom. May pecuniary aid be furnished from funds which rely on compulsion, to support a religion so essentially based on willinghood? How far, in return for the supposed stability and dignity of the Church, is it right to surrender the Church's liberty under its heavenly Lord, so as to suffer the State to authorize its creed, regulate its worship and appoint its ministers? On this question many sincere subjects of the kingdom hold varying views. Each may give honour to others' profession of conscientiousness, while lamenting the supposed ignorance or prejudice which causes difference of opinion. But on the great fundamental truth of the spiritual nature of the kingdom of Christ there can be no difference of opinion; all must hold it, all should proclaim it, who are loyal to the King.

6. *The extent.*

This spiritual kingdom, adapted for man irrespective of nation or condition, is destined to be universal and perpetual. Other monarchies perish—

‘Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, what are they?’

But this kingdom shall widen and strengthen till the twilight of its dawn shall have developed into the glory of the perfect day, and God shall be all and in all. We have received ‘a kingdom which cannot be moved.’ His people shall fear Him ‘as long as the sun and the moon endure, throughout all generations: His Name shall endure for ever, and men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed.’ In contemplation of the rule of this King, shall not ‘prayer be made for Him continually’? Ps. lxxii. 15. Shall not the Church without intermission send up this heaven-taught petition—‘Thy kingdom come’?

## III.—THE COMING OF THIS KINGDOM.

This rule of God in the region of mind and will, ‘comes’ in proportion as it is recognized by its individual subjects. Truly to offer this prayer is evidence that the kingdom has already come in the heart of him that utters it. But as yet the coming is imperfect. It increasingly comes as the moral nature yields to its sway. It comes to the intellect as we better understand its laws, to the conscience as we more readily approve them, to the will as we more resolutely respond to them, to the heart as we more ardently love them, to the life as we more loyally

conform to them. The King has been proclaimed in the citadel of man's soul, but in many by-ways, courts and alleys His authority is not yet supreme. 'You who have received this kingdom need to wish the coming of it in further degrees. Find you not many rebels yet unsubdued? They who search their own hearts often complain of them to their King. O such swarms of lusts, and unruly, irregular desires! When shall they all be brought into subjection?'<sup>1</sup>

The prayer naturally expands from the individual heart presenting it, to separate assemblies of such subjects, and so to the whole Church of God. We discuss not the claim of any one organization to arrogate to itself alone the title of the kingdom. The Holy Catholic Church includes all who truly 'profess and call themselves Christians;' all 'congregations of faithful men;' all who 'love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.' In this Church, as a whole and in each portion of it, we pray that God, in Christ, may rule.

It is reasonable, it is obligatory, that every Christian should be chiefly concerned for the prosperity of the particular religious society with which he is associated; because in that society is the sphere of his own personal activity. 'Charity begins at home.' He who is not in earnest for the prosperity of his own church, is not likely to be so for the Church universal. And this prosperity consists not in circumstances which to the worldly view are most impressive, such as royal patronage, legal status, numbers, wealth, influence; good music, an ornate ritual, eloquent

<sup>1</sup> Leighton.

preaching; there may be these without the kingdom.

The kingdom comes to a church when there is fidelity in the pulpit: when the aim of the preacher is to show forth not himself, but Christ; to teach, not human theories, but revealed truth; to turn men 'from darkness to light;' and to 'feed the flock of God.' It comes when there is spirituality of worship; when, whether with or without pre-composed petitions, hearts go up to God in earnest desire and grateful praise; when the sincerity of profession is proved by holiness of life, and 'they who name the Name of Christ depart from iniquity;' when, not satisfied with securing instruction and comfort for themselves, the congregation, from minister to humblest member, are zealous for the glory of Christ and the salvation of souls; when the Spirit of God is applying the truth to the hearers of it, so that they ask, 'What must I do to be saved?' and having believed in the heart, 'confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus Christ;' when the real Presence of the King is revealed at sermon and sacrament, at prayer-meeting and mission-service; and 'the secrets of the heart are made manifest,' and it is felt that 'God is in them of a truth;' when such spiritual life prompts to devoted zeal in promoting the welfare of men, in teaching the ignorant, tending the sick, succouring the needy, reclaiming the lost, 'doing good unto all men.'

The coming of the kingdom to separate congregations will necessarily promote its coming to the universal Church. A true seeking the prosperity of

the part must encourage seeking that of the whole. We shall pray for and rejoice in such signs of prosperity in every section of the one Church. When we find ourselves praying and labouring for '*Our Church*' rather than for '*Thy kingdom*,' for the prosperity of our own society as distinguished from others rather than as an integral part of the kingdom of God, we may fear that we are not praying 'after this manner' which Christ taught His disciples. It is so much easier to pray for ourselves than for Him, that we are apt to make His Name a screen for selfish ends, and when seeming to plead for His kingdom, to be chiefly seeking our own exaltation : *my system, my methods, my church*. If in battle one regiment were to seek exclusively its own renown, breaking its line of connection with the rest, and indifferent to the progress of the fight elsewhere, such valour, however great, might often prove a hindrance rather than a help to the victory of the whole army. Rivalries of churches, frivolous controversies, sectarian jealousies, must needs be reprov'd by earnest prayer for the kingdom of God.

The prosperity of the Church implies the conversion of sinners, by whose accession it is enlarged. The prayer therefore seeks the subjection of all who are aliens to it. We shall first pray that it may come to our kindred and friends ; to our neighbours and fellow-citizens ; and then to all nations. This is a prayer for the success of all Christian missions, in our own land and throughout the world. We pray that the kingdom may come to God's ancient people, who have hitherto rejected it ; and to Romanists, who have

disguised and distorted it; to the nominal Christians of Europe and America, as well as to the gross idolaters of Africa and Asia; to the hundreds of millions of Mohammedans and Buddhists, and to all of whatever religion or of none, who know not God as 'our Father,' revealed in His Son Jesus Christ.

In proportion as this spiritual rule is recognized, external and tangible benefits must result to mankind. They who thus receive the kingdom must cease to be fraudulent, unjust, revengeful, tyrannical. Laws will become more humane, rulers more righteous, the customs of society more pure, nations more pacific. Wealth will be less unequally distributed; the rich will care more for the poor, the poor will envy less the rich, and every subject of the kingdom will gladly admit that he is his brother's keeper.

While our Lord taught the minds of men He healed their bodies, and this was an emblem of the concomitant blessings of His future rule over the hearts of men. We may expect in connection with His spiritual reign that the hungry will be better fed, disease more skilfully treated, the laws of Nature better known and obeyed, education more widely spread, and all evil more controlled by Him who 'came to destroy the works of the devil.' We need not dissociate ourselves from the interests of earth while praying for the kingdom of Heaven. This will best promote those. 'The lofty expressions of contempt for the littleness of mere earthly transactions which some divines affect, are not learnt in His school, or in the schools of His prophets. The kingdom of God begins within, but is to make itself

manifest without. At last it is to penetrate our whole social existence, to mould all things according to its laws. For this we pray when we say, "Thy kingdom come." We pray for the extinction of all tyranny, whether in particular men or in multitudes; for the exposure and destruction of corruptions inward and outward; for truth in all departments of government, art, science; for the true dignity of professions; for right dealings in the commonest transactions of trade; for blessings that shall be felt in every hovel. If God had not heard this prayer going up from tens of thousands in all ages, the earth would have been a den of robbers.<sup>1</sup>

#### IV.—THE MILLENNIAL REIGN.

We have now to consider the Millennial Reign, when the kingdom shall have fully and universally come. By what means will this be accomplished? Many consider the means already in operation will suffice, only with a fuller outpouring of the Divine Spirit. Let the Church pray more earnestly for a blessing on the ordinary means of grace and proclamation of the gospel, and the kingdom will gradually extend until all shall know the Lord, 'from the least unto the greatest.' Then, after a millennium of such reign of truth, Christ will come for the final judgment, and to take His saints to His kingdom in the heavens above.

Why should we doubt the efficiency of God's revealed Word to convince, convert and sanctify the

<sup>1</sup> F. D. Maurice.

soul? Why deem the power of the Holy Ghost insufficient to render that truth effectual? Have not the Word and the Spirit triumphed over the very worst forms of infidelity, selfishness and sin? Have not the most debased and degraded been raised to sit in heavenly places; the bitterest persecutors become the most zealous apostles; the most depraved and revolting sensualists and criminals been turned from darkness to light, and made new creatures in Christ Jesus? Agencies thus effectual in a thousand instances might be equally so in a thousand millions, with increased zeal and prayer for the Holy Ghost.

Such a coming of the kingdom would involve no change of dispensation, and would not seem to disparage, as if inadequate, agencies divinely appointed. It would be in harmony with the spiritual nature of the kingdom, and involve no interference with political governments except by moral influence. It would seem to be in harmony with the words of our Lord, 'It is expedient that I go away.' Would not a personal reign appear to be a reversal of the true order, a going back to the time of the Church's childhood?

There is surely much in the past triumphs of the gospel and the present state of the Church to encourage our hopes. Within the last fifty years, into how many languages has the Bible been translated—how many missionaries have been sent forth—in how many lands already have the idols been utterly abolished—how many tens of thousands, recently sunk in lowest barbarism, revelling in vice and bloodshed, are now sitting at the feet of Jesus,

clothed and in their right mind! In our own land there were never so many faithful pastors and preachers, so many devout worshippers, so much evangelistic zeal. Christianity by its indirect influence has purified our social institutions, humanized our laws, broken the fetters of the slave, and mitigated the horrors of war. If the kingdom has made such advance during the last fifty years, what may not be hoped for during the next five hundred?

Suppose the existing Church were to become fully alive to its privileges and responsibilities; every individual claiming his share in the crusade against sin; every professed disciple being a living witness to the excellency of the kingdom; every believer acting as a member of its 'Royal Priesthood'—would the conversion of the whole world seem a hopeless dream? It is easily calculated that, limiting the present number of real Christians to only half a million, and supposing that each believer led one other soul to Christ each year, in eleven years there would be one thousand and twenty-four millions of subjects of this kingdom, exclusive of infants, and the kingdom would have come to the whole human race.

It may be said that this cannot be without the special help of the Holy Spirit, and that, excepting at Pentecost, the Spirit has never been given in such measure. But are we not encouraged to expect the help of the Spirit in answer to prayer? If the Church prayed more earnestly, would not the Spirit work more effectually? If, as some think, the actual appearing of Christ in person is needed to win the

human family to God and is to be confidently expected, though during long ages there have been no immediate signs of it, may it not be urged that an outpouring of the Holy Ghost more abundant and efficacious than any yet experienced, may equally be looked for to produce the same results? May not Christ be expected to come in the power of His Spirit no less than in the manifestation of His Person?

But there are many who are discouraged. Present instrumentalities, they admit, suffice for the salvation of multitudes in all lands, but, they ask, may we not look for something more in order to hasten the coming of the kingdom? After nearly nineteen centuries of witness-bearing, how small a part of the earth has the Church secured, even nominally, for Christ! Rejoicing in the great blessing that in late years has attended the circulation of the Scriptures and the preaching of the gospel in heathen lands, we must lament the very small proportion of converts to the hundreds of millions utterly unreached by our missionaries. But let us look at Christendom. Can we think the kingdom of God has come in France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Russia, except in individual and exceptional cases? Are not superstition on the one hand and atheism on the other in the ascendant, rather than the gospel? Have we not within our own time witnessed a series of wars between 'Christian' nations, rivalling in slaughter those of Paganism? Are not millions of men under so-called Christian governments daily being trained for mutual slaughter, and the people oppressed to provide the cost of enormous armaments, even in

times of peace? Do not frivolity and licentiousness run riot; and are not the stage and the press prostituted to the demoralization of the people? And how few and feeble are the counteracting influences!

But, looking at home, we lament that with all our Christian agencies so long in operation, a vast portion of the population never even enter a place of worship; and of those who do, the number is very small who even profess personal subjection to Christ. Is there not reason to fear that even in our own land the increase of conversions is less than that of the population, so that relatively as regards numbers, the kingdom is receding? And then again, from such professors, a large deduction must be made. Within the Church, do we see the kingdom supreme? Alas, how much looseness of doctrine, fickleness of faith, conformity to the world, inconsistency of conduct! Alas, how much ambition, pride, contention, jealousy! How often, in various ways, is God's house of prayer made a house of merchandise! How much flattery or fear of some, how much despising or patronizing of others; how much outward show or undisguised indifference, how much formal ceremonial or dead informalism! How much sectarian exclusiveness, ecclesiastical assumption, intolerant judgment and want of charity!

And if such things are to be lamented within the Church, which is the organized witness to the kingdom, can we be surprised at its slight influence on the world outside? Alas for much of the current literature—science perverted to disprove the existence

of the Creator whose works she explores; fiction degraded to stimulate the passions by exciting portraitures of vice; daily journals crowding their columns with theatrical and sporting news, while almost ignoring the work of the Christian and the philanthropist; and even periodicals designated religious and provided ostensibly for Sunday reading, needing to increase their attractiveness and sale by trashy and sensational tales, far less wholesome for the young than many standard books which would be condemned as too secular for the Lord's day.

If we inquire into the nature of popular amusements, we find few that are remunerative except those which attract by indecency of dress, immodesty of demeanour, and the representation of what is either frivolous or immoral. Parents take their children to see and hear what must corrupt and deprave. Licentiousness unblushingly parades our streets. Intemperance has its temples at every corner, numbers its votaries by hundreds of thousands, boasts a revenue of a hundred millions of pounds, and has an annual death-roll of myriads of souls. In the region of trade, of politics, of fashion, in the manners of all classes, how much there is totally opposed to the kingdom of God!

Who can examine into the condition of the multitude of the poorer classes without sadness!—the pig-sties in which many of our agricultural labourers exist, filth and crowding illustrating an evolution downward into the brute; the dull routine-toil of the factory, amid dust and heat and foul air; the dismal perilous labour of the mine; the protracted

health-sapping hours in shops and warehouses; the starving wages of the needle-woman; the teeming lodging-houses of the city, whole families being crowded into a single narrow room; the gin-palace producing poverty, and poverty seeking to relieve its wretchedness in the gin-palace and the low music-hall; and then, the multitude of the sick and poor whom no faults of their own have brought to destitution, who, notwithstanding all the efforts of benevolence, are shivering and starving and dying, unheeded; while wealth and pomp in ever-increasing ratio are stimulating luxury and licentiousness not only in the palaces of the great, but in the dwellings of the middle classes, who imitate and emulate the self-indulgence of many in higher grades;—can we see all this without lamenting how far, how very far we are from that condition of our world we are all hoping for, and how little progress we seem to be making towards it, with the means now possessed by the Church of God!

For this is in a land where, above all others, Christian agencies are in full operation. Suppose India were equally evangelized, Christian congregations being gathered in every city and every village; could we hope that the people at large would be more in subjection to the kingdom than in our own land? And if not, the Church would be there, a little sanctuary for the few rather than the kingdom for all; a witness-bearer rather than instrumentally a saviour, to the many.

With such thoughts it is not surprising that many are expecting a different and more powerful agency

than any now in operation, even the 'glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.'

Their hopes are inspired by the prophecies of Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar's image of gold, silver, brass and iron, symbolizing the 'universal' empires of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome, was cast down by the stone cut out without hands. This is to be a kingdom, in some sense similar to those it displaces—real, visible, universal. 'The stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.' This is not yet true of the Church. We are therefore still expecting the triumph of the stone which is to 'break to pieces' the remains of the last monarchy, which the 'wind will carry away like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors.' Then will the kingdom of God appear, not as now, only here and there as green hillocks in the desert, but as a 'great mountain' filling 'the whole earth.' This kingdom 'shall stand for ever.' Dan. ii.

In another vision also, the Millennial Reign as introduced by the Advent is supposed to be taught by the same prophet. His own vision of the four beasts corresponds with Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the image. The fourth beast is the fourth, or iron kingdom, and its ten horns ten governments proceeding from it. And 'behold, One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days; and there was given Him dominion, and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away.' Then 'the kingdom, and dominion, and

the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.' It is inferred that the coming of the Son of man here predicted is the cause of the triumph of the kingdom, and introduces the era of its perfect universal sway on the earth. Dan. vii.

The prophecy of Zechariah is regarded as favouring this view. The 14th chapter blows the trumpet of the Advent, 'Behold, the day of the Lord cometh.' There is to be an uprising against the Church by the hosts of the wicked, who will be destroyed by the Lord Himself, standing 'on the Mount of Olives;' for 'the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with Thee.' Then 'living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; and the Lord shall be King over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and His Name one.' Then 'every one that is left of all the nations that came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King;' and 'in that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD.' From this it is inferred that a great reaction against Christianity will be overcome by the personal Advent of Christ, whose punishment of the ungodly will be a preliminary judgment, to be followed by a long period of loyal obedience to the King, when all nations shall drink of the living waters of salvation and shall come to Jerusalem, if not to the earthly to the spiritual city, the Church; and when all earthly relationships and avocations shall be sanctified by the fear and love of God, 'Holiness' being inscribed upon them all. Zech. xiv.

If we now turn to the last and greatest of the prophets, we find a vision of apparently similar import. A warrior appeared riding on a white horse ; His eyes were as a flame of fire, and 'on His head were many crowns, and His Name was called the Word of God ; and He had on His vesture and on His thigh a Name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.' A mighty host of foes 'made war against Him' and were overcome ; and 'the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet,' and were 'cast alive into a lake of fire.'

Then an angel from heaven 'laid hold on that old serpent, the Devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years should be fulfilled. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them : and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God ; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection ; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.' At the close of this millennium, Satan will be loosed, and will make a final effort to deceive the nations and gather them together against the kingdom. Then fire from heaven will consume them, and the Judge will be seen on 'the great white throne ;' and 'the dead, small and great, will stand

before God, and be judged according to their works.' Rev. xix. xx. After this description of the triumph of the kingdom on earth, follows that of the glories of the kingdom in heaven. Rev. xxi. xxii.

From this vision of St. John it is inferred that after an antichristian reaction overcome by Christ in person, the powers of darkness will be held in restraint, and the saints then living, with the souls of many of the dead, shall reign with Christ a thousand years prior to the final judgment, and to the perfected bliss of the heavenly Jerusalem.

It is during this intervening period that the kingdom so graphically predicted by David in the 72nd Psalm will have its peaceful sway; when Christ 'shall have dominion from sea to sea' and 'all nations shall call Him blessed.'

Our Lord frequently spoke of His coming again; but almost always in immediate connection with the final judgment. 'When the Son of man shall come in His glory and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory; and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another,' etc. Matt. xxv. 31-46, xvi. 27, xxvi. 64; Mark viii. 38; Acts xvii. 31; 2 Cor. v. 10, 11; 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17; 2 Thess. i. 6-9; 2 Tim. iv. 1, 8; 1 Pet. iv. 5. Such passages seem to many readers to indicate that the judgment will be immediately consequent on the second Advent; and if so, that the millennial age must precede the Advent.

To this inference it is objected that our Lord and the Apostles spoke of His coming as immediately

near, as the first great event to be expected, which would not be the case to our apprehension, if the Millennial Reign were known to precede it. How could the Church be 'looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God;' how could it be said, 'The coming of the Lord draweth near;' how could He bid us to 'watch, lest coming suddenly He should find us sleeping,' if He were not to come till a long period of millennial glory had transpired? It is therefore inferred that our Lord spoke of the event which was the nearer and not of the one more remote; that which the Church was first to expect. And as His coming would be at once attended with judgments on the rebellious then living, and would be followed by a continued rule of righteousness, to close with the general judgment, He to whom a thousand years are as one day might appropriately speak of coming to judgment, though that judgment would only be completed at the termination of that thousand years. Thus the Apostles habitually urged the churches to be living in joyful hope of and diligent preparation for the 'glorious appearing' of Christ, as the proximate great event in the history of the Church.

From such statements of Scripture it has been inferred that while existing agencies are to be diligently employed to spread the truth, we are not to be discouraged if the result should illustrate the Lord's words, 'This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world *for a witness unto all nations*, and then shall the end come;' rather than for the conversion of all nations. Matt. xxiv. 14. If

such universal conversion is the hope that chiefly animates missionary enterprise, a hope so long deferred may make the heart sick and discourage exertion ; whereas no difficulty and no apparent want of success are likely to lessen the labours of those who are hoping that speedily, even in our own day, Christ Himself may come to establish His kingdom throughout the world.

It is considered by advocates of this theory that no passage of Scripture either in the Old or New Testament represents that by the preaching of the gospel, prior to the personal Advent of our Lord, will all mankind be converted. The promise to give to the King 'upon the holy hill of Zion,' the 'heathen for His inheritance,' is immediately followed by the statement, 'Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron ;' intimating that such possession of 'the uttermost parts of the earth' will be that of triumphant judgment on His foes. Ps. ii. 8, 9. Jehovah will make the enemies of Christ 'His footstool,' not necessarily by their willing submission, but by their final punishment ; for 'He shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath.' Ps. cx. 1, 5.

Isaiah, when beginning to unfold his prophetic roll, gives us glimpses of the triumph of the kingdom, but intimates that when the Lord comes to establish it, idolatry will still prevail. The land will be 'full of idols ;' multitudes will be found who 'worship the work of their own hands, which their own fingers have made.' They will 'hide in the dust for fear of the Lord and for the glory of His majesty.' Then 'the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the

Lord alone shall be exalted in that day; and the idols He shall utterly abolish.' We are not therefore to anticipate the abolition of idolatry prior to the Advent, but as its result. Isa. ii.

The same prophet depicts terrible judgments as preceding the millennial reign. The deliverance of the Church is to follow the destruction of its foes. The arm of the King brings 'salvation unto Him, and His righteousness sustains Him.' But in what manner? The prophet adds, 'For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon His head; and He put on the garments of *vengeance*. He will repay *fury* to His adversaries.' As the result of such judgments the kingdom will come, rather than as the result of the universal reception of the gospel. 'So shall they fear the Name of the Lord from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun.' Then 'the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord.' Isa. lix. 16-20.

The following chapter is generally regarded as a glowing description of the millennial reign:—'Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.' Gentiles and kings come from far to behold the brightness of the uprising of the Church, which shall then be made 'an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.' 'Violence shall no more be heard in the land.' Surpassing all radiance of the sun and the moon, shall be the glory of the Divine Presence, when the promise is realized, 'The Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.' Isa. lx. It is

observable that this graphic picture of the millennial kingdom does not precede but follow the description of the return of the King, whose coming is associated with judgments on men then living; 'for the nation and kingdom that will not serve Thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.' Isa. lx. 12.

In a subsequent chapter the millennial kingdom is again described. In the new Jerusalem the voice of weeping will not be heard; the buds of youth will not be nipped, but will develop into beautiful maturity; 'the child shall die an hundred years old;' and no old man shall go 'thence 'that hath not filled his days;' 'the wolf and the lamb shall feed together;' and none 'shall hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.' Isa. lxxv. 20-25. But this condition of things in 'the new heavens and the new earth' is represented as following the fulfilment of the threatening against the enemies of the King—'I will number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter; behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall howl for vexation of spirit.' Isa. lxxv. 12, 14, 17.

Again, in the closing chapter, we find the same connection of judgment and triumph. 'For behold, the Lord will come with fire, to render His anger with fury; for by fire and by His sword will the Lord plead with all flesh.' It is after this that in the dispensation of the new heavens and the new earth, 'all flesh shall come to worship before me, saith the Lord.' Isa. lxxvi. 15-24.

It is considered that this view is sustained by the language of Zechariah, who says, 'The Lord shall go forth and fight against those nations;' after which

'every one that is left of all nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts.' Zech. xiv. 3, 16. This idea would seem to be still more emphatically expressed by St. Paul when, in comforting the persecuted believers in Thessalonica, he cheered them by the hope of rest after trouble, in that day 'when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.' 'Then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of His mouth, and bring to naught by the manifestation of His coming.' (R. V.) 1 Thess. i. 7-10, ii. 8. See also Rev. vi. 9-17, xi. 15-18, xix. 11-21, xx. 1-6.

Christ compared His kingdom to a man who sowed good seed, but the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat. Both grow together until the harvest. However widely the gospel may spread, its success for a season will only be partial. There will be the wicked intermingled with the righteous. But at 'the end of the world, the Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.' Matt. xiii. 24-43.

Our Lord predicted that 'all the tribes of the earth

shall mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.' Matt. xxiv. 30. This does not indicate a state of universal submission to the kingdom. This wide prevalence of sin at the time of our Lord's appearing would seem to be sustained by the description of that event by St. John in 'the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass;' 'Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him.' Rev. i. 7. If this relates to Christ's final coming, those 'kindreds of the earth' will not be friends who 'love His appearing,' but foes dreading it.

The Transfiguration has been regarded as symbolical of the second Advent. The division of the chapters in St. Matthew's Gospel renders less noticeable the close connection between our Lord's promise that some of His disciples should see the coming of the kingdom and the narrative of the Transfiguration. The words, 'Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom,' are followed by the statement, 'And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John,' etc. Matt. xvi. 28, xvii. 1. These three were the 'some standing here' who were to see 'the Son of man coming in His kingdom.' The Transfiguration was a typical vision of the great event. Christ appeared in glory attended by Moses and Elijah representing the glorified saints, who will accompany their Lord in the clouds of heaven. The

three disciples represented the Church on earth meeting the Lord in the air, and sharing His triumph with the risen saints. Peter, James and John did see in a vision the coming of the kingdom.

St. Peter refers to this in his Second Epistle: 'We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of His majesty.' Alford says: 'The POWER (*viz.* that conferred on Him by the Father at His glorification, of which the following scene testified; in the strength of which He will come to judge the world) and COMING (*i.e.* as ever, second and glorious coming: not, as Erasmus and many others, His first coming).' This vision which St. Peter saw, was confirmed by the 'more sure word of prophecy,' and pointed forward to the time when the 'day' should 'dawn;' 'the day of the Lord' described in the third chapter, 'when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise;' to the coming of which day believers should be 'looking for and hastening,' in hope of 'the new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.' But this 'coming of the day of God' which believers are 'looking for,' is represented as connected with great judgments on the wicked: 'the heavens and the earth which are now, are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.' 2 Pet. i. 16-21, iii. 7-14.

Although it is not essential to this theory that there should be any vision of the Lord at one time or within the course of one day, by all mankind at once; yet many persons do thus interpret the prediction,

‘Every eye shall see Him.’ All will know, friends and foes, that the King has come to perfect His kingdom, gladden His loyal subjects, and execute judgment on hardened rebels.

Such a vision of Christ has been objected to on the ground of physical impossibility. But it has been suggested in reply, that as the sun is seen every twenty-four hours by all the inhabitants of the earth, the vision of Christ as He approaches to establish His kingdom may be, in some way, obvious to all. ‘Is anything too hard for the Lord?’ Then His Advent having been witnessed, His subsequent appearances in all parts of the world might be ‘at sundry times and in divers manners;’ analogous to the appearances of His risen body to the disciples prior to His Ascension.

The King will be attended by angelic hosts as His ministers. ‘The Son of man will come in His glory with all the holy angels with Him.’ Matt. xxv. 31. The souls of the martyrs and of those who ‘had not worshipped the beast, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands,’ shall ‘live and reign with Christ a thousand years. This is the first resurrection.’ Rev. xx. 4, 5. They, as ‘priests of God and of Christ,’ together with the angels of light, will drive away the spirits of darkness who have so long influenced men for evil; ‘that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan,’ will be ‘bound a thousand years;’ Rev. xx. 2; and hardened rebels, still refusing to repent, will be judged and sent to their own place. Rev. xx. 15.

Then will commence that glorious era of which St.

Peter spoke, when filled with the Holy Ghost at the Pentecost: 'Repent, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of His holy prophets which have been since the world began.' Acts iii. 19-21 (R. V.). Then shall the saints share in the government of the kingdom, according to the words of St. Paul, 'Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the earth?' 1 Cor. vi. 2; and of St. John, 'They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years;' Rev. xx. 4; and of 'the Son of God, who hath His eyes like a flame of fire,' 'He that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations.' Rev. ii. 26.

As during the Theocracy, Jehovah was visibly present in the temple by cloud and Shekinah, so Christ will be present in Jerusalem; not necessarily in the Syrian city, but in His Church; not subject to material laws, but as His resurrection-body appeared to the disciples unexpectedly in various places, so His whole Church shall know that He dwells among them. Theoretic infidelity will be no longer possible. The only question will be, not 'Is Christ the King?' but, 'Shall I submit to His rule?' The Jews will recognize their long-rejected King, who will now 'reign on the throne of His father David.' Their conversion will bring in the fulness of the Gentiles. Antichrist will be dethroned and the spell of the false

prophet broken. All the people who sit in darkness will see the great light. The Church, animated by the presence of the King, and filled with the Spirit, will then literally 'go unto all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,' until 'they shall not teach every man his neighbour, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know Him, from the least unto the greatest.' Heb. viii. 11.

To this theory of the premillennial Advent of our Lord, it is objected that conversion by external vision is inferior to that produced by internal perception of the truth, even as Christ said, 'Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.' But Saul of Tarsus was converted by the vision of Christ, and his subsequent career did not suggest any inferiority in the method of his spiritual birth. Surely the expectation of a personal reign of Christ on the earth will not necessarily tend to render those who share it less spiritual in mind than those who have no such expectation, inasmuch as all Christians are looking forward to the personal reign of Christ in heaven, and to the beholding Him 'face to face' as the consummation of their purity and bliss.

In support of the objection that the conversion of the world by a personal revelation of Christ would be a retrogression instead of an advance in methods of operation, it has been urged that 'God will never return from the building to the scaffolding, from the winged insect to the creeping caterpillar. Neither are we to expect a future dispensation of salvation by sight, in which the Saviour will subdue unbelievers by that visible sign from heaven which He always

refused because it was contrary to His method of dealing with souls.'<sup>1</sup>

To this it may be replied that our Lord refused the sign from heaven to Pharisees and Sadducees who asked for it, not sincerely, but 'tempting Him.' Matt. xvi. 1. Yet even to these He predicted 'the sign of the prophet Jonas;' and fulfilled it when He rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven in the sight of His disciples. This manifestation gave new vigour to their faith; it caused a resurrection of their own spiritual life; it was the mighty truth with which they went forth on their gospel mission to the world. The sign, *σημείον*, which the Pharisees asked and were denied, was distinctly promised to be given at the coming of the Son of man: 'Then shall appear the sign, *σημείον*, of the Son of man in heaven.' Matt. xxiv. 30. Inasmuch as the sign from heaven on Sinai heralded the Mosaic dispensation, and the sign from heaven in the Resurrection and Ascension prefaced the publication of the gospel to the world, the sign of the visible Advent of Christ to introduce the millennial reign would not be a 'retrogression,' but an advance; not a new method, but a further development of the old.

Dr. David Brown, in his elaborate argument against premillenarianism, maintains that 'when Christ comes, the Church will be absolutely and numerically complete;' that 'the Bible makes no provision for the bringing in of any after the second coming;'<sup>2</sup> that the kingdom of Christ is the kingdom of grace, already

<sup>1</sup> Monsell, *The Religion of Redemption*.

<sup>2</sup> *Christ's Second Coming*.

in existence; and that it will continue unchanged till the final judgment; and that at the second coming 'the whole Church will be made alive at once, the dead being raised and the living changed; and at the same time all shall stand up in a resurrection state,' and 'the whole human race be tried together for eternity.'

In support of these views, he says that 'at Christ's coming all saving of souls is at an end,' because the predictions of His coming, which are the chief motives urged for watchfulness, 'would cease to have force after He had come.' It is replied that these are not the only or chief motives for faith and holiness; and that as with the predictions already accomplished, so these, when fulfilled, will remain as illustrations of Divine prescience and themes of praise. Dr. Brown says that Baptism and the Lord's Supper must cease at the Advent, and that 'if there is to be a millennium *after that*, it cannot be an era of Christianity, for the whole Christian furniture, and with it all the Christianity that has hitherto obtained, has been withdrawn from the earth.' But can there be no 'Christianity' apart from an ordinance which only ceases because Christ, whose spiritual presence it symbolizes 'till He come,' is actually present on the earth? Dr. Brown says, 'The grace of which the Sacraments are but the symbols and exponents has retired from the field, having accomplished all its objects;' the grace being the blessed hope which is now a reality. But surely the grace is more than this hope, and consists in the love of God shed abroad in the heart, of which the Holy Spirit will never cease to be the Fountain.

In reply to his statement, that as the Spirit and the Word of God are the only present agencies for converting sinners and perfecting saints, these alone must be expected for securing the glory of the latter day, it may be said that the Spirit and the Word existed in the Old Testament dispensation, yet the fuller manifestation of both was accompanied by the outward signs of the first Advent, and may also be by those of the second. And the Apostles, when they sought help to speak the word, asked for outward signs, saying, 'Grant unto Thy servants that with all boldness they may speak Thy word, by stretching forth Thy hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the Name of Thy holy child Jesus.' And though for a time these signs have been discontinued, there is no evidence that they will never be renewed. If 'majestic steps in Providence, startling men from their stupid slumbers, aweing their spirits and constraining their attention,' if such aid may supplement the Word and the Spirit, why not the aid of 'supernatural signs'?

It has been said that 'the literalism insisted on by millenarians is a false and impossible system of interpretation.' To this it is replied, that although some millenarians carry too far the system of literal interpretation, this is not the case with all; and that the theory of the premillennial Advent does not depend on those objectionable interpretations. We are reminded that the prophecies respecting the first Advent were fulfilled literally, although such fulfilment had seemed impossible. The Jewish scribes could not comprehend how the glorious Messiah could

come to Jerusalem riding on an ass, how His garments should be divided by lot, how He should 'make His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death;' yet these and other predictions, the literal interpretation of which would have been derided previous to the event, were literally accomplished. Why, then, should all predictions respecting the second Advent be interpreted spiritually, because their literal fulfilment is attended with difficulties which we cannot as yet explain?

It has been objected that 'millenarianism is inconsistent with the scriptural doctrine of the nature and growth of Christ's kingdom;' that it implies failure in the Divine methods of working hitherto; that 'its practical influence is evil, by discouraging present efforts to bring it about,' dissociating the triumph of Christianity from efforts to advance it, that triumph coming 'by occasion of the persistence of sin, not of the persistence and prevailing power of God's saints;' and that it is 'inconsistent with the doctrine of the Bible as to the time, object, and concomitants of Christ's second coming.'<sup>1</sup>

To this it is replied that all are agreed that the kingdom now grows from heart to heart by purely spiritual means; but it is nowhere in the Bible declared that by these means alone, unaided by external influences, the kingdom is to become universal. The theory in question implies no failure dishonouring to God. For nearly nineteen hundred years the gospel has been preached, yet the vast majority of those who have known something of it

<sup>1</sup> Harris, *Kingdom of Christ on Earth*.

have rejected it. As far as they are concerned there has been 'failure in the Divine methods of working,' not because of imperfection in the methods, but because of the wickedness of men. And as this general rejection of the message until the coming of our Lord has been fully recognized by the Word of God, there has been no failure on His part, but rather a proof, in patent facts, that the history of the reception of the gospel hitherto, agrees with the predictions of Scripture.

In reply to the objection that the premillenarian view discourages present efforts, it is urged that greater discouragement would arise from the expectation that the universal coming of the kingdom is to be brought about by present agencies alone; whereas the expectation of the personal Advent of our Lord animates us with the certainty of a triumph which may speedily be accomplished; and prompts to diligence in service, 'lest coming suddenly He find us sleeping.' Nor are present methods to be superseded; they will only be supplemented. The word of God will still be circulated, the gospel still be preached, the Church still bear witness; but this will be accompanied with visible tokens of the presence of the King and more abundant outpourings of the Holy Spirit.

It is to the possible nearness of this personal coming of Christ to perfect His kingdom, and introduce a millennium of righteousness and peace, that many are looking. They do not consider it to be so distant that the golden age, so long delayed, so slowly advancing, must first intervene. They hope

that very soon the King will appear who shall 'judge the people with righteousness, and break in pieces the oppressor, and save the souls of the needy; whose Name shall endure for ever, and all nations shall call Him blessed.' Ps. lxxii. Before the enjoyment of the kingdom in heaven to which the saints hope to go, the kingdom of God on earth will come. 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.' Rev. xxi. 3.

Each theory has its difficulties. There are texts which are not easily explained in harmony with either view. But, whether by the gradual influence of the truth applied by the Holy Spirit in the use of ordinary means to individual souls; or whether by some visible manifestation of Christ, we are taught that some day, indefinitely remote, or near at hand, the kingdom of God will come to this earth; and that God will 'take to Himself His great power and reign.'

It would seem that Milton shared this hope when, impatient of the level plains of prose, he soared aloft in such rhapsodies as when he pictured his country casting away from her the rags of vice, and pressing on in happy emulation 'to be found the soberest, wisest, and most Christian people at that day, when Thou, the shortly-expected King, shalt open the clouds to judge the several kingdoms of the world, and distributing national honours and rewards to religious and just commonwealths, shalt put an end to all earthly tyrannies, proclaiming Thy universal

and mild monarchy through heaven and earth ; where they, undoubtedly, that by their labours, counsels, and prayers, have been earnest for the common good of religion and their country, shall receive above the inferior orders of the blessed, the regal addition of principalities and thrones into their glorious titles, and in supereminence of beatific vision, progressing the dateless and irrevoluble circle of eternity, shall clasp inseparable hands with joy and bliss, in overmeasure for ever.'<sup>1</sup>

Poetry, when not apprehending the higher and spiritual blessings which the coming of the kingdom will bring, has delighted to extol that Golden Age when—

‘All crimes shall cease, and ancient Fraud shall fail ;  
Returning Justice lift aloft her scale ;  
Peace o’er the world her olive wand extend,  
And white-robed Innocence from heaven descend.’<sup>2</sup>

But that of which philosophers and poets have dreamed and sung, is to be realized only by the coming of Christ. It is the acceptance of His salvation, the recognition of His authority, the prevalence of His kingdom, it is this which will secure all other blessings to mankind. The believer, praying, working, waiting, expecting, sees in the glad visions of a hope that maketh not ashamed the promised day when—

‘One song employs all nations ; and all cry,  
“Worthy the Lamb, for He was slain for us !”  
The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks  
Shout to each other, and the mountain-tops  
From distant mountains catch the flying joy ;  
Till, nation after nation taught the strain,  
Earth rolls the rapturous Hosannah round.

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<sup>1</sup> *Of Reformation in England.*

<sup>2</sup> Pope.

Bright as a sun the sacred city shines ;  
 All kingdoms and all princes of the earth  
 Flock to that light. From every clime they come  
 To see thy beauty and to share thy joy,  
 O Sion ! an assembly such as earth  
 Saw never, such as Heaven stoops down to see.  
 Come then, and, added to thy many crowns,  
 Receive yet one, the crown of all the earth ;  
 Thy word fulfilled, the conquest of a world !'<sup>1</sup>

Whatever views may be entertained respecting the method of its development, what Christian does not long for such a millennium of blessedness to dawn on this darkened and desolated world ! O for the time when the Right shall reign, and not mere Might ! when distinctions of station, endowment, nationality, shall not be the destruction of brotherhood ; when men shall everywhere show that they are children of one Father ; trusting, not fearing one another, and each seeking his own good only in alliance with that of his neighbour : when fortresses and fleets shall no longer frown defiance ; when boundaries of mountains, rivers and oceans shall no longer separate the human family into antagonistic rivalries ; when swords shall indeed 'be turned into ploughshares and spears into pruning-hooks ;' when thrones shall never be symbols of pride, objects of fear and prizes of ambition ; when laws and rulers shall no more be needed to resist violence or punish wrong, but only to guide and assist in common action for the common weal. O for the time when holy love shall no longer be debased to brutish lust, nor strength of body or brain be used to injure or distress ; when Science shall pour fresh light on Religion, and every new

<sup>1</sup> Cowper.

discovery evoke new hallelujahs to the Creator; when the pen and the press shall never be employed to assail the truth of God or corrupt the minds of men; when speech shall never utter what is false, impure, or unkind; when music shall never lend its charms to licentiousness, or stir the passions of war, and painting and sculpture shall portray only what is beautiful and pure; when commerce in all its transactions shall be honest and beneficent; when labour shall never be oppressive and irksome, but give joy to the producer as well as to the purchaser; when amusement shall be only an exchange of pleasure, recreating for fresh toil, and never stooping to give delight by stimulants that enervate the body or corrupt the mind.

O for the time when in the Church there shall be no more sectarian rivalries, bitter controversies, worldly expedients, mammon-worship, ambitious intrigues, popularity-courting, secret envyings, personal jealousies; when, though all may never think and worship exactly alike, varieties of method shall only the more illustrate unity and stimulate love; when all will rejoice in each other's fellowship, promote one another's usefulness, and fulfil the Saviour's prayer 'that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.' John xvii. 22, 23. How blessed the day, Lord hasten it! when there shall no longer be the Church and the world, but when the Church will have absorbed the world, and when the world will be the Church, and God be all and in all.

Then at length shall the glowing prophecy of

Isaiah become an accomplished fact: 'The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.'

Isa. xi. 1-9.

'The corner of yon stall, where a poor shoemaker has prayed in secret, or the garret which has witnessed the peace in believing of a dying needlewoman, have become holy places, through the presence of God; but what a temple sacred to repentance, reconciliation and the mutual joy of the Father and the child, will this earth become, when its whole surface shall have been consecrated by such remembrances! Happy the age that saw and heard the Redeemer; but happier still the generation that will be wholly placed under this regenerating influence. Now, O earth! thou mayest resume the place thou hadst lost in the concerts of the universe. Thou hast borne our revolts and our sorrows through the depths of measureless space; thou mayest now advance all adorned through the still heavens, bearing the pennon of a Redeemer.'<sup>1</sup>

#### V.—PRAYER FOR THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM.

##### 1. *Not unnecessary.*

It may be objected that as this is a prayer which specially concerns God's own glory it is unnecessary; since, if He desires the coming of His kingdom

<sup>1</sup> Monsell.

and alone has power to secure it, He will establish it without our solicitation. In reply, we refer to the introductory chapter. Prayer must be either for what is in accordance with the Divine Will, or in opposition to it. It would be injurious, if it were possible, to obtain the latter. All acceptable prayer must be for what is the Will of God. Such prayer benefits ourselves by blending our will with His; and such prayer promotes obedience to His Will, because, as He rules in a universe of mind, the fulfilment of His purposes involves our accord; and thus prayer, in harmony with His Will, helps on its accomplishment. We are thus 'fellow-workers with God.'

2. *What the prayer includes.*

In this prayer we ask the King to control the powers of Nature and events in Providence to promote His kingdom. He rules supreme, and everything may become a minister in His service. 'The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.' He who bade the waters of the Red Sea overthrow Pharaoh and his hosts, can still by natural agencies defend His people from their foes. He who gave Israel streams from the rock and manna from heaven, can interpose to preserve His Church in the wilderness which still separates us from the land of promise.

If Satan, by malignant unseen agency, may corrupt the Church within, or stir up enemies from without, much more may the Divine Head of the Church maintain its internal purity and strength, so as to enable it to overcome all assaults of its foes; or His angel may again smite the hosts of Sennacherib.

We pray that whatever is intended by the foe for harm may be overruled for good; even as persecution has promoted the purity of the Church and increased its power. We pray that the advance of science, the diffusion of knowledge, the discoveries of travellers, may all promote this kingdom, and that even the struggles of ambition and the wars of nations may be so overruled that out of the devil's worst designs and seeming successes, the final victory of Christ may be brought near. We pray especially for heavenly influences in connection with increased zeal in publishing the truth 'until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.' The disciples, to whom the promise of the kingdom was so emphatically made, were commanded not only to proclaim it but to expect the promise of the Spirit, and we know that while they prayed the Holy Ghost was given, and they saw 'the kingdom of God come with power.'

We also pray for that coming of the Lord Jesus for which His Church has so long been waiting; for the fulfilment of ancient prophecy, for the realization of divinely sanctioned hopes. We hear Him say, 'I come quickly;' and we respond, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus.'

### 3. *A test of character.*

If we are truly regenerate, we do not simply submit to the kingdom of God because we cannot help it, but we welcome it because we love it. We have a deep conviction that He has a right to reign and that

it will be for His glory in the supreme happiness of mankind that His kingdom should fully come.

If we truly say 'Our Father,' we, as His children, naturally desire the coming of His kingdom, because, being 'heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ,' it is our own. Aliens may consent to the rule of a foreign prince, and natives of a land may submit to their own liege lord; but the children of the king are identified with himself, share his honour, and feel his cause to be their own. And so in relation to the kingdom of God. Some persons yield to His will as inevitable; others accept it merely as just and beneficent; they who share the adoption of sons, long for His kingdom, embrace it, rejoice in it, as the kingdom of their Father.

#### 4. *Personal concurrence.*

All prayer is practical, for, if sincere, it is accompanied by corresponding efforts. There are three stages in the coming of the kingdom, involving three several kinds of exertion. It comes to our own soul experimentally, to the world by the diffusion of the Truth, and in the final Advent.

(1.) The prayer therefore involves efforts to promote the kingdom in our own hearts and lives, by diligent study of its laws, by scrupulous observance of its precepts, by loyal response to its claims. 'In Worship, we give our homage to God; in the Word we come to learn His laws; in the Sacraments we renew our oath of allegiance; in Alms and Charity, we pay Him tribute; in Prayer, we ask His leave, acknowledging His dominion; and Praise, it is our

rent to the great Lord from whom we hold all things.’<sup>1</sup>

The kingdom we desire is all-comprehensive. It is not this or that special organization, but the universal rule of God, and our corresponding duty of entire subjection. We cannot truly pray for it to come unless we open the door of every part of our nature to its entrance, and desire and resolve that its principles shall permeate every thought, motive and action. ‘A good Christian is like a pair of compasses, one foot of the compass stands upon the centre, the other part of it goes round the circle.’<sup>2</sup> The circle is the kingdom, and the heart of the believer describes the whole and not a mere segment of it. We should give ‘*all* diligence,’ and ‘add to our faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity;’ thus shall we secure a portion in this rule of God, ‘For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.’ 2 Pet. i. 5-11. It is the life of its subjects which best recommends the kingdom to others, as it also best hallows the Name.

When we ‘shine as lights in the world,’ with a flame clear, strong, constant, we attract others to the safe harbour of the kingdom. When we are ‘living epistles of Christ, known and read of all men,’ we become emissaries, recommending His rule wherever we go. Loyal tribute to the King on the part of all who breathe this prayer will promote the kingdom in the minds of strangers and even foes, who, ‘seeing

<sup>1</sup> Manton.

<sup>2</sup> Watson.

our good works, will glorify our Father who is in heaven.'

Alas, how many utter this petition without any intention or even desire to submit to the rule of God! What multitudes salute the Monarch with formal gestures while plotting against His throne! How many, while repeating with their lips 'Thy kingdom come,' resemble in their hearts the unfaithful servants in the parable, who said, 'We will not have this man to reign over us'! To be self-pleasers instead of God-pleasers; to be seeking our own supposed welfare first, and the kingdom of God afterwards, which is near to not seeking it at all, this is self-exile. We are banished by our own act. We are outlawed by refusing to come within the law; and our own petition, 'Thy kingdom come,' is our self-pronounced sentence of doom.

(2.) The prayer also prompts to *missionary zeal*. It is hypocrisy to pray for the coming of the kingdom if we are not helping to promote it among our fellow-men. To be content with the saving of our own soul without caring and labouring for the coming of the kingdom in the souls of others, shows how little that kingdom has come to ourselves. There are various offices in the Church to which all are not called, but there is some work in the Church in which all should engage. 'He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;' but He gave all who receive the kingdom a commission to make it known. Every man, until all shall know Him, is to 'say to his neighbour, Know thou the Lord.' If 'the Spirit and

the Bride say, Come;’ that same Spirit adds, ‘And let him that heareth say, Come.’ Rev. xxii. 17.

This prayer then should prompt those who offer it to encourage efforts at home and abroad for making known the kingdom; by evangelizing the multitudes who are still outside the Church; by circulating the Scriptures and religious literature; by Sunday School instruction; and by promoting all benevolent and philanthropic agencies for rescuing the fallen, reclaiming the drunkard, saving the lost. Sincerity in offering this petition involves efforts, whether personal or pecuniary, to send the gospel through the world. The command of the King is clear—‘Preach the gospel to every creature.’ Christianity is necessarily aggressive. It is intended for the world, and its adherents are bound to propagate it. ‘How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they are sent?’ The prayer, in relation to our present duties, means, let more missionaries be sent. Who is willing to go? Who will spare his son? Who will deny himself to provide the cost? The prayer asks for fresh openings for service at home. Who is willing to enter the open door; to give up time and ease; to spare some personal comfort, and not merely give a part of his superfluity?

Thus to pray that the kingdom may come involves self-sacrifice. ‘There is some loss to the flesh, if we will hear it, in this desire, in each kind. The erecting of Christ’s kingdom is purity in His Church, and thrusts out the outward pomp and magnificence

that naturally we like so well. His kingdom of Grace cannot be in the soul without the forsaking of all our accustomed and pleasing ways of sin. But they who know the excellency of His kingdom, are well content to forego all that suits not with it. Thus, that His kingdom of glory may come, the world must be burnt up; and that we particularly may come to it, we must pass through death. But it is worth all.'<sup>1</sup> Again and again the King repeated the emphatic word: 'Except a man take up his cross and deny himself, he cannot be my disciple.' And except we are willing to make sacrifices to promote it, we cannot consistently pray: 'Thy kingdom come.'

Our chief inquiry should not be, 'When will Christ come?' but, 'What is my present duty?' Excessive desire to know 'the times and seasons' was emphatically reproved by our Lord just before His ascension. Naturally excited by the marvels of the resurrection, the disciples asked of Him, saying, 'Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' He did not gratify their curiosity, but He reminded them of their duty. Whatever might be the purposes of the King, the province of the subjects was loyal service, sustained by the assurance of faithful succour. 'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power; but ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.' Acts i. 6-8. Their duty was to bear testimony even as martyrs, relying

<sup>1</sup> Leighton.

on the promised power; not to relax their energies in service by speculations about 'seasons.'

Zeal in extending the kingdom by winning individual adherents should be equally stimulated by either of the views held respecting the Advent of Christ. Does the Advent follow the Millennium? Then the Millennium is to prepare for His coming. If that reign of righteousness is to be expected as the result of present agencies, how earnest should they be who pray 'Thy kingdom come,' to promote an event the means of hastening which are already entrusted to the Church! But if the personal appearing of Christ is expected to precede and introduce the millennial reign, and if such Advent may be very near, what an incitement to be at our post of duty, watching, waiting, working! Whatever the future may reveal, our present duty is plain. Whether we expect the whole world to be won to the kingdom by missionary zeal or by the Advent of Christ, it is His imperative command that we make known the truth. If we relax our efforts because His appearing will at once accomplish what He designs, we are desisting from the work which He has entrusted to us, and thus we cannot be ready for His Advent. 'Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing;' so *doing* our present duty, not idly *dreaming* of what may happen in the future. Matt. xxiv. 46.

(3.) The prayer admonishes to *preparedness for the final coming of the kingdom*. 'We pray that it may come in us, we pray that we may be found in it; for come it certainly will, but what will it

profit thee, if it shall find thee at the left hand!'<sup>1</sup> By many a mourner at the open grave the prayer is offered with solemn emphasis, 'We beseech Thee, that it may please Thee, of Thy gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of Thine elect and to hasten Thy kingdom.' Do we really desire this? Are we of the number of the elect of whom Jesus said, 'They cry day and night unto God'? Suppose the kingdom should come while we are neglecting its claims and trampling on its laws! Suppose it should come while we are discussing the method and the time of it, but are neglecting to prepare for it! The premillennial Advent of our Lord may appear to many, as to good Matthew Henry, a 'doubtful notion,' but all should resolve, 'I will so live that I may live with Him, come when He may, and reign where He may.'

As that ancient temple of Renown could be entered only by passing through the temple of Valour, so the kingdom of Glory can only be enjoyed by those who have already become subjects of the kingdom of Grace. Grace is glory in the seed; glory is grace in the flower. The King gives both grace and glory; but they who reject the former are not fit for the latter. If we would reign with Christ, we must ourselves be subject to Christ. They who breathe this prayer should be 'looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God. What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conduct and godliness! We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth,

<sup>1</sup> Augustine.

wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless.' 2 Pet. iii. 11-14.

In closing this meditation, let us be encouraged by thinking of the great congregation by whom this petition has been and is presented to God. Though many never utter it at all, and many repeat it without thought, yet from what multitudes of true hearts during nearly nineteen centuries has it gone up to God, its volume and fervour still increasing to the present day! It is ascending now from every clime, in varied accents of human speech. Greenlander and Esquimaux echo it back to Bechuana and Hottentot; learned Brahmin and cultured Chinaman respond to the same litany with Caffres and Zulus; the prayer, wafted to heaven in our dear English tongue from both sides the Atlantic, is swollen by the voices of a 'great multitude which no man can number, of every tribe and people and kindred and nation;' many an earnest Christian worker breathes it, from Sunday school class and motley throng in mission-hall or gathered crowd by the wayside; it ascends from rustic conventicle and city temple, from village church half hidden by ancient yews, and from dome-crowned Cathedral and venerable Minster; there are babes in Christ who lisp it, and veterans of service who, with ever increasing fervour, plead—'Thy kingdom come;' there are poor saints unable to do anything for it by money, but who do very much for it by prayer; there are the sick and infirm

ones no longer capable of actively promoting it, but who, from chambers of weakness and beds of pain, speed all the workers by giving this petition precedence above any personal request for health and life. And while it ascends from earth, it mingles with the same petition from angels and saints in heaven. O that we may share in this 'Communion of the Saints'! That God may reign in our own hearts, throughout the world, and in the latter day glory, let us ever pray, 'Thy kingdom come.'

Come, Lord, to earth again ;  
 Come quickly, come and reign :  
     Lord Jesu, come !  
 Enthroned the struggling right,  
 Make clear the clouded light,  
 In victory close the fight :  
     Lord, quickly come !

The love of some grows cold ;  
 Thy foes are waxing bold :  
     Lord Jesu, come !  
 They mock our hope delayed,  
 Our little progress made,  
 Thy precepts disobeyed :  
     Lord, quickly come !

Bid war and faction cease,  
 Bring in the reign of peace :  
     Lord Jesu, come !  
 Set every captive free ;  
 Let all men brothers be ;  
 Heal earth's long malady :  
     Lord, quickly come !

Assert Thy right divine ;  
 O'er all the nations shine :  
     Lord Jesu, come !  
 Then earth like heaven shall sing,  
 With hallelujahs ring,  
 And hail her rightful King :  
     Lord, quickly come !

## CHAPTER V.

### *THE THIRD PETITION.*

‘THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.’

THE third petition is the appropriate sequel to those which precede it. As the hallowing of the Name of the Father is essential to the coming of a kingdom based on intelligent apprehension and cordial reverence; so the kingdom implies rule, and the coming of it submission.

By some this is regarded not as a separate petition, but as a development of the second. We pray that the kingdom may come on earth, by its laws being obeyed on earth. Both petitions have their sphere in the present world. The Will of God, perfectly done in Heaven, has been only partially known and obeyed on earth. We are taught to pray that this discrepancy may cease, and that the whole realm of God may be harmonized in obedience to Him.

As is the case with all the petitions, this one, beside being related to the rest, is based on the Invocation, ‘Father.’ God says, ‘If I be a Father, where is my honour?’ Mal. i. 6. And His children pray, Our Father in Heaven, let Thy holy, loving, Fatherly Will be done.

On Mount Sinai the Law rang out trumpet-tongued, ‘Do the Will of God:’ on the Mount of

Beatitudes the Saviour taught us how to obey this Law, even by asking grace from the Lawgiver to enable us to fulfil it.

### I.—THE WILL OF GOD.

This petition is, like the Invocation, a protest against the materialism which recognizes Power alone as supreme. Mere material forces, physical laws, have no volition. The abstraction called 'a power, not ourselves, that works for righteousness,' suggests ideas utterly different from those of the prayer, 'Our Father! Thy Will be done!' How cold, dreary, terrible, the notion of mere Power controlling us, with no loving thought, emotion, purpose! What a sense of helplessness is engendered by it, what terror of the Power which cannot be resisted or evaded, against which there is no appeal, under which we may be crushed! This would foster a Fatalism as discouraging to personal exertions as to prayer for Divine help.

The notion of Power instead of Will ruling the universe must also tend to prevent any sense of sin. I may be unfortunate in becoming its victim, I cannot be guilty of resisting its volition. I may lament my weakness, but cannot be conscious of wickedness. But when I recognize the rule of a loving and holy Father, I acknowledge my sin in resisting His commands, and am prompted to reform what is wrong in myself instead of pleading the resistless tide of necessity. 'Hence comes a conviction, not of weakness, but of sin; the sense, not that we have

been unable to resist, but that we have actually resisted that Power which is working for the deliverance and blessedness of us and of our whole race. A Power we shall then joyfully confess it to be, when we know that it is not that merely or principally.'<sup>1</sup>

We recognize a loving purpose, for He is our Father; a holy purpose, for He is in Heaven. We need not fear the Power which executes the Will, when the Will is that of 'Our Father who is in Heaven.' We appeal to Him as developing in His Will, tender compassion, beneficent purposes, perfect righteousness. He does not reign in order to exhibit sovereignty; He does not decree anything simply because He chooses to decree it: His Will is the outcome of His Fatherhood.

There must be much that to us is mysterious and inscrutable in the Will of the Infinite God. It would be presumptuous in us to dictate what His Will ought to be, or to pronounce by our own unaided understanding what that Will is. But it would also be derogatory to our own nature which owes to Him its origin, and reflects, though imperfectly, His likeness, to say we cannot in any degree conjecture what His Will is likely to be. In the light of His own revelation it would be ungrateful and false to say that we know nothing of His Will, when He has revealed it not only in His Word, but by His Son, who, being from eternity 'in the bosom of the Father,' has 'declared Him.' John i. 18. He is the everlasting Word, the Revealer of Deity. As already stated, in

<sup>1</sup> Maurice.

all His earthly life we learn the nature of His Father's Will.

And He who from eternity knew it, bids us pray that it may be done. He who came to save us would not instruct us to pray for the accomplishment of a Will opposed to His own mission of mercy. There can be no secret purpose in the mind of God conflicting with His Will as illustrated by Christ. We are therefore sure that the Will of the Father must be the highest welfare of His children, and may well pray, 'Thy Will be done on earth, as it is done in Heaven,' inasmuch as the Prayer is indited by our Saviour, and the Will is the Will of our Father.

The Will of God is both Potential, relating to what He does, and Preceptive, relating to what He requires His creatures to do.

## II.—GOD'S POTENTIAL WILL.

His Potential Will in Creation and Providence none can resist. 'He speaks and it is done. He doeth according to His pleasure in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. Who can stay His hand, or say, What doest Thou?' This Will of God is already done by all creatures inferior to man, everywhere, absolutely, on earth as in Heaven. Our part in relation to it is mentally to concur in it, to be glad that His Power is supreme, that His purposes are sure. 'The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice.' We also rejoice in His universal dominion, and in this prayer ask that we and all men may be willing to carry out the Will, either by active

service or patient suffering. We present it, 'not in order that God may do His own Will, but that we may be enabled to do what He wills to be done by us.'<sup>1</sup> This brings us to the consideration of

### III.—GOD'S PRECEPTIVE WILL IN RELATION TO THE HUMAN WILL.

God recognizes in man, who was made in His likeness, a capacity of Will corresponding with His own. He is not mere Force, and we are not mere machines. We have the marvellous, the Divine faculty of observing, considering, judging, approving, resolving, performing. We can concur with His Will or dispute it; perform it or resist it. It is frivolous to debate about foreknowledge, and preordination, and philosophical necessity, as though what will be must ever have been certain, and therefore such as no will, or act, or prayer of ours can change. 'The logical terms in which we express our conclusions are even less adequate to describe the subtle operations of spirit than those of nature: we should not therefore suffer them to embarrass us either in our dealings with our individual consciences, or in our judgments respecting the purposes of God. A man cannot be honest in action if he applies maxims and formulas about the extent of prescience and human power to his own particular conduct; he must be profane and false if he uses them to measure the Éternal Mind.'<sup>2</sup>

We know by our own consciousness that we possess this power of Will. If we are indeed children of God,

<sup>1</sup> Cyprian.

<sup>2</sup> Maurice.

we know that our will can be exercised in obeying that of God, and is as free when in harmony with it as when resisting it. But we also know that such resistance is possible, that such resistance is a sad and solemn fact. A created will can resist the Creator. Sun, moon, and stars unconsciously obey, but man stands forth amidst the loyal universe, and dares to say 'No' to the Almighty. This faculty is recognized in all the commands, promises and threatenings of Holy Scripture. We are not told to abrogate our function of volition, so that God alone should exercise will; no other mind but His being active: but to exercise our will freely in accord with His. Our volition is appealed to by motives and persuasions. The Son of God said to the Jews, 'Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.' John v. 40. He declared that His own Will was opposed by theirs. 'How often *would I have gathered thy children, and ye would not!*' Matt. xxiii. 37. I had the will to save you; you had the will to reject me. There are two wills, but our will must be corrected by the Will of God; not the Will of God distorted to ours. 'Our will is depraved, His is true; true, that what is depraved may be conformed to the true.'<sup>1</sup>

God remonstrates with us concerning the opposition of our will to His. He sent His Son to bring it into accord with His own. 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.' The Apostles besought men 'in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God.' To produce this harmony between man's will and that of God, the truth concerning His holiness

<sup>1</sup> Augustine.

and love was revealed. For this, the Divine Spirit enters human hearts. 'It is God who worketh in us to will and to do.' Phil. ii. 13. This inward operation of the Spirit does not control our will so as to destroy its free agency, but only to aid it to choose rightly. We have still the power to cherish or resist these Divine influences. Thus we are commanded, 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God;' 'Quench not the Spirit.' We are warned against imitating those to whom it was said, 'Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye.' Acts vii. 51.

This petition is for Divine assistance in the right exercise of our own will. It implies that both God and man have a will, and that God can influence our will for good without destroying our freedom of choice. For this prayed saints of old, 'Teach me to do Thy Will. Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies.' For this Our Lord prayed, 'Sanctify them through Thy truth.' And for this He taught us to pray when we say, 'Thy Will be done.'

#### IV.—WHY SHOULD GOD'S WILL BE DONE?

Because it is God's. He has every right to rule; as Creator and Preserver, He gives laws to all things that depend on Him for existence; as infinitely Righteous and Good, He has a moral right to the willing homage of all intelligent beings. It is reasonable that they should employ the faculties He gave in accordance with His own inherent perfections and revealed commands.

In offering this petition we ask for the fulfilment of

'that good, acceptable, and perfect Will of God.' Rom. xii. 2. We obey it because it is His, and because it must be beneficent like Himself; for it is our Father's will and corresponds to His Name. His precepts no less than His promises are the expressions of His love; in commanding duties He bestows benefits; in forbidding sins He guards from injuries. 'Honour thy father and thy mother' implies, Receive honour in your turn. 'Thou shalt not kill' involves, None must kill thee; and 'Thou shalt not steal' declares, None must rob thee. His most emphatic warnings against sin mean, 'Do thyself no harm;' His severest threatenings cry in the ears of sinners, 'Why will ye die?' Nothing is forbidden which would not be an injury to ourselves; nothing enjoined which is not for our good. He places us on an estate and bids us cultivate it for Him, asking no rent but our diligence, and promising that we shall enjoy as our own the fruits of orchards and corn-fields. 'He bids us dig a mine, and then take all the gold for ourselves.'

But besides the benefits resulting, there is joy in the very act of performing His Will. When we obey Him, our lesser wheels revolve smoothly in harmony with the great machinery of loving law, instead of grating and breaking in hopeless counteraction to His Will. There is peace in being consciously in accord with our own higher nature. We rejoice when what we will and what we do is what Truth and Righteousness require. Above all, there is satisfaction in feeling that our strongest and most habitual desires and efforts correspond with the holy laws of our Creator and the

loving Will of our Father. 'In keeping of them there is great reward.' Ps. xix. 11.

This dignifies the humblest lot, and raises to the rank of Divine service the most menial employment. The Apostle comforted those bond-slaves of the Roman Empire who believed in Jesus by this grand consideration, that however unjust or cruel their earthly masters might be, yet in obeying them, those slaves were serving the Lord Christ. Col. iii. 24. Physical bondage became spiritual freedom when endured patiently from love to the Lord. When the thing we do possesses in itself neither interest nor honour, if we do it in His name, it at once becomes noble and blessed.

'Teach me, my God and King,  
In all things Thee to see,  
And what I do in anything,  
To do it as for Thee.

'A man that looks on glass,  
On it may stay his eye ;  
Or if he pleaseth, through it pass,  
And then the heaven espy.

'A servant with this clause  
Makes drudgery divine ;  
Who sweeps a room, as for Thy laws,  
Makes that and the action fine.

'This is the famous stone  
That turneth all to gold :  
For that which God doth touch and own  
Cannot for less be told.'<sup>1</sup>

#### V.—ANGELIC NATURE.

As Moses when erecting the tabernacle was commanded to 'make all things according to the pattern

<sup>1</sup> George Herbert.

showed him in the mount,' so we have here set before us an example of the way in which the will of God is to be done by men on earth. We pray that it may be done as it is done in Heaven.

If for a moment the word suggests the starry firmament and what are sometimes called the heavenly bodies, we see an illustration of obedience, unceasing, untiring, exact; but it is mechanical, involuntary, lifeless. One man endowed with mind and will may render more homage than all the solar system. We must look beyond the sidereal, even 'to the third heavens,' the heaven of heavens and the angels of God, for the pattern of our obedience.

The resemblance of the obedience of angels to that of men suggests resemblance of nature. We are perhaps apt to suppose there is a greater difference between angels and men than Scripture reveals. We read that at the creation of the world 'the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.' Job xxxviii. 7. We, as sons of God, say, 'Our Father.' We rejoice that 'now are we the sons of God.' There exists therefore a near brotherhood. We are told that God made man 'a little lower than the angels.' This implies only a difference of degree between kindred natures. Ps. viii. 5. So our Lord, when He became man, took a nature near to that of angels. 'We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour.' Heb. ii. 9. He who appeared to the patriarchs as the angel of Jehovah, appeared, in the fulness of time, as 'the Son of man.'

It is interesting to notice how frequently angels are

described as men in their appearances as 'ministering spirits' for the 'heirs of salvation.' Angels foretold the destruction of Sodom; and the record says, 'Three *men* appeared to Abraham.' Gen. xviii. It is evident that at first he took them to be simply men. He 'entertained angels unawares.' Heb. xiii. 2. We then read, 'There came two *angels* to Sodom;' and in a subsequent verse, 'And the *men* said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides?' Gen. xix. 'There came an angel of the Lord' to Gideon, and as 'he sat under an oak,' Gideon thought he was a man, but afterwards 'perceived that he was an angel of the Lord,' and said, 'Alas! for I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face.' Judg. vi. Thus Daniel describes the angel Gabriel: 'Whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the *man* Gabriel, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.' Dan. ix. 21. The prophet Zechariah (i. 8-14) speaks of '*the man* that stood among the olive trees' as being '*the angel of the Lord* that stood among the olive trees.'

St. Matthew describes 'the angel of the Lord' rolling away the stone from the sepulchre, but Mark describes him as 'a young *man* sitting' where the body had lain (xvi. 5); and St. Luke (xxiv. 4), describing the visit of the women to the tomb, says 'two *men* stood by them in shining garments.' When Jesus ascended in the sight of His disciples, 'as He went up, two *men* stood by them in white apparel.' Acts i. 10, 11. In St. John's description of the heavenly city, we have this remarkable expression: 'He measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of *a man*, that is, of *the angel*.' Rev. xxi. 17.

In the closing chapter the angel forbids the homage of the Apostle, saying, 'I am thy fellow-servant.'

From such statements we may infer that angels are only a higher species of man; higher in endowment; higher by actually obeying, just as we ought to obey, so that the true ideal of humanity is to be found in them; and we are restored to the true human type, by resemblance to angels, when the Will of God is done by us as by them.

It is a joy to feel that if there are spirits of evil plotting to do us harm, there are holy angels, closely allied to us, only a little above us, in sympathy with us and employed in helping us. Very little has been said of the angelic nature in Scripture; perhaps because angels so resemble ourselves that there is little to say. But of this we are sure, that obedience is the same with all moral beings. Everywhere the same authority exists, everywhere the same wisdom and love appeal to a similar understanding and volition. Angels as well as men, from love to God, must give heed to His expressed Will; concur with it; perform it; delight in it; and so their obedience is a model for our own.

## VI.—ANGELIC OBEDIENCE.

### 1. *Angels do the will of God lovingly.*

It must be universally true that no obedience is acceptable to God, because no obedience is genuine and perfect, which love does not inspire. Angels are highest in the scale of moral beings, and must therefore be highest in the possession and exercise of that love which is the fulfilling of all law. They are

in the immediate presence of God, whose essence is love, and therefore under its most potent influence. Dwelling in His light, they reflect and share it. They are all seraphim burning with a holy fire that impels them, as their highest privilege and supreme delight, to do the Will of Him they adore.

Such love secures the perfect loyalty which obeys every command of God because it is His. They do not first bring it to the tribunal of their own judgment, and then comply with it in proportion as they understand the reason of it. Their faith must have been severely tried when they were bidden to overthrow the cities of the plain, to destroy the first-born of Egypt, and to slay one hundred and eighty thousand of the army of Sennacherib; when they saw their Lord insulted and tormented by His foes, and were not allowed to rescue Him; and when they have beheld the persecution and sufferings of the heirs of salvation, and 'their angels' have not been permitted to deliver them, the obedience rendered must have been that of unquestioning, loving loyalty in the absence of any clear insight into the reason of the restraint. Their only inquiry is, 'Has God commanded?' it is then their unquestioning delight to obey.

Obedience which is thus prompted by love, is sure to be cheerful. Unloving service is reluctant, grudging, regretful, sad. A willing heart makes a merry countenance, and inspires an obedience the happy spontaneity of which renders fragrant the work done. Such 'service is perfect freedom.' Angels obey not because they must, but because they would. As it would be pain to birds to be restrained from

singing when the flowers deck the fields ; as it is cruelty to cage the lark whose loftiest flights express its greatest pleasure ; so it would be a burden to angels to be spared the service which is their purest bliss. Heaven is a synonym for happiness ; and there is not a truer description of the joy of its present inhabitants, and of those who, sharing their loyalty, shall one day share their glory, than this—‘ His servants shall serve Him.’ An old writer exclaims, ‘ It is the joy, I had almost said the mirth, of heaven to obey the statutes of its King.’

They therefore do it promptly. Love does not loiter. Angels are compared to the winds and the lightning in their swiftness of service. ‘ He maketh His angels winds, His ministers a flaming fire.’ Ps. civ. 4. No delay mars their obedience. They never wait for a more convenient season, nor substitute a purpose to do for present doing. Their promptitude is illustrated by the mission of Gabriel to Daniel, who ‘ being caused to fly swiftly,’ brought the reply to the prophet ‘ while he was speaking in prayer.’ Dan. ix. 23. Love spares no pains in service. Angels who ‘ excel in strength,’ with all that strength ‘ do His commandments.’ Their capacities may vary as our own, but each, according to his measure, does the Will of God with his might. Nothing is too trivial for the putting forth of every needful energy, when the end in view is the Will of God whom they perfectly love.

We are taught to pray that our obedience may, like theirs, be that of love. Then will it be loyal, unquestioning, cheerful, prompt, unsparing. As chil-

dren obey wise and tender parents from loving trust before they acquire from experience the conviction that their own welfare is thus best secured, so let us obey our Father in heaven, even when we cannot understand the reason and methods of His Will. Called to such obedience, we are called to noblest liberty. Our service may well be cheerful when it has become the gratification of our own heaven-born impulses ; when ‘ we love the thing which God commandeth, and desire that which He doth promise.’ It may well be cheerful when thereby we share the privilege and the joy of Heaven ; and possess a sign that we belong to Him whose example, as the Lord of angels, we are supremely to follow, and who said, ‘ I delight to do Thy will.’ Ps. xl. 8 ; Heb. x. 7. ‘ The will of man is linked with those chains which draw us to God, and loves the fetters that confine us to the pleasures and religion of the kingdom. And as no man will complain that his temples are restrained and his head a prisoner when it is enriched with a crown ; so, when the Son of God hath made us free, and hath only subjected us to the service and dominion of the Spirit, we are free as princes within the circle of their diadem, and our chains are bracelets, and the law is a law of liberty, and “ His service is perfect freedom ;” and the more we are subjects, the more “ we shall reign as kings,” and the faster we run, the easier is our burden ; and Christ’s yoke is like feathers to a bird, not loads, but helps to motion, without them the body falls, and we do not pity birds, so as in summer to wish them unfeathered that they might be cooler and lighter.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jeremy Taylor.

Then will our obedience be prompt. Alas! how often we are convinced of some evil, and resolve to forsake it, or of some duty, and comfort our conscience by the purpose of performing it, to-morrow! whereas, in an attitude of loving obedience we should pray, 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth;' and in grateful retrospection be able to say, 'I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments.' Ps. cxix. 60.

Then also will the obedience of earth be rendered with unstinted effort. We should always do our best in such service. 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might;' when God commands, inspects, rewards. 'She hath done what she could' is a commendation not to be surpassed, and not confined to rank or power. The very weakest and lowliest may share it with the strongest and greatest. Men on earth are accepted with cherubim and seraphim, when, with them, they do what they can.

It is to be feared that some who bear the Christian name are still but as Jews, under the restraints of law. They try to do their duty, fearing to displease God and to incur the penalty of transgression. But believers in Christ have not received 'the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.' Rom. viii. 15. 'Thou art no longer a bond-servant, but a son.' Gal. iv. 6, 7. We obey, submit, labour, suffer, not as slaves, but as sons. Our obedience is not that which is measured by payment nor constrained by fear. 'We freely serve because we freely love.'

### 2. *They do it intelligently.*

Their faith is rational, their loyalty discerning. They take pains to know whether the command is really from God, and not the fruit of their own imagination; and then to understand what it really means, not what their own fancy may suppose it capable of meaning. So the Psalmist appealed to them as waiting, listening, learning. 'Bless ye the Lord, ye His angels, that do His commandments, *hearkening* unto the voice of His word.' Ps. ciii. 20. They do not rush heedlessly into service, but obey thoughtfully. So the Psalmist prayed, 'Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law. Make me to understand the way of Thy precepts. Give me understanding, and I shall keep Thy law.' Ps. cxix. In order then intelligently to obey, we are to 'search the Scriptures,' wherein the Will of God is revealed, and which are 'profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.' 2 Tim. iii. 16.

### 3. *They do it prayerfully.*

It is being wise beyond what is written to say that the natural expression of loving loyalty, encouraged and commanded on earth, ceases in heaven. If prayer is far more than the mere utterance of requests for sorrow to be relieved, wants supplied, and sins forgiven; if it is the outpouring of a filial heart, heaven would lack one chief element of bliss if angels did not pray.

The Lord of angels prayed. Knowing how surely

the Will of the Father would be accomplished, He expressed His concurrence with that Will, in earnest supplications. And we may be sure that the angels who worship Him as their Lord pray in heaven as He did on earth. He still prays. He makes intercession for transgressors, that they may repent and begin to do the Will of God: and for His faithful servants, that they may go on to do it. 'This must surely be a law of the spiritual universe and of the heavenly world. Angels and the "spirits of just men made perfect," martyrs from beneath the altar, the four and twenty elders, and the principalities and powers in heavenly places, because of their thorough submission to the law and love and will of God, are the most fervent and intense of all His creatures in their prayers, and see by the piercing glances of their faith, and soar by the strong wings of intercession, on into the everlasting purposes of the Infinite and Eternal God.'<sup>1</sup>

Many petitions we present on earth can have no place in heaven, but surely this one will never cease to be the desire of glorified saints and unfallen angels. Heavenly perfection must include reliance on the Heavenly Father, both for existence itself and for the purity and happiness which are inseparable from obedience. Not for themselves alone, but for all intelligent beings they pray. While they do God's Will, they pray that it may be done. So let us do it; doing it, the more we pray; praying for it, the more we do it.

<sup>1</sup> H. R. Reynolds.

4. *They do all God's Will.*

We on earth, even when professing subjection to the Divine Will, are apt to make selections from it, according to its harmony with our own inclinations. Obedience is easy when the Will of God seems to agree with the prevailing opinions and practices of the world, or of the society in which we move; when it does not tend to injure us in the esteem of patrons or friends; when it does not threaten our property, trade and personal comfort; when it does not demand uncongenial exertion, the breaking of matured habits, or any form of painful self-sacrifice. We are apt to think we are obeying the Will of God when we may be only pleasing ourselves. If we walk along the path of duty only when it is level, smooth and flowery, but turn aside when it scales the steep crag, our motive is the gratifying of self, not the obeying of God.

But in heaven, inasmuch as they do God's Will because it is His, angels do it *all*. Every commission has alike His authority to sustain it. We cannot imagine angels hesitating while they select from the Divine commands what may be most easy to do, or profitable, or honourable. They loyally execute *every* order—whether to destroy Sodom or rescue Lot; to smite the tyrants or emancipate the slaves; in brilliant array to proclaim the Law on Sinai, or singly to withstand Balaam in the way; to give food to Elijah under the juniper tree, or to carry him to heaven with chariots of fire and horses of fire; to form a body-guard for Elisha at Dothan, or to shut the lions'

mouths for Daniel in Babylon; to destroy the hosts of Sennacherib, or to bear a quick reply to one lonely suppliant's prayer.

So we do God's Will as they do it in heaven when we obey without preference, whether to work amid the blaze of publicity or in the shade of obscurity, whether to range the earth in unresting activity or to wait His Will in humble readiness.

'God doth not need  
 Either man's work, or his own gifts; who best  
 Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best: His state  
 Is kingly; thousands at His bidding speed,  
 And post o'er land and ocean without rest;  
 They also serve who only stand and wait.'<sup>1</sup>

After some important battle, a great general was conversing with his officers respecting the various incidents of the fight. The names were mentioned of men who had chiefly distinguished themselves—who had stormed batteries, held their post against fearful odds, fought single-handed against a crowd of assailants, or carried off wounded comrades amid a shower of bullets. 'No (said he); you are all mistaken: the best man in the field to-day was a soldier, who had his arm lifted up against an enemy, but who, on hearing the trumpet sound a retreat, checked himself, and dropt his arm without striking the blow. That perfect and ready obedience to the will of his general is the noblest thing that has been done to-day.'<sup>2</sup>

How often do we feel it easier to wield the sword than sheathe it, to pursue than to retreat, to work than to wait! Yet there should be no difference in our obedience when we cannot doubt what is the will

<sup>1</sup> Milton, 'On his Blindness.'

<sup>2</sup> Augustus Hare.

of God. One command neglected, because uncongenial, mars the rest of our obedience. In a harp of many strings, one that is out of tune makes the whole seem discordant. Then only 'shall we not be ashamed' when, like the angels, we 'have respect unto all' the commandments of God.

5. *They do it always.*

'They serve Him day and night in His temple.' There are no intervals of idleness in their obedience. They wish no vacation in service. Interruption in doing the Will of God would be to them a suspension of bliss, yea, of their very life. Let our obedience resemble theirs; let it not be characterized by fits and starts, with intervening relapses into indolence; not needing revivals out of apathy; not dependent on novelty which must soon lose its charm, but patient and persevering under all changes and circumstances; not as a mountain-torrent whose rocky channel is bare and sunburnt when snows are not melting and rains do not fall, but as a deep broad river ever flowing with fertilizing tide. Our Advocate, the Lord of angels, Himself desires this—'O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep *all my commandments always*, that it might be well with them and with their children for ever.' Deut. v. 29.

6. *They all do it, and do it altogether.*

Not as here, a few amongst the many, and these objects of curiosity and wonder, sometimes of ridicule and hatred; but every one does it; that countless host forming a glorious and perfect unity of obedience

with endless diversity of gifts. There is not one amongst that great multitude who makes objection, questions why? chills by indifference. 'Are they not *all* ministering spirits?'

All do it in perfect harmony with one another. Not as men on earth, who, though diligently doing what they think their duty, yet are often influenced also by motives of ambition and vanity, or of ease and advantage, and so compete with each other for service which for such reasons may appear preferable, a competition sometimes accompanied by ill-will, and followed by detraction and envy. Angels do their own work, each one contented with his allotted service as most honourable and advantageous, because appointed him by God. No time is lost, no strength is wasted on controversy between different bands of workers. The possessor of ten talents does not despise the possessor of only one, nor does the latter envy the superior gifts of the former. The worker with one kind of instrumentality does not condemn his fellow-worker because he uses varying methods. There is no insisting on uniformity of operation where there is this grand unity of motive; no attempt to compel conformity to one standard, to fetter the freedom the Creator gives by bonds the creature invents, to make the exercise of that freedom by an individual or by an association, an occasion and an instrument for curtailing the freedom of any other. There is no friction of the wheels, because each is perfectly fitted to the central power and plan. All the workers are in harmony with each other, because all are perfectly doing the Will of God.

O for such harmony among Christian workers on earth! Alas, how much time, strength, energy, are wasted in contentions between the servants of their one Lord! How lamentable the strifes arising from the desire to impose our own preferences on others who have an equal right to their own; and from failing to recognize true service in the common cause unless performed according to some standard of man's own devising! The cure for this is an earnest desire to do the Will of God. As the structure of the earth is consolidated by every particle gravitating towards the same centre, so the more our minds and hearts in all our service are directed towards God, all who share in this direction of mind must needs approach nearer to each other. When the kingdom of God comes on earth, then will there be this universal gravitation towards the centre, and then the Will of God will be done on earth as harmoniously as it is done in heaven. 'Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.' Isa. xi. 13.

*7. They do it in the presence of God.*

The actual presence and inspection of one we honour acts as an additional stimulus even when obedience is rendered with the utmost willingness of love. The angel who appeared to Zacharias said, 'I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God.' Luke i. 19. St. John records, 'I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne.' Rev. v. 11. 'They do always behold the face of the Father,' they hear His voice, His eye is upon them, the eye of Him whom they supremely love and adore.

No wonder, therefore, that they do His Will earnestly, constantly, cheerfully, harmoniously.

So let us do it. For is not God really as near to us here on earth as He is to them in heaven? We do not behold His face nor hear His voice, but we may by faith realize His presence, and in holy service 'endure, seeing the Invisible.' If soldiers are animated by the presence of the general; if servants by the inspection of their master; if children by the loving looks of their parents, should not we serve and obey, 'as ever in our Great Taskmaster's eye,' when that Great Taskmaster is our loving Father? O for the kingdom of God so to come amongst men that His presence may be universally felt and rejoiced in; then will His Will be done on earth, as it is in heaven by angels who 'stand in the presence of the Lord.'

The reference in the prayer is to the manner in which angels obey, not to the kind of work they do. But we cannot refrain from noticing how numerous and varied are the services performed by them which are of a beneficent character. Though obeying every command of God, yet as 'judgment' is His 'strange work,' so they take special delight in executing commissions of mercy. They all 'minister for the heirs of salvation,' Heb. i. 14; they 'encamp round about them that fear God,' Ps. xxxiv. 7; they have a 'charge concerning' the righteous, to 'keep them in all their ways,' Ps. xci. 11, 12; they do not overlook 'one of these little ones who believe in Jesus,' Matt. xviii. 10; they rescued an apostle from prison, and carried a beggar into Abraham's bosom. In doing the Will

of God, the princes in heaven serve sinners on earth.

‘How oft do they their silver bowers leave,  
 To come to succour us, that succour want !  
 How oft do they with golden pinions cleave  
 The flitting skyes like flying pursuivant,  
 Against foul fiendes to aid us militant !  
 They for us fight, they watch and duly ward,  
 And their bright squadrons round about us plant ;  
 And all for love and nothing for reward :  
 O why should heavenly God to men have such regard !’<sup>1</sup>

If thus angels act as ‘ministers of grace’ to defend and succour fallen men, obeying with the alacrity of sympathetic love, surely we should obey that same Will with loving promptitude in acts of beneficence to one another ; ministering to the saints, protecting the weak, succouring the needy, caring for little children, visiting the sick, tending the dying. O for the time when throughout the earth the will of God may thus be done !

In such service we are apt to neglect small acts of kindness while thinking we are prepared to do great things, and waiting for these to present themselves. ‘A wise man,’ said Lord Bacon, ‘will make more opportunities than he finds.’ Benevolence like that of the angels will never wait for a call to do some mighty act, when such a service as giving a cup of cold water is ready at hand. While imitating their obedience to Him whose ‘Nature and property is ever to show mercy,’ we shall never be at a loss for opportunities.

‘Small service is true service while it lasts ;  
 Of friends, however humble, scorn not one ;  
 The daisy by the shadow that it casts,  
 Protects the lingering dewdrop from the sun.’<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Spenser.

<sup>2</sup> Wordsworth.

In all benevolent work we are doing the Will of God. But there is no department of such work so important as that of endeavouring to save the souls of men. Here also we may learn a lesson from the angels. We not only read of them as executing various commissions in connection with the first coming of our Lord: foretelling and announcing His birth, Luke i. 26, ii. 9; ministering to Him in the wilderness and in Gethsemane, Matt. iv. 11; Luke xxii. 43; appearing at the Resurrection, Matt. xxviii. 2, 5; and at the Ascension, Acts i. 10; and then on various occasions appearing to the disciples to succour and direct them; to Philip, Acts viii. 26; Cornelius, x. 3-22; Peter, xii. 7-9; Paul, xxvii. 23, and John, Rev. i. 1; and attending their Lord on His return, Matt. xxv. 31: but we are told that they are deeply interested in the salvation provided for sinful men. 'Which things the angels desire to look into.' 1 Pet. i. 12. And we are distinctly assured by our Lord that 'there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.' Luke xv. 10. Possessed of lofty intelligence, great power of discernment, with vast and accurate knowledge of truth, they understand how much is involved in the repentance and salvation of one soul. Already in possession of joy so complete, they would not burst forth into fresh gladness on account of any merely trivial event. We may learn from them the supreme importance of the work of Redemption, and the unspeakable reasons for joy in the salvation of one sinner. If we do the Will of God on earth, as they do it in heaven, we also shall be supremely interested in the great work of

salvation ; we shall be zealous in making it known ; we shall endeavour to save the souls of men ; and shall feel that the repentance of even one sinner is ample reward for a life of labour, since it furnishes occasion for fresh joy in heaven.

This then is what we are taught to ask, obedience to the Will of God by men on earth, similar to the obedience rendered by angels in heaven. We are not to be content with any example among men. The very best are imperfect. It is not enough that we equal or even surpass our neighbours. We must look to unfallen angels for the true type of doing the Will of God. O for the time when earth shall thus resemble heaven ; when all men in doing the Will of God shall best serve themselves and one another : when the varied wills of men, not destroyed nor compressed into a rigid uniformity controlled by a single dominant and all-embracing volition, but in their multiplicity of individual wills, each free yet all concurring, shall form one free Commonwealth in perfect service of the Eternal King !

#### VII.—PASSIVE OBEDIENCE.

We have been considering the prayer, 'Thy Will be done on earth,' as illustrated by the active service rendered in heaven. But men have also to obey in another method unknown to angels. We are exposed to varied sorrows, all sent or permitted by God and overruled for the good of His children, but needing special help from above to enable us to endure them with patient submission.

The purposes of God must be accomplished whether we assent to them or not. We here pray that we may render this assent. 'Our repining hinders not His working, but it hinders our own comfort : our wrestling and fretting doth but pain ourselves.'<sup>1</sup> How the character of any trial is changed when we accept it from our Father ; when we are cheerfully led instead of being unwillingly driven ; when we take up our burden and carry it instead of trailing it along the rocky path ! We cannot have our own will always. God's Will may concur with our own wish ; or our prayer may bring us what we ask ; but there will often be times when what we wish we cannot have. But we may always relinquish our own will and embrace that of God, and so, by making His Will ours, have our own. John xv. 7.

It would not be good for us to have our own will always, if it were possible. Were God to give us the liberty of choice, it would be wise in us to resign that liberty again to Him who is infallibly wise and unfaillingly kind. How often as we look back we see places where we wished to take some other path than that in which God was leading us, and we perceive that our own preference would have led us into bogs or over precipices ! And we also see places where we resolutely chose our own path without prayer and submissiveness, and God allowed us to have our own wilful way in order by disappointment to teach us the folly of refusing to be guided by Himself ! O that we could so surrender our own will to that of God as to say with Luther, 'I do not ask "*Thy* Will be

<sup>1</sup> Leighton.

done," but *my* will be done, because *Thy* Will is now *my* will, and I best get my own will by unquestioning acceptance of Thine.' So George Herbert sweetly and quaintly sings :

' Lord, Thou art mine and I am Thine,  
 If mine I am : and Thine much more,  
 Than I or ought, or can be mine.  
 Yet to be Thine, doth me restore ;  
 So that again I now am mine ;  
 And with advantage, mine the more,  
 Since *this* being mine brings with it Thine,  
 And Thou with me dost Thee restore.  
 If I without Thee would be mine,  
 I neither should be mine nor Thine.'<sup>1</sup>

How unanswerable the argument for resignation to the Divine Will in times of trial is the assurance of the Apostle, ' These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ' ! 2 Cor. iv. 17. Light compared with the weight of glory, momentary compared with the eternal result, they are always operating for our welfare even when causing us most suffering. ' We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.' Rom. viii. 28. They are active, beneficent, harmonious ; they work together for good. Often our trials act as a prickly hedge which wounds, but guards us from the steep precipice or the deep river. Loss of property may enrich the soul. Trials reveal to us ourselves, ' as soaking rain shows damaged places in the roof which need mending.' They bring our sins to remembrance, as in the case of Joseph's brethren. Gen. xlii. 21. They separate us from many perilous temptations and

<sup>1</sup> *Clasping of Hands.*

worldly snares ; they draw or drive us to the throne of grace ; they are a needful discipline of faith, and our patient endurance of them is a helpful example to others.

‘ If loving hearts were never lonely,  
 If all they wish might always be,  
 Accepting what they wish for only,  
 They might be glad, but not in Thee.

‘ We need as much the cross we bear  
 As air we breathe, as light we see ;  
 It draws us to Thy side in prayer,  
 It binds us to our strength in Thee.’

The brave and godly Sir John Eliot said : ‘ In wrestling with calamities there is this advantage for all—First, thyself ; the favour of God giving thee this education, knowledge of thyself, confirmation of virtue. Secondly, thy neighbours ; profit by thy example, thy fortitude adding courage to them. How then in this great duty of advantage to ourselves and neighbours we should repine, as ’tis a prejudice to our happiness, so ’tis a wonder unto reason.’

As the destruction of Aquileia and other towns on the Italian coast caused their inhabitants to flee to the islets of the lagoon, from which there afterwards arose the temples and palaces of the queenly city of the Adriatic, so the most threatening perils and darkest trials of the believer have often been the means of erecting temples of spiritual beauty, far surpassing that palatial city of the sea.

Whatever brightness there may be in any object through colour of its own, this is far exceeded by the sun’s own rays when reflected from it. A broken vessel, a fragment of glass, may blaze with solar splendour when objects of perfect form, artistic beauty,

and costly material may send back no heavenly radiance. The stream flowing placidly through the meadows may be beautiful, but not until obstructed by rocks, broken into rapids, tumbling over precipices, is it brilliant with all the colours of the solar spectrum and spanned by the rainbow.

If our own real welfare coincides with our duty to our Ruler and our loving confidence in our Father, resistance to His will is opposition to our own welfare, murmuring at trials He sends is discontent with blessings He designs. Let us then take the oar of duty, and leave to Him the helm of direction. Whatever course the pilot steers let us aid the vessel's progress, whether it bear us through smooth or stormy waters, and while pulling let us pray, 'Thy Will be done.'

'Man's weakness, waiting upon God,  
Its end can never miss ;  
For man on earth no work can do,  
More angel-like than this.

'Siding with God, I always win ;  
No chance to me is lost :  
His Will is sweet to me, even when  
It triumphs at my cost.

'Ills that God blesses are my good—  
All unblest good is ill ;  
And all is right that seems most wrong,  
If it be His dear Will.'<sup>1</sup>

### VIII.—ILLUSTRATIONS OF PASSIVE OBEDIENCE.

We have no examples of passive obedience in unfallen angels ; but we have many such examples in the history of those who joined their ranks when they

<sup>1</sup> Faber.

'came out of great tribulation.' This was expressed by Job when he said—'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord;' Job i. 21: and by Eli—'It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good;' 1 Sam. iii. 18: and by David—'Behold, here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him;' 2 Sam. xv. 26: and by Habakkuk—'Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, yet I will rejoice in the Lord;' iii. 17: and by the Apostles and early Christians when 'they rejoiced to be counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name;' and could 'glory in tribulation also;' Acts v. 41; Rom. v. 3.

The history of the Church in all ages abounds with illustrations of such passive obedience, such consent of heart to the prayer, 'Thy Will be done.' Richard Baxter, when suffering extreme pain on his death-bed, prayed for release, but checked himself thus—'It is not fit for me to prescribe: What Thou wilt, when Thou wilt, how Thou wilt.' He said, 'I have pain; there is no arguing against sense; but I have peace.' When asked how he was, he would reply, 'Almost well; better than I deserve to be, but not so well as I hope to be.'

Milton speaking of his blindness said, 'It is not so wretched to be blind as it is not to be capable of enduring blindness. There is a way to strength through weakness. Let me then be the most feeble creature alive as long as that feebleness serves to invigorate the energies of my rational and immortal spirit; as long as in that obscurity in which I am enveloped the light of the Divine presence more

clearly shines, then in proportion as I am weak I shall be invincibly strong, and in proportion as I am blind I shall more clearly see. O that I may thus be perfected by feebleness and irradiated by obscurity !'

Thus our trials may become means of blessing, and seeming hindrances real helps. Climbing the mountain of God's holiness we often find our path obstructed by projecting rocks, which tempt the timid to despair and the indolent to turn back, but which the resolute climber grasps with his hands and uses as a fulcrum for his feet, so making what might have become a stumbling-block a stepping-stone.

In a touching and instructive memorial of his wife by the late Archbishop Tait, the death of five children within a few weeks is thus spoken of by the mother :— 'We were called to part with these five blessed little daughters, each of whom had been received in prayer, educated with prayer, and were now given up, though with bitter anguish, yet with prayer and thanksgiving.' In after years that season of trial is spoken of as 'hours of agony which burn into one's soul and leave their heavy impress through all that remains of life; but, no doubt, if Christ goes with us through them, they will produce blessed fruit to all eternity.' The trial is spoken of as 'a bright chain to draw the heart up to heaven.' And when a son was cut off in the morning of his usefulness, we read that 'as the benediction was pronounced over his resting-place, his parents felt that their many prayers for his welfare, offered up from his infancy onwards, had been answered, though not in the way they had expected.'

‘All is best, though we oft doubt  
 What the unsearchable dispose  
 Of highest Wisdom brings about,  
 And ever best found in the close.’<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Fisk, in his narrative of a journey to Jerusalem, relates that a Grand Vizier, in high favour with the Sultan, was suddenly disgraced and deprived of all his property. He at once conformed to his new circumstances, and was seen selling lemons at a street corner, where he was sympathetically accosted by an English nobleman who had known him in his glory. He replied, ‘I am not at all unhappy. Allah gave me what I had: He had a perfect right to take it away: Allah is great, Allah is good!’ How much more should we who know God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ pray with unquestioning submission, ‘Thy Will be done’!

To a friend of the writer, a poor man, prior to the days of chloroform, related how it had been necessary that his little boy should undergo a most painful operation. The father explained this to his child, asking if he could bear it? ‘Yes, father, if you will hold my hand.’ The hand was held, the boy was patient, and health was restored. Thus every trial God ordains is necessary; our Father holds our hand; recovery is certain; shall we not then be ‘patient in tribulation’? Rom. v. 3; Col. i. 11, 12.

A woman in the writer’s congregation, poor in this world but rich in faith, had been prostrate on her bed during forty years, with an active spirit but helpless body. When asked by him if she did not often wish to be at home, she replied—‘Yes, I would rather be

<sup>1</sup> Milton.

in heaven ; but if it be my Father's Will, I'm ready to lie here forty years longer.' To a friend's remark, 'All is for the best,' she replied with a brightening smile, 'How can it be otherwise when my Father does it?'

On the day of writing this page the author was at the bedside of her sister, who had been during nineteen years lying helpless, and scarcely ever free from pain. Her countenance beaming with peace, in feeble but cheerful tones she said—'Last week I was very near home, but the Lord has brought me back. I hoped He would have taken me, but it must be best.' The case of the boy was related to her whose father held his hand, and she replied, 'O, He does more for me—"His left hand is under my head, and His right hand doth embrace me." I have seen more of His mercy by lying here than I should have seen if well. What a sweet text that is—"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God ; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." Covered me with His own righteousness—angels have not such a dress!'

Thus the Father helps His children to do His Will; not only to submit, but to 'glory in tribulation also;' not only to be resigned but thankful; 'strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness, giving thanks unto the Father,' while from the midst of the furnace exclaiming, 'Thy Will be done.' Rom. v. 3 ; Col. i. 11, 12.

## IX.—THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

Believers on earth and angels in heaven have been mentioned as illustrating obedience to the Will of God. But there is One infinitely greater, even the Lord of angels, who when on earth set us a perfect example both of active service and passive submission. He who was so high above angels stooped to become below them, that He might illustrate His own prayer and show us how the Will of God may be done on earth even as it is done in heaven.

Throughout His ministry He made it manifest that He came to fulfil a trust, to perform a service, to obey the Will of His Father. He said, 'I seek not mine own will, but the Will of the Father which hath sent me.' John v. 30, vi. 38. When the disciples wondered that their Lord talked with the woman of Samaria, and seemed indifferent to the food which they had gone into the city to buy, He said, 'My meat is to do the Will of Him that sent me and to finish His work.' John iv. 34. His satisfaction at the close of life was this, 'I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.' John xvii. 4.

In the course of this active service He was exposed to suffering, and illustrated when on earth how the Will of the Father would be done in heaven if sorrow and trial could find entrance there. His agony in the garden was real and intense. The bloody sweat was the sign of anguish beyond all possibility of flesh to feel. He knelt, He bowed down, He fell on His face to the ground, 'with strong cryings and tears' He appealed to His Father, 'O my Father, if it be

possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.' Matt. xxvi. 39. Our Lord experienced the utmost degree of human suffering, united with entire resignation to the Father's Will, so that He yielded Himself to all that awaited Him with filial acquiescence, saying, 'The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?' John xviii. 11. And He did drink it to the dregs. When mocked, and scourged, and crucified, He never ceased to illustrate the prayer, 'Thy Will be done,' until He said, 'It is finished.' 'The cross is at once the complete utterance of the prayer and the answer to it.'<sup>1</sup>

Here is the highest possible example of heavenly obedience in patient suffering: agony intense, desire strong, submission absolute. 'He learned obedience by the things that He suffered.' It was fitting, it was needful that the Father, 'in bringing many sons unto glory, should make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.' Our Leader in the same path of trial 'is not ashamed to call us brethren.' Heb. ii. 10, 11. Thus we pray to be enabled to submit in the same spirit of filial trust. My Father, Thy Will! Because as Father Thy Will can purpose nothing which is not for Thy glory in Thy children's good, therefore 'Thy Will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven.'

The example of Christ Himself is the high mark at which we are to aim. We are not to consider what other people do, nor what many Christian professors do, nor what even the best of fallible men

<sup>1</sup> Maurice.

do; we are to imitate the obedience of angels, nay, of the Lord of angels. To aim lower would make us untrue both to God and ourselves. He accepts inferior degrees of service from loyal hearts, but He cannot be satisfied with less than perfection, nor will loving children of His be content with offering less. His Will cannot be lowered to our mean attainments, but our standard must be lifted up to His perfectness. Our dilatory dial must be adjusted to the true solar time. Though we fail in this life to reach the ultimate goal, we must press towards it rather than rest short of it; thus shall we run farther than if our goal were nearer. 'Though an archer shoot not so high as he aims, yet the higher he takes his aim, the higher he shoots.'<sup>1</sup> 'He that aims at a star will shoot higher than he that aims at a bush.'<sup>2</sup> The Divine target for human endeavour is Divine perfectness. 'Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.' 'Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' Lev. xix. 2; Matt. v. 48.

That we may with all our heart, constantly, consistently, joyfully illustrate this prayer, is the purpose of God in the discipline of trial and the teaching of the Spirit. This is involved in the profession of every believer in Christ when he says—'Whose I am and whom I serve.' Such obedience is the test of faith and stedfastness, for the great Teacher likened the doer of His word to 'the wise man who built his house upon a rock.' Matt. vii. 24. This secures repose, for the promise is linked with the precept—'Take my yoke upon you and ye shall

<sup>1</sup> Leighton.

<sup>2</sup> Manton.

find rest.' Matt. xi. 29. This alone gives reasonable assurance of salvation, for 'hereby we do know that we know Him if we keep His commandments.' 1 John ii. 3. This is the true key of knowledge, the torch to guide into new paths; for 'if any man will do His will, He shall know of the doctrine.' John vii. 17. This elevates to a dignity surpassing noblest descent or royal lineage, for it constitutes us near relatives of Him who said, 'Whosoever doeth the Will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother.' Mark iii. 35. This secures the indwelling of Deity, for Jesus said, 'If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.' John xiv. 23. This secures immortality, for though 'the world passeth away and the lust thereof, he that doeth the Will of God abideth for ever.' 1 John ii. 17. This antedates heaven's bliss and allies us already with angels, for it is characteristic of the home of the blessed that 'His servants shall serve Him.' Rev. xxii. 3.

With what thoughtfulness, self-scrutiny, sincerity, should we offer such a prayer! How many are self-condemned as they utter it, acknowledging as the standard of conduct an example they have no intention or wish to imitate. 'In this prayer the godless man condemns himself, the sufferer comforts himself, the slothful invigorates himself, the self-willed rebukes himself, and the will of the spirit prays itself through all the impediments of an opposing flesh, to perfect victory.'<sup>1</sup>

The essential difference between the children of

<sup>1</sup> Stier.

God and others is, that they place the Will of God foremost. Human depravity is alienation from the loving Will of our Father, and may underlie great varieties of external behaviour. Self-will is the common malady; and while the modes in which men gratify their own will are endlessly varied, this typical feature is alike in all. Every true convert asks at once with Saul of Tarsus, 'Lord, what wilt *Thou* have me to do?' Alas for those professors who have any lower aim; who daily say 'Thy Will be done' while daily doing their own! How apt we are to be content with convictions that the Will of God ought to be done, with forms of prayer that it may be done, with regrets that we have not done it and resolutions to do it hereafter! How often we think we do it when we only do it partially, in trifles that cost nothing, in actions concurring with our own inclinations and worldly interests, or when we wait for some grand occasion for doing it, and let slip the opportunities which each day offers in little things! How often we make abstinence from one fault a palliative to conscience while indulging another! We may be temperate but avaricious, chaste but uncharitable, orthodox but irritable and unforgiving, and all the while suppose we are doing the Will of God.

'This is the great difficulty which stops so many in their Christian journey. It is like a great steep mountain, which blocks up the road to heaven: and some of us waste our time in trying to find a path round it; and some of us fall asleep at the foot of it; and some of us in despair turn our backs on it, and set our faces toward the way of sin and death: but

few, very few have the wisdom and the courage to say within themselves, 'The city of our God and King is at the top of that steep mountain: unless I climb the mountain, I can never get there: so the sooner I begin the better.'<sup>1</sup>

Yes, unless we do climb this mountain, and make the Will of God our own, we are in danger of the worst doom that can overtake us, that of being left to our own will. 'My people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me; so I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust, and they walked in their own counsels. Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!' Ps. lxxxii. 11-13. Resolute refusal to walk in God's ways, results in determined walking in our own; and walking in our own, means following that other guide who always leads those who will not be led by the Spirit.

We may fancy we are masters of ourselves when we refuse to be servants of God, but while dreaming of freedom, we are becoming spell-bound by the stronger will of the devil. He promises us freedom, in order to rivet on us his chain. He bribes with the assurance of securing us the possession of our will that he may make us subject to his own. It is a terrible description of his victims—'taken captive of the devil at his will.' Alas for those who are 'tied and bound by the chain of their sins,' and have yielded up their freedom to their soul's worst foe!

Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, who illustrated this petition both by active service and martyr-suffering,

<sup>1</sup> Augustus W. Hare.

thus admirably summarizes what we pray to be enabled to do:—'The Will of God is what Christ has done and taught: it is humility in conduct, steadfastness in faith, scrupulousness in our words, rectitude in our deeds, mercy in our works, governance in our habits; it is innocence of injuriousness, and patience under it, preserving peace with the brethren, loving God with all our heart, loving Him as our Father, and fearing Him as our God; accounting Christ before all things, because He accounted nothing before us, clinging inseparably to His love, being stationed with fortitude and faith at His cross, and when the battle comes for His Name and honour, maintaining in words that constancy which makes confession, in torture that confidence which joins battle, and in death that patience which receives the crown. This it is to fulfil the Will of the Father.'<sup>1</sup>

Such practical personal lessons should not cause us to forget that this petition, like all the rest, though applicable primarily to him who offers it, includes all mankind. As we recognize the whole brotherhood when we say '*Our Father*;' so we pray that His Will may be obeyed throughout the same earth to which we have prayed that His kingdom may come. O for this glorious day to dawn! What a reign of peace will it be when every one will be aiming at the same object, cultivating the same holiness, imitating the same faultless example, obeying the same perfect Will! Then will earth resemble heaven, when the Will of God is done by men as by angels.

<sup>1</sup> *De Oratore*, A.D. 252.

## CHAPTER VI.

### *THE FOURTH PETITION.*

'GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD.'

#### I.—MEANING, PLACE, AND REASONABLENESS OF THIS PETITION.

SOME interpreters, chiefly among the ancient Fathers, have explained this petition as a request for spiritual nourishment. Christ is prayed for as the Bread of life; His Word as the food of the soul; His real Presence as communicated in the Eucharistic bread. Thus the Lord's Prayer is deprived of any request for the supply of temporal necessities. Such an interpretation arises from an unnatural and unscriptural depreciation of the body, and an inadequate and dishonouring conception both of the Author of the prayer, whose own real Humanity is forgotten; and of the 'Father in Heaven' on whose care for all the interests of His children our Lord taught us to rely.

However important may be the spiritual lessons suggested, the petition itself asks for things needful for the body. It is not, like those preceding it, suited for angels as well as men. As yet we are a little lower than they, and are dependent on supplies of daily bread. Neither is it a prayer suited for the Stoicism which would regard the body as an

incumbrance to be ignored, its pains unheeded, its demands despised. Nor is it a prayer for the Monasticism which would punish the body for the sins of the soul, and think to please the Creator of it by denying it the satisfactions of the instincts with which He endowed it. The Incarnate Word, by whom all things were made, recognized His own workmanship when He indited this prayer. The body He framed and made dependent on daily bread, is to be honoured, protected, nourished, prayed for. He Himself took our nature and shared our bodily needs. He did not scorn them as mean and undeserving attention because the body is less valuable than the soul. It was made by God and is cared for by Him. However some may fanatically or hypocritically profess to be superior to the demands of our physical nature, the Lord said, 'Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.' Not 'He knoweth that you can do without them, and should rise superior to the desire for them,' but 'He knoweth that ye do really need them, and therefore you may ask them from Him as your Father.'

But the place allotted to this petition teaches us the due precedence of desires. God should be paramount in our wishes and requests. Not till we have asked that His Name may be hallowed, that His kingdom may come, that His Will may be done, do we appropriately ask that our bread may be given. To seek exclusively the supply of bodily wants is to rise little above the beasts of the field, who 'roar after their prey and seek their meat from God.' Such quest for temporal benefits is begging, not praying;

or, as an old author says, 'It is howling when we come to God merely for corn, wine and oil; when we prefer these things before His glory and the graces of His Spirit.'

This petition is generally regarded as the first of the series relating to ourselves. But if so, we might have expected that prayer for pardon and for deliverance from temptation would have taken precedence, even as the petition for hallowing the Divine Name is first in order as in importance. But this request for bread may be regarded as the last of the petitions for positive blessings, the remainder being deprecations of evil; and if so, the rule of precedence is observed, the least important petition coming last.

Really, though not avowedly, we pray for our own highest interests when we pray for God's Name, Kingdom and Will; but here we more explicitly plead for ourselves. Yet in so doing there is no sudden descent from heavenly to earthly things, no abrupt separation between the Divine kingdom and bodily necessities; for if we ask to do the Will of God on earth, we need to have our earthly life nourished to enable us to do it, and so we ask for bread as a help to service.

Some persons who pray for Divine help in relation to what is moral and spiritual, question the utility of asking for anything within the region of physical law. But events both great and small are influenced by men's thoughts and volitions; if God may be asked to influence these, He may be asked to direct those. And if we ask God to influence human volitions to

bring about physical facts, can we suppose that His own volitions have no influence on such facts? The spiritual and the natural spheres are inseparable. God presides in both, and may be sought in relation to both. To the same Being whose Will we ask may be done, we may say, 'Give us bread;' for is He not our Father, and as such must it not be His Will to supply His children's wants?

The duty, privilege, and natural instinct of an earthly parent were recognized by our Lord when He said, 'If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone?' So we are encouraged to apply to our heavenly Father for the supply of our natural wants. It is a child's instinct to ask food from its parent: it is the instinct of our spiritual nature to look up to God: it is a moral necessity with those who are born from above, and have 'received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry Abba, Father.' We may be unable to reply to all objections against such prayer, or to explain all its mysteries, but if we are children of God we cannot cease from praying; and though we chiefly ask for the Divine glory, and for help to trust and obey, we feel that we do promote His glory, that we do trust and obey, when the filial spirit expresses itself in the petition divinely taught us: 'Our Father which art in heaven, give us this day our daily bread.'

## II.—THE GIVER, 'OUR FATHER.'

God is the universal Giver, we are all receivers. He has righteous claims on His creatures, but His

gifts precede His claims and are the ground of them. We do not purchase His favour, but respond to it. 'He prevents us with the blessings of His goodness.' 'We love Him because He first loved us.' We do His Will because He has first taught us to say 'Father.' As His children we are dependent on His goodness, recipients of His bounty, and say with filial confidence, *Father! give!*

Giving implies personality, thought, emotion. We cannot ask material forces to give. It is vain to appeal to gravitation to bestow anything. What a dreary abode this world would be if deprived of God the Giver! How would all the enjoyments of life lose their highest charm, if we no longer received them as from our Father! To use the recent words of a great statesman and Prime Minister, 'These are convictions the loss of which I believe to be the most inexpressible calamity which can fall either upon a man or upon a nation.'<sup>1</sup> Were there no personal God, we could not say 'Give:' were He not our Father, we could not as children come to Him day by day for bread.

Our Father is the universal Giver because He is the universal and all-merciful Proprietor. The worlds He made and sustains He claims as His own. 'The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.' By His power it is preserved, and He is the life of all that lives. 'In Him we live and move and have our being.' 'He preserveth man and beast.' By His providential care the innumerable tribes of living creatures are fed. His inexhaustible supplies are

<sup>1</sup> W. E. Gladstone, in the House of Commons, April 26, 1883.

ever forthcoming for the need of His vast family. 'He heareth the ravens that cry.' The birds have neither storehouse nor barn, yet our 'heavenly Father feedeth them.' He is always giving, so quietly that we are often unobservant of His bounty as of the silent dew; so regularly that we notice His gifts more by their occasional seeming interruption than by their regular bestowment.

How marvellous is the supply of food throughout the ages for the support of man! Inorganic substances cannot feed him, but they are transmuted by an unfailing chemistry into vegetable products which are fit nourishment for animals, and both become the food of man. But how is it that particles of earth and water and gas combine to form a plant, and arrange themselves into a complex organism, which, formed of dead atoms, is itself alive? How is it that each vegetable and tree gathers to itself particles of matter unlike itself, which then change their nature and arrange themselves in due order, and act as if endowed not only with life but intelligence?

The Rev. Edward White says: 'What is growth? It is as wonderful as if an iron seed had struck out, and had gathered from around lumps of clay or pieces of copper, changed them into iron, steel and copper, and built them up into the form of a steam-engine with its complicated metallic fixtures and appurtenances. . . . What should we say if we could see the gaseous atoms of carbon or nitrogen first gathered from the air, then changed into something quite different, and then moving about and fixing them-

selves just where it was necessary—here some marching to the root, others to the stalk, others to the ear, with its chaff and flour? . . . When *soldiers* form in line or square, or move slowly or quickly according to command, this is because each man is intelligent, each unit has a mind. But each of these particles has not a mind; yet it acts as if it had. . . . There must be some power distinct from the force possessed by each particle and superior to all, which directs the movements of each, as the general directs the movements of every soldier on the field. What is this power? You say it is Life. Yes, that is a beautiful word—but it means nothing unless it means pattern-forming mind. These wonders conduct us to the all-pervading Spirit of God, who “maketh the grass to grow upon the mountains, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing.” It is not then a piece of poetry but profoundest truth when we say, It is God who “giveth food to all flesh.”<sup>1</sup>

This wonderful production of food from inorganic substances, and the adaptation of food to maintain the life of the body, must be owing to the beneficent Will of the Creator and Father of all. His almighty Fiat, His sovereign Word accomplishes it. ‘He upholdeth all things by the word of His power.’ This was the great truth the Israelites were taught in the wilderness. They had fed on the abundant stores of Egypt, where the harvests were not dependent on rain, and where the inundations of the Nile were so constant as to seem a necessity, notwithstanding the seven years of dearth in the time of Joseph, the

<sup>1</sup> *The Mystery of Growth.*

memory of which had perhaps faded away. They had no sooner crossed the Red Sea than they felt their helplessness in respect to that which had seemed a matter of course. In answer to their cry of distress, the manna fell.

Besides furnishing needful supplies for the body, it taught their dependence on God for daily bread. At the close of their long wanderings Moses said, 'Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness. He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.' Deut. viii. 3. God showed that He could feed them independently of the Nile flood and the corn of Egypt. By the exercise of His power He could make the air distil this unknown product and endow it with nutriment to satisfy their hunger during forty years. Thus they were taught that ordinary food nourishes not by any inherent necessity, and that when they were settled in Canaan the produce of their own corn-fields would, equally with the manna, be the gift of God.

Our Lord, suffering the pains of hunger in the desert, and tempted to employ His miraculous power in the production of food, quoted these words. Satan suggested that if He were indeed the Son of God, He had power to turn stones into bread. But He replied that man's life depends not on bread alone, but on God who gives bread and renders it nutritious, whose

power can support life without it, whose favour therefore is life, and obedience to whose word is the life of life. If bread is effectual for food by the Word of God alone, how foolish as well as sinful to violate that word in order to obtain that food! Matt. iv. 4. 'Better starve than go to the devil for provender.'

This same temptation to endeavour to obtain bread for ourselves, instead of receiving it from our Father, is ever being presented to us in varied forms. Our Lord placed Himself on our level. As man He suffered temptation; as man He resisted and triumphed. He did not assert any special privilege of His own, but as one of mankind and quoting their Scriptures, He said, 'It is written, Man,'—all men, the race of mankind,—'shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' That Word alone makes bread to nourish; and therefore the bread must be received as the gift of God, which can only really benefit when it is sought and received as such.

Other miracles besides that of the manna had reminded the Jews of the same truth. On two occasions Moses was supported during forty days without food; Elijah was thus preserved in the desert; ravens brought him meat beside the brook; and the widow's barrel of meal wasted not, and the cruse of oil did not fail. 1 Kings xvii. 6, 16. These facts showed that the Word of God could preserve life in other ways than by what are called natural processes, which are equally the product of His Word. That Word brought the great multitude of fishes to the net of the disciple who had toiled for

them all night in vain, and that Word multiplied the five small loaves to feed five thousand men.

Such miracles convinced the beholders that God had given the food. The strangeness of the method was to convince them of the identity of the Giver. In the regular harvest no less than in the obvious miracle, the hand of God is at work. The comparatively small quantity of seed-corn resulting in the produce which feeds the whole multitude of mankind is only the miracle of the loaves on a larger scale. Those miracles were 'but flashes of light from the heavenly regions to illuminate our darkness—concentrated lessons, strongly-marked diagrams, to teach our dull minds that our heavenly Father gives us our earthly bread.<sup>1</sup>

Because God works by means, such as sunshine and rain; and because He ordains that we should be fed in connection with our own efforts in ploughing and sowing, men are apt to dwell on these second causes and forget Himself. The seed grows by the action of light and heat, of sun and rain; but it is He who ordains these influences. 'He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.' Acts xiv. 17.

And as regards our own exertions, He is still the Giver. Faculty of thought, invention, contrivance; power of will, resolution, perseverance; strength of arm, mechanical skill,—all these come from Him, and therefore He is the Giver of all they produce. 'Say not in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt

<sup>1</sup> Saphir.

remember the Lord thy God : for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth.' Deut. viii. 17, 18.

The Rev. J. H. Wilson of Edinburgh relates :—  
'One day I asked the children in our infant school, Who gives you the bread you get to your dinner? Almost every voice answered, "*My mother.*" But who gave it to your mother? "*The baker.*" And who gave it to the baker? "*The miller.*" And who gave it to the miller? "*The farmer.*" And who gave it to the farmer? "*The ground.*" And only when I asked, Who gave it to the ground? did I get the answer, "It was God."<sup>1</sup> How many children of a larger growth, like these infants, attribute their blessings to any second cause rather than to the gift of their Father!

When the food has been produced we still need to say, 'Give.' The field may be golden with ripened corn, but there may be no fit weather for harvesting it. The barn may be filled with grain, which the mould may corrupt or the fire consume. Throughout the year, and every day of it, the beautiful prayer of the English Litany is appropriate, that God would 'give and preserve to our use the kindly fruits of the earth, so as in due time we may enjoy them.' And when thus preserved we need to say, Give; for it is by the Word of God alone that the grain can nourish and so become food. It might cease to be suitable for our need. We might have no appetite to desire it, no power to digest and assimilate it, no health to enjoy it. For all this we are still dependent on our Father's care, and say, *Father, Give!*

<sup>1</sup> *Our Father in Heaven.*

## III.—THE GIFT, 'DAILY BREAD.'

There has been much discussion on the word rendered 'daily,' *ἐπιούσιον*. It occurs nowhere in Greek literature, and is found only in the Lord's Prayer. Some have interpreted it as referring to the future; bread being asked for the day coming, for to-morrow, or even all the days following. But this seems totally opposed to our Lord's teaching in v. 34 of the same chapter, 'Be not therefore anxious for the morrow; for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.' And although seeking from God provision for the future differs from anxiety, yet our Lord seems to teach that we should be without such anxiety for the future as would prompt us to pray about it, and that we should be content with asking a supply for the present.

Others, as Tertullian, Cyril, Jerome, have treated the term mystically, referring it to Christ as the Bread of eternal life, and to the Eucharist in which He is supposed to be supernaturally but really present; 'super-substantial' bread being asked for, in accordance with the Romanist dogma of Transubstantiation. But it must be obvious to all who read His words with simple minds, that our Lord referred to actual bread for the human body. His teaching is far loftier than that of those who, with seeming spirituality, would ignore the bodily nature which He shared, as though it were unworthy of His care and of being introduced into our supplications.

The meaning now generally given to the word is

that of *seasonable*, bread suited to our need. 'Thus ἐπιούσιος will be "required for our subsistence," "proper for our sustenance," equivalent to "the things needful to the body." Jas. ii. 16.'<sup>1</sup> 'The idea of fitness for a purpose and of actually serving it, are united in the closest manner. For what reason would food have been adapted to the human body, if it did not likewise, in point of fact, serve to nourish it? Now this is the exposition to which we unreservedly give the preference. The "daily" stands in the middle between the past and the future, and designates that *which is just enough.*'<sup>2</sup>

Honour is here given to food as the appointed means of nourishment to the body. How little they reverence God who, in professing to pay Him homage, regard any of His works as in themselves to be despised! How contrary to the teaching of the Bible are the cave of the hermit and the cell of the monk, and how inevitable is the revolt from such unnatural restraint! Unfallen man needed food in Paradise, and received permission to eat of every tree in the garden, one only excepted. It was not the eating which caused his fall, but the disobedience. Angels when appearing to men did not refuse to eat with them. 'Abraham took butter and milk and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them, and they did eat.' Gen. xviii. 8. Lot 'made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.' Gen. xix. 3. Our Lord was not only sustained during His human life by the food of man, but shared it after His resurrection. On the first day of His

<sup>1</sup> Alford's *Greek Testament*.

<sup>2</sup> Tholuck.

triumph over death, He not only accompanied the favoured two on their way to Emmaus, and 'expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself,' but having thus given them food for their souls, He 'sat at meat with them, and took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave it to them.' Luke xxiv. 30. Later in that evening, to confirm the faith of the disciples that it was He Himself, 'He said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave Him a piece of broiled fish and of an honeycomb. And He took it and did eat before them.' Luke xxiv. 41-43. As a sanction to that fellowship in food which so tends to draw together hearts and kindle sympathy, that most affecting and solemn interview when He confirmed Peter in his apostleship and gave Him the charge, 'Feed my lambs, feed my sheep,' was signalized by participation in a common meal. 'Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. Jesus then taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.' It was when they had dined that 'He saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?' John xxi. 13-15.

Religion sanctifies common life. 'Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.' 1 Tim. iv. 8. The body of the Christian is not only the lodging place of the immortal soul, but 'the temple of the Holy Ghost.' To guard it from injury, to supply it with nutriment, to protect it from the heat and the cold, to defend it from dishonour—this is a religious duty, not so important as the other duty of caring for the soul, but deriving its authority from the same

source, and therefore, though subordinate, not to be neglected.

We glorify God not by ignoring the bodily nature He has given, and which Christ shared with us, but by wisely governing it; not by carelessness, but by culture; not by neglecting it, but by nourishing it as the clothing and instrument of the soul. We are to 'glorify God in our body' as well as 'in our spirit, which are His;' equally His, and therefore each, in its degree, to be cared for according to His purpose in regard to each. 1 Cor. vi. 20.

Godliness was never intended to make a separation between our earthly and our spiritual life, but between both and sin; teaching us, not to distinguish things secular from things sacred, but to make all things sacred by faith and love; not to expect to secure happiness in heaven by giving ourselves pain on earth, as though the feast of eternity could be purchased by the fast of time, but, except where conscience intervenes, thankfully to use God's gifts for the 'life that now is,' as well as for 'that which is to come.'

But while the necessities of the body are recognized, we are taught to be content with what is sufficient for our need and not to desire what shall furnish our luxury. It is bread that we are taught to ask. And though we may regard this term as comprehending both other food, and also raiment, habitation, and whatever else we may need for the present life, yet it does suggest the simplest kind of provision.

Here then is a lesson of contentment, and a warning against extravagance. We are not to ask God for that which is merely to please the palate. What He

gives we may use in moderation and gratitude, but we are not instructed to *ask* for more than daily bread. How often has undue pampering of appetite led professing Christians astray! 'We had two common parents, Adam and Noah, and one failed by *eating*, and the other by *drinking*. These sins are natural to us. The throat is a slippery place, and had need be looked unto.'<sup>1</sup> The Apostle lamented the failures thus caused in the early Church: 'For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose god is their belly.' Phil. iii. 18, 19.

Some who do not crave luxuries as a necessity for self-indulgence, may do so for ostentation. They must keep pace with the customs of society. They must not be outdone by their neighbours. Wholesome food, reasonable variety, moderate expenditure suited to their means,—this is not enough. Viands are valued the more the less they are seasonable, not for their suitableness but for their rarity. The pleasures of social intercourse cannot be enjoyed without a prodigal waste which may cripple the resources of the family for weeks to come, or may exceed the amount spent in bread for the hungry poor during a whole year. What a sarcasm on some of the feasts of professing Christians would be, as grace before meat, the prayer, 'Give us this day our daily bread!'

If the prayer simply for 'daily bread' warns us against extravagant desires, it surely forbids extravagant waste, and may suggest the question how far it

<sup>1</sup> Manton.

is consistent to destroy as regards its suitability for food the grain bestowed, and turn it into that which not merely does not sustain life but which in many cases destroys it, beside producing a vast amount of poverty, disease, vice, crime and misery. At least it should make us consider whether some abatement is not called for in the quantity of grain thus annually perverted in Great Britain alone. Mr. William Hoyle, author of *Our National Resources*, gives the following statistics: 'The average annual amount spent on intoxicating drinks during the ten years 1870 to 1881 was £134,103,461. In the manufacture of intoxicating drinks 80,000,000 bushels of grain or its equivalent in produce, has been destroyed each year. Taking the bushel of barley at 53 lbs., it gives us 4,240,000,000 lbs. of food destroyed year by year, or a total in twelve years of 50,880,000,000 lbs. This would supply the entire population with bread for four years and five months; or it would give a 4 lb. loaf of bread to every family in the United Kingdom daily, during the next six years. If the grain and produce thus destroyed yearly were converted into flour and baked into loaves, they would make 1,200,000,000 4 lb. loaves. To bake these loaves would require 750 bakeries producing 500 loaves each hour, and working ten hours daily during the whole year. To grow the grain to manufacture the liquor consumed yearly would take a cornfield of more than 2,000,000 acres; or it would cover the entire counties of Kent, Surrey, Middlesex, and Berkshire.' Dr. Norman Kerr, in an address to the British Medical Association in August 1882, stated

as the result of very careful investigation that the drink thus obtained by the destruction of food was the cause annually of 40,500 deaths from personal intemperance—and of 79,500 others from disease, violence, accident or starvation consequent on the intemperance of others.<sup>1</sup> Does not the prayer 'Give us suitable bread' seem incongruous with this misuse of so much of the bread already bestowed for daily sustenance?

Let not those who have only 'daily bread' repine. The Apostle, who knew 'both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need,' said, 'Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.' 1 Tim. vi. 8. A crust received as from God with gratitude is a richer feast than the costliest banquet which He does not bless. 'The bread God carves, though a lesser slice, has a heavenly excellence when taken with content. The bit of bread is with the love of God, and that makes its relish sweet.'<sup>2</sup> Better 'a dinner of herbs,' where such love is, 'than a stalled ox' without it. Prov. xv. 17. Pulse and water, if God blesses it, may still make 'the countenance fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children who eat the portion of the king's meat' without such benediction. Dan. i. 8-16. God's crumb weighs more than the devil's loaf. 'Godliness with contentment is great gain.'

These remarks are confined to the *quality* of the supply, fitting, needful food, daily *bread*. The subject of covetousness in relation to quantity, anxiety to heap

<sup>1</sup> *National Temperance League's Annual for 1883*, by Robert Rae.

<sup>2</sup> Watson.

up for the future, will more appropriately be considered in connection with the limitation of the request for '*This day.*'

#### IV.—THE COMMUNITY OF THE GIFT—'US.'

This word places us side by side with our fellow-men, and forbids us to pray selfishly. In asking bread for myself I am taught to ask it for others. If I pray for my own interests merely, I do not pray scripturally, and therefore not acceptably. I cannot come to the throne of Grace in the Lord's Name unless I come in the Lord's spirit. 'After this manner pray ye, Give *us.*' As in the opening word, '*Our* Father,' we are reminded of our common brotherhood, so in this word '*us*' we are taught our common dependence on the one Father's bounty.

It would sound very strangely if a family were gathered together, and one of the members prayed, 'Give *me* this day *my* daily bread.' And so we learn by this petition that the human race is one family, and that we must not isolate ourselves from our brethren by seeking good things for ourselves alone.

We may learn a lesson from the bees. They store up honey as a common stock, each for all. Suppose a few, stronger than the rest, appropriated the largest portion of the supply, so that though there was ample provision for the daily sustenance of all, large numbers of bees in the same hive perished with hunger; it could not be said that they perished from want of food for the many, but from the selfishness of the few. Mankind are a community, and the universal

Father provides abundantly for all. If one kind of food may fail, other kinds supply the lack. If there is dearth in one land, there are plentiful harvests elsewhere. There is always food enough sent by the Father for the great '*us*.' Ought there to be destitution among any of His children?

During a recent war there was at one time an open-air enclosure where thousands of captured soldiers were confined within strong stockades, closely guarded. Within this barrier the prisoners were at liberty. Each day food was carried within the gates, just sufficient, though in small proportion, for them all. But there was no attempt at equable distribution. Thus the strong and selfish made a rush at the common store, taking more than their due share, while many of the sick and wounded obtained nothing. Morning by morning, scores of corpses were carried out. Had those sharers of a common captivity all acted in the spirit of the word '*us*,' none would have died from want.

Suppose that there were two hundred persons on board a vessel, which set sail with ample stores, but that these stores were under the control of a few who dealt them out only to themselves and their personal friends; and that the rest began to pine away with hunger, while every day some perished and lifeless bodies were dropped with funeral services into the deep. Imagine the ship's company assembling daily on deck, and the captain leading their devotions with '*Our Father, give us bread!*' The case is too monstrous. But does not the principle apply on a larger scale? We are all sailing together over life's

ocean, and God has provided the vessel with ample stores. Does it then follow that we are to proclaim universal equality, and bid all men share alike? Certainly not. The doctrines of political Communism would soon produce universal want, by destroying capital, discouraging industry, promoting indolence, rewarding vice. The condition of mankind forbids it. If all were equal in capacity, and equally intent on fulfilling each his part, the case might be different. Thus angels share together, no one of them having his own property, but each possessing all. Although this cannot yet be so on earth, every man should remember there are moral obligations he may not neglect, which bind him to care for others while seeking bread for himself. So the Apostle taught, 'Look not every one on his own things, but every one also on the things of others.' Phil. ii. 4. x

Primitive believers were so impressed with the truth contained in the word '*us*,' that for a time they did actually practise a community of goods. This was never enjoined for the future conduct of the Church. It soon came to an end. It could not work in an imperfect society. It exposed to such temptations as destroyed Ananias and Sapphira, and would soon have pauperized the Christian society by making it the prey of hypocrisy. So we afterwards read of wealthy and of poor saints. But to the present day the principle holds good which is expressed in the statement, 'The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul; neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own.' Acts iv. 32.

It is still true that nothing we possess is absolutely our own. It is a stewardship entrusted by God to whom all must give account. It is ours of right, only conditionally on our keeping in mind that we are 'every one members one of another.' Worldly governments enforce the rights of property; the Christian Church teaches its duties too. Perhaps in supporting the State by defending the rights of property, it has sometimes performed a superfluous work, while not sufficiently diligent in its own special function. Governments cannot impose laws of love. The terms are self-contradictory in the mouth of the magistrate. Human laws are precise, rigid, and are enforced. Love is free, and its promptings cannot be excited or limited by legislation. The kingdom of Christ is not of this world, and while it recognizes the rights of property, insists chiefly on the obligation of love to use it generously. 'Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?' 1 John iii. 17.

'The Church proclaims tacitly by her existence—she should have proclaimed openly by her voice—that property and rank are held upon this tenure; that they can stand by no other. Alas! she has not spoken out this truth clearly and strongly here or anywhere.' The consequence of such failure in duty is lack of power. 'She can scarcely make her voice heard against schemes for reducing all things to a common stock, for establishing a fellowship upon a law of mutual selfishness, because she has not believed that the polity of brethren confessing a

common Father is a real one—has left people to fancy that it is only a fine dream, a cruel mockery, incapable of bringing any tangible blessings.' 'If we had understood that we were children of one Father, and were asking Him to bless all the parts of His family while we were seeking blessings for ourselves, that, in fact, we could not pray at all without praying for them, we should have found the answer in a new sense of fellowship between all classes.'<sup>1</sup>

We are reminded of this community whenever we say 'Give *us*.' Masters, kneeling with their servants, are thus admonished to 'give unto their servants that which is just and equal.' Employers of labour are reminded that beyond the working of Political Economy there are the duties of brotherhood, and should be ashamed and afraid of accumulating fortunes while those who help to make them well-nigh starve, though receiving the 'market price' of their toil. Landowners, kneeling with their tenants and acting out the spirit of this word, would not require more than the land can fairly yield, whatever the competition for the tenancy, and would not allow their brothers who plough the soil to live in hovels where they would be ashamed to stable their horses. Grinding competition in trade would cease. The 'Song of the Shirt' would no longer syllable the inarticulate groaning from garret and cellar; nor would haggard children be employed in making match-boxes for twopence-halfpenny the gross.

The intelligent recognition of this principle would influence international relations. The whole world

<sup>1</sup> F. D. Maurice.

would be regarded as the Almighty Father's store-house, as well as the dwelling-place of His children. What He provides in one country would be considered the property of all, and no artificial restriction would be placed on commerce to prevent the free circulation of His gifts. Had this principle been recognized, there would never have been laws for the exclusive supposed benefit of a class, while the millions were starving within sight of plenteous harvests across a narrow strait, or an imaginary boundary line.

As in the next petition they who ask to be forgiven must themselves forgive, so in this we learn that those who ask God to give, must themselves be willing to give. We stand in His presence together with the sick, the aged, the sorrowful, the hungry, and we say 'Give *us*'! We are one company. We plead for each other. And God hears our plea in giving bread enough and to spare. Only He does not divide it into portions for each, but leaves us to distribute it, conferring on those who have abundance the honour and privilege of acting as His commissariat. Can we intelligently and honestly say 'Give *us*,' and then practically live as though we had only said 'Give *me*'? Are we not bound to help our brethren who, when we utter this word, may be regarded as kneeling with us? 'Charge them that are rich in this world' (and riches are comparative; he that has two loaves being rich in relation to him who has not a slice); charge the rich 'that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation

against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.' 1 Tim. vi. 17-19.

God gives to His children more than they need for themselves, to exercise in them the grace of giving, and to open to them the opportunity of a special reward. He who gives wealth 'is able to make all grace abound,' including this special grace of giving; so that 'having all sufficiency in all things, we may abound in every good work: as it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor, his righteousness remaineth for ever.' It is He who 'ministereth seed to the sower,' giving what is more than enough for ourselves for the purpose of distributing it; and we should pray that 'He would both minister bread for our food' that which we ourselves need, 'and multiply our seed sown, and increase the fruits of our righteousnesses.' 2 Cor. ix. 6-10. And we are taught that 'he who soweth plentifully shall reap also plentifully.' In receiving from God we are on a level with our needy brethren; but when we are enabled to relieve their wants we are sharers with God Himself, the universal Giver.

And what can we give which we have not already received? Nothing we possess is of our own producing apart from God. Whatever our benefactions we must say, 'Of Thine own have we given Thee, O Lord.' We are His almoners. He uses us as His hand to distribute the daily store of bread. Our Lord illustrated such beneficence in His own life. 'He went about doing good.' And we are taught to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' It is

more blessed, for there is more conscious pleasure in a gift lovingly bestowed than in a much larger sum gained or found or received; there is more profit secured, for it benefits the soul of the giver, while the bread may only feed the body of the receiver; what is secured by the giver is more lasting than the gift, because the benefit to the soul abides when the garment given is worn out, the bread eaten and the money spent; there is a richer reward from God, for though grateful receiving is acceptable to Him, yet special promises are recorded for those who generously bestow. Jesus regards the bread given to a poor disciple as given to Himself. A 'cup of cold water given in His Name will not lose its reward,' and He will say to those who with true love have habitually ministered to others—'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' Matt. xxv. 40.

Thus the poor and the rich are mutually helpful. If the rich help the poor by material benefaction, the poor help the rich on a still higher scale in affording them the opportunity, by faithful and generous stewardship, of increasing their own spiritual wealth both here and hereafter, and of rendering special service to their Lord. This is the true community of bread.

#### V.—THE CONDITIONS OF THE GIFT—'OUR.'

##### 1. *This word 'our' teaches a lesson of honesty.*

Though it is God's bread when He gives it, and ours when we receive it, yet it cannot be our own in

any true sense when we obtain it by dishonest means. We do not in such a case really ask it from God, nor does He give it. It is a seizure by us, not a donation by Him. If we are providing for our wants by any species of fraud, by misrepresentation, by harshness and exaction, or by trades which secure profit by injuring either the bodies or the souls of men, we may not consider that the bread we eat was given by our Father, or that it is truly 'our bread.' We cannot ask God's blessing upon it. It is sure to entail a curse. 'He that increaseth his estate by indirect means stuffs his pillow with thorns, and his head will lie very uneasy when he comes to die.' Such wealth will prove 'daggers of gold to stab us, ropes of silk to hang us.' 'Our faith without honesty shall be but as the rainbow was to them before the flood,—for show, but no use at all. Though we wish our head a fountain of tears to bewail the sins of the people, though we tread the courts of the Lord and nail our ears to the pulpit; yet a false weight in our bag and a heavy hand will wipe off our title to "our bread;" and our names too, if we repent not, out of the book of life.'<sup>1</sup>

## 2. *A lesson of industry.*

Intelligent prayer has regard to the Divine methods. It is His Will that bread should be the reward of labour. Adam was placed in the garden not simply to enjoy its produce, but 'to dress it and to keep it.' Gen. ii. 15. Idleness is only the paradise of fools. The curse pronounced when man sinned was not

<sup>1</sup> Farindon.

labour itself, but the new conditions attending it. Man would have been much more cursed had he been doomed to inactivity. 'In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread' has been the law of the Giver from the first. Satan goes where men stand idle for his most ready slaves. God's law, linking labour with bread, is a law of love. The Son of man honoured humble toil for daily maintenance. He of whom it was said, 'Is not this the carpenter?' did not eat the bread of idleness during that long abode at Nazareth. In praying for bread we pray for health and strength to earn it, that by industry it may become fairly ours.

The most distinguished Patriarchs, Lawgivers, and Prophets were trained in humble toil. The Bible abounds in admonitions to industry. 'The hand of the diligent maketh rich.' 'Be diligent to know the state of thy flocks.' 'Seest thou a man diligent in his business, he shall stand before kings,' whereas 'drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.' 'I went by the field of the slothful, and lo, it was all grown over with thorns.' 'So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.' In the New Testament believers are instructed to be 'diligent in business;' to 'work with their own hands that they may walk honestly and have lack of nothing.' 1 Thess. iv. 11, 12. Prayer will not bring the bread, when linked with laziness, for such prayer is mockery. Real prayer to God recognizes His laws. We only truly pray, 'Give us bread,' when we pray, 'Thy Will be done,' and do it.

Those whose circumstances raise them above the necessity of labour are not thereby discharged from

the obligation to do some useful work. King Lemuel's model woman 'eateth not the bread of idleness,' though possessing fields and merchandise, with maidens to serve her. Prov. xxxi. 27. The bread we eat is not our own, but that of others, when we render no equivalent for their toil. This was the habitual teaching of St. Paul. He wrote to the Thessalonians, 'When we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.' He then 'commands by the Lord Jesus' those who 'walked disorderly, working not at all, but who were busy-bodies, with quietness to work and eat their *own bread*,' as if no man by mere purchase could make it his own. If we would 'eat our *own bread*,' it must either be by manual toil in its production, or by rendering some equivalent service to the community. Of course children and infirm persons are exceptions; all others, however exalted in station, should, by some beneficial industry, earn their bread if they would regard it as their own.

A distinguished preacher of the English Church in the 17th century says: 'Every man is to work for his food either directly or by commutation; for the gentleman cannot, at least worthily, obtain it otherwise than by redeeming it from the ploughman and the artificer, by compensation of other cares and pains conducive to public good. Sloth is the argument of a mind wretchedly mean, which disposeth a man to live gratis on the public stock as an insignificant cipher among men, as a burden of the earth, as a wen of any society, seeking aliment from it, but yielding no benefit or ornament thereto. A noble

heart will disdain to subsist like a drone upon the honey gathered by others' labour, like a vermin to filch its food out of the public granary, or like a shark to prey on the lesser fry; but will one way or other earn his subsistence, for he that doth not earn, can hardly own his bread.'<sup>1</sup>

Such industry is not opposed to piety, but is a part of it. Religion has too often been regarded as confined to mental exercises and acts of worship; thus it has often been relegated to priests, whose function it has been to relieve the laity from this service in whole or in part, and leave them the more leisure to pursue undisturbed their secular labours. Thus too often the duties of common life have been separated from the exercise of religion, and so have become non-religious, and been regarded as a hindrance in the way to heaven. Were this necessarily so, alas for the great multitude who have to toil in one way or another for daily bread! But when this is sought from God, and the strength and capacity for bread-winning are acknowledged as His gift and exercised according to His Will, then work becomes worship, and the most humble manual toil or the most engrossing mental labour is an acceptable sacrifice, being 'sanctified by the word of God and by prayer.' 'Religion is not confined to the ear, nor is it a prisoner to so narrow a compass as to be shut up in the temple. If you will entertain her, she will come and dwell with you in your private houses and shops; she will walk with you in the streets and fields, and sit down with you at your meals. The husbandman, whilst he holds

<sup>1</sup> Isaac Barrow, D.D.

his plough, may chant forth a Hallelujah ; they who work with their hands may sing the songs of Zion, and ease their labours and rouse up their spirits with this heavenly noise, as the mariners do when they draw up the anchor.<sup>1</sup> 'Religion will sit with the king on his throne, and with the judge on the bench. It will accompany the preacher as well in his study as in the pulpit, and the tradesman as well in his shop as in the church.'<sup>2</sup>

#### VI.—THE PERIOD OF THE GIFT—'THIS DAY.'

In St. Matthew we read *σήμερον, this day* ; in St. Luke *τὸ καθ' ἡμέραν, for the day, or day by day*. The meaning is the same. We are taught to ask needful sustenance for each day as it comes, and not be anxious to lay up a store for the future, or ask God to provide more than for the necessities of the present time. 'St. Matthew touches the readiness, St. Luke touches the steadiness ; St. Matthew the promptitude, St. Luke the patience of God's supply.'<sup>3</sup>

This lesson is developed in the latter part of the same chapter in St. Matthew. Our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, having spoken about prayer, warned His disciples against anxiety respecting earthly things. Their Father, from whom they sought daily bread, would provide what He knew to be best. They must not therefore make it their aim to heap up the wealth which moth can waste and thief steal, but the heavenly treasure which is secured to all who labour for it. Whatever is regarded as the life's chief

<sup>1</sup> Jerome.

<sup>2</sup> Farindon.

<sup>3</sup> Vaughan.

treasure possesses the heart's chief affections. If the treasure is worldly, so will be the heart. Nor are both ends to be kept equally in view, as though a man might give his energies equally to secure treasures on earth and in heaven. One object must be supreme, the other subordinate. 'Ye cannot serve God and mammon.' Therefore we are to take no anxious thought respecting food or raiment. God who gave life will not fail to bestow the lesser gift of food to sustain it day by day. He who formed the body may be trusted for its needful raiment. The birds of the air do not store up food in barns, but our heavenly Father feedeth them. Surely we, His children, are more valuable in His sight than the birds, and will not be less cared for. All our anxiety will, moreover, be useless. It cannot add to our bodily stature, nor prolong our life beyond its appointed limit. And why be anxious about the body's dress so as to lay in a store of raiment for future years? 'Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?' Therefore we are not to be anxious about the future supply of our bodily wants, which are all known to our Father. To-day's wants, labours, sorrows, are enough for us to bear to-day without anticipating to-morrow's. The morrow will bring its own wants and its own supplies. Therefore let us be content to ask from our Father what we need for present

wants. 'Give us *this day* our daily bread.' Matt. vi. 19-34.

Our Lord does not command us to neglect wise precautions. Instead of 'Take no thought,' the Revised Version translates, 'Be not therefore anxious for the morrow.' The Bible never encourages indolence and improvidence. 'Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise: which provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.' Prov. vi. 6-8. 'The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it.' Jas. v. 7. In the spring-time the harvest of the distant autumn must be sown. The culture of youth lays the foundation for the work of manhood, and this for the support of age. The sluggard and the spendthrift must not plead our Lord's word as a palliative for laziness and self-indulgence; nor should religious enthusiasm close its eyes to reason and truth, and think to honour Christ's teaching by observance of the letter while violating the spirit. If we trust God we shall accept His methods, and use the means in connection with which it is our Father's good pleasure to give us bread.

But such obedient industry should be free from anxiety. Anxiety is useless. It is neither thoughtful contrivance nor practical diligence. It hinders both. We cannot think so clearly nor work so effectually when the mind is perplexed with care, as when it is in that condition of calm trustfulness which results from religious faith. The surgeon brings all his skill and experience to the operation, but if the hand that holds the knife trembles, such anxiety may be perilous

to the patient. Especially is such anxiety mischievous when it relates to to-morrow, for we cannot to-day do the morrow's work; and therefore care for the morrow, which cannot be practical, interferes with to-day's work, which demands all our energies.

Not only is such anxiety for to-morrow injurious to ourselves, but it is dishonouring to our Father. To Him all the future is known; whatever we shall need, and His own boundless store. The Israelites were taught by the manna to trust Him for to-morrow. It fell for the present day alone; if unbelievably they stored it up, it stank; they must depend on God for new supplies; they must ask and receive from Him their needful food 'day by day.'

Poverty brings its special trials, but it may help to make its subjects 'rich in faith' by encouraging daily dependence on God. When food for the next day must come from fresh exertion through the continuance of daily strength, it is easier to feel the appropriateness of this prayer than when he who offers it has large landed estates, or property securely invested, or a thriving business.

But the richest, when they reflect, must feel that for them too this petition is appropriate. Their wealth may vanish like a cloud; 'real property' retain only a nominal value; investments become worth no more than the paper on which they are inscribed, and the very prosperity of business allure to ruin. How true the words of Solomon, 'Labour not to be rich: for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.' Prov. xxiii. 4, 5. The wings seem to grow out of the

wealth and bear it away unexpectedly and for ever. Such evolution is constantly going on. ‘Who is richer for a flock of wild fowls which pitcheth in a man’s field to-night, but to-morrow they are gone?’ The riches may fly away not only by their absolute loss, but by their ceasing to give any satisfaction. The care of keeping, the fear of losing, the envy of others, the contentions of rival claimants, may make the possessor wish that the wealth had actually flown away. And the health to enjoy it depends on God, so that the richest must still feel their need to ask supplies from God each day. ‘Whatever his success in the world, he relies on the care of God from day to day as a child in his father’s house, and thinks the provision as good in God’s hands as his own; and therefore asks not so much store laid up as bread for to-day. If he has great wealth, he trusts no more in it than if he had nothing; and if he has bread for to-day and nothing for to-morrow, he trusts no less in God than if he had thousands.’<sup>1</sup>

The dependence of all alike, both rich and poor, on Divine Providence is illustrated by the limited produce of the earth’s harvests. Every summer there is never enough corn in store for a year’s consumption. Were the harvests of one year to fail, there would be universal famine. Of what value would bank-notes and title-deeds and gold and silver be to the wealthiest if there were no corn in the barn? The whole human family may well unite in the prayer, ‘Father! this day!’

The word ‘this day’ reminds us of the uncertainty

<sup>1</sup> Leighton.

of life. To store up for many years to come implies that we expect to live many years. We cannot pray in faith for supplies to last us even for to-morrow, because to-morrow we may be beyond the need of earthly food. The rich man in the parable flattered his soul by the assurance of much goods laid up for many years ; but the voice of God startled him from his self-security with the solemn word, 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee ; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided ?' Luke xii. 20. We hold our tenancy at will ; the lease is daily renewed and may at any moment expire. Therefore we are not instructed to pray for stores to lay up in an abode we may quit before to-morrow.

If we now combine the two characteristics of the gift expressed in the words 'daily' and 'this day,' we find in the prayer an emphatic warning against

#### COVETOUSNESS.

We ask for *bread*, the simplest food. We ask for *daily* bread, just what is suitable or needful and no more. We ask it for *this day* only, or day by day, enough for the present necessity without storing for the future. This reproves eagerness to amass wealth ; the longing for more than is needful in respect both to quality and quantity, which is so often condemned as 'covetousness ;' *πλεονεξία* ; the having more, the craving for some additional possessions or advantages ; leading to rapacity, overreaching, avarice, hard-heartedness towards others.

Our Lord classed 'covetousness' with 'adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, wickedness, deceit,

pride, foolishness,' as the evil things which 'come from within and defile the man.' Mark vii. 22. When applied to respecting a disputed inheritance, He said, 'Take heed and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.' Luke xii. 15. It is not the *things* which can enrich, nor the *abundance* of them; it is the soul itself which is the life, and this may be impoverished by amassing '*things*.' St. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, 'Let not covetousness be once named among you as becometh saints;' and to the Colossians, 'Mortify your members which are upon the earth;' classing among such vices as 'fornication and uncleanness' this one which he specially stigmatizes, 'and covetousness, which is idolatry.' Eph. v. 3; Col. iii. 5.

Many who are not greedy for dainties, and would be content with the simple fare which the term 'bread' suggests, may be fatally avaricious. They cannot be satisfied with food and raiment, nor with whatever else God may give by blessing their industry or in other ways; but they are *eager* and *anxious* for more. This 'love of money is a *root* of all kinds of evil; which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows.' 1 Tim. vi. 10, R. V. Such eagerness for more than 'daily bread' renders the conscience dull in perceiving the boundary line of truth and justice, and leads to defective manufacture, adulterated stores, unfair advantage, misrepresentation, underpayment of service, indifference to the distress of others, refusal of imperative claims of bene-

volence. The covetous illustrate the pagan satire—'Money! honestly if you can, still, anyhow, money!' and what Horace calls the 'sacred hunger for gold.' They are examples of the Apostle's warning, 'They that desire to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts; such as drown men in destruction and perdition.' 1 Tim. vi. 9. Achan rises before us clutching his wedge of gold; Ahab murder-stained haunts Naboth's vineyard; Demas, 'gibbeted by St. Paul,' swings to and fro with this inscription, 'having loved the present world;' Judas fleeing from his still pursuing thirty pieces of silver,—these and multitudes of similar victims of greed warn us not to crave more than 'daily bread.'

Especially sad is the sight of an old man still greedy of gain, grasping if not increasing his store. The long habit of the mind grows stronger as life lengthens, though the bodily strength declines, and the faculty and opportunities of enjoying the acquired wealth become daily less. The shorter the tenure, the closer the clutch. The less use for the hoard, the stronger bolt on the door. The nearer the judgment-seat, the longer the account to render, and the apparently greater eagerness to heap up the condemnation to be pronounced on unfaithful stewards. They who are ambitious to 'die rich' should remember that 'we brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.' We all die alike poor, alike penniless. Nay, they who die with great accumulations of wealth beyond all reasonable requirement of survivors, die the poorest, for, as

stewards, they must give account of so much not employed for Him who entrusted it.

Our real wealth is what we use wisely and give generously; beyond this, riches only impoverish. 'He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord.' The deposit is safe, the interest is sure. Was not Lazarus in his rags richer than Dives in his purple? 'Where is now the dance of Herodias' daughter, and the pomp of Belshazzar's feast? But the tears of the godly have all been numbered; the death of the martyrs is precious in the sight of God and the saints for ever, and the conflict of faith has gained an unfading crown. The widow's mite is still bearing interest and enriching the treasury of God; the cup of cold water given to the least of Christ's disciples is a joy to the heavenly Lord throughout all ages; the visit of Onesiphorus to Paul the prisoner will never lose its fragrance.'<sup>1</sup> An old epitaph quaintly records: 'What I spent I had, what I kept I lost, what I gave I have.' Philip Henry, father to the Commentator, used to say: 'He is no fool who parts with that which he cannot keep, when he is sure to be recompensed with that which he cannot lose.'

The folly of making wealth the great aim of life has been exposed by moralists in all ages, even though they may not have followed their own counsels. Lord Bacon says: 'Seek not proud wealth, but such as you can get justly, use soberly, distribute cheerfully, leave contentedly.' A full table cannot secure a good appetite, nor a large bed sound sleep. 'A great cage cannot always make a

bird sing.' Nay, the increase of estate may bring increase of care. Abundance of 'things' may be more a burden than a blessing. 'One staff,' says Leighton, 'may help the traveller, whom a bundle of them will hinder.'

'Extol not riches then, the toil of fools,  
The wise man's hindrance, if not snare; more apt  
To slacken Virtue, and abate her edge,  
Than prompt her to do aught may merit praise.'<sup>1</sup>

A robe that not only covers the body but drags a gorgeous train behind, may be beautiful in the eyes of the beholder, but very troublesome to the possessor; and it is not every wearer who is skilful enough so to carry it that it shall not gather dirt and perhaps disease, nor by its entangling folds, and by its trailing and catching on the ground trip up such wearer and cause an ignominious or dangerous fall. Things are seldom what they seem. 'The learned pate ducks to the golden fool,'<sup>2</sup> but despises him in his heart, and his own weakness too for 'ducking.' The glamour that surrounds the owner of gold vanishes with the gold and leaves its former owner in the gloom.

'Ah, when the means are gone that buy this praise,  
The breath is gone whereof this praise is made.'<sup>3</sup>

The jewelled crown is prettier to look at than easy to wear. More gold may bring more greed, more prosperity more pride, more fame more folly, greater revenue heavier reckoning. If with larger purse comes less peace, and with more bread more burden, we need not be so eager as some are to obtain more than suitable supplies for our need, and 'if riches

<sup>1</sup> Milton.

<sup>2</sup> Shakespeare.

<sup>3</sup> Shakespeare.

increase' we should 'set not our hearts upon them.'  
Ps. lxii. 10.

Property has its advantages in the supply of comforts and innocent enjoyments, and chiefly as a means of doing good; we may therefore value it when it comes to us in the way of Providence, but should not make the acquiring it our great aim in life, even as we are encouraged to pray not for what is superfluous but only for what is needful. This has been assured to us, and the word of God should be to us more than an earthly treasure to secure us against want. 'What the Christian hath not in the cupboard he hath in the promise.'<sup>1</sup>

It is suitableness, not superabundance, that gives enjoyment. A dress that fits is more useful to the wearer than one which is too large, though more costly. A shoe that pinches the foot is no easier for all the gold lace upon it. Saul's armour was useless to David, who was far better equipped with his sling and his stone. Many who have climbed into great wealth and high station have found their new surroundings so incongruous with their tastes and habits that they have sighed for their 'lowly roofed cottage again.' He whose condition is not suited to his desires, because those desires are never satisfied, is, however wealthy, poorer than he whose mind and estate are in harmony, for, however poor, the latter is contented with what he has.

The Rev. Edward White truly and beautifully says:—'God prohibits us from confounding wealth and welfare. To all He promises a sufficiency; but

<sup>1</sup> Watson.

a sufficiency is something very different from the English "competency." The normal condition of Christian service is the wage of "bread and water;" and whatever is beyond that is a gratuity of the Master in heaven. . . . They who are at rest in the centre are "rich towards God;" rich here, amid the toils and hardships of poverty: rich in thought, rich in the power of extracting, like the bee, honey from almost every flower, and of singing over their work—rich in that "quiet spirit" which receives from the five geraniums in the cottage-window more deep and abiding pleasure than folly can extract from all the collected palms and magnolias of Asia—rich in the power of deriving happiness from other men's gladness, and even from other men's sorrows, through earnest efforts to alleviate them—rich in that holy love which makes the wear and tear of household life seem, not like the convict's trample on the world's vast treadmill, but like an ascent on the luminous steps of duty up to the very gate of heaven—rich in the inward light of God's Spirit which dwells in the soul, and, passing through the eye as a prism, throws a sunny radiance of variegated beauty over the external scene. Of such as these is many a Christian labouring man, and many a sleepless Christian mother, and many a father of children whom the world accounts a poverty-stricken and hopeless struggler with an evil destiny.'<sup>1</sup>

They whose poverty brings hunger may be consoled by remembering that our Lord Himself lived many years on daily bread supplied day by day

<sup>1</sup> *Mystery of Growth.*

through manual toil, that He knew the pangs of hunger, and how the tempter takes advantage of bodily weakness and privation. They may feel that if among those whom 'God hath chosen rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom,' they need not envy those to whom He entrusts silver and gold. Every believer possesses more than all the wealth of which any Cræsus ever boasted, because God is his, and all God has to give. 'For all things are yours; whether the world, or things present or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.' 1 Cor. iii. 22. The universe belongs to every child of His, not *although*, but *because* it is in the Father's keeping. From His infinite store He day by day selects and bestows on every child of His that which He knows to be most suitable. May we not as surely feel that we possess the whole when our Father gives us our portion day by day as if we ourselves kept the key? Are not His choice and distribution likely to be more suited to our real welfare than if we selected for ourselves?

To possess God is to possess a treasure satisfying, enduring, infinite. No failure of earthly hopes, no destruction of this world's wealth can deprive a Christian of his inheritance. He may say with cheerful confidence, 'Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be on 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 stall, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' Hab. iii. 17, 18. 'A little that a righteous man

hath is better than the riches of many wicked.' Ps. xxxvii. 16. And if ever with Asaph he is tempted to repine because some who are not the children of God 'have more than heart could wish,' it is surely enough to silence such regrets when he can say, 'Nevertheless I am continually with Thee; Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me by Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison with Thee. My heart and my flesh faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.' Ps. lxxiii.

#### VII.—PRAYER FOR THE GIFT.

As we ask only for bread sufficient for the day, this is a prayer which is obviously given us for daily use, not necessarily in the form but certainly in the substance of it. In answer to the prayer of to-day I receive bread for to-day; to-morrow's supply must be sought to-morrow from the same Father in heaven. This ever-recurring need renders necessary ever renewed petitions. Though the highest privilege of the creature is to hold intercourse with the Creator, it would often be neglected did not a sense of necessity compel us to pray. This necessity brings us into constant intercourse with Deity and links earth's little things with heaven. Our Father's bounty never fails, but He would have His children's dependence, faith and gratitude nourished. 'The tree of promise needs shaking by the hand of prayer.' The fruit tastes the

sweeter and is more nutritious when sought and received from God.

Our Father does not limit the approaches of His children to great crises at distant intervals, but would hear their voice each day. Not as the High Priest once a year entering within the veil ; not as the worshippers at the annual festivals ; not even as those who on each weekly Sabbath went up to the temple for worship, but day by day we are permitted to appear before Him. Thus graciously does our Father ordain that His children should never be long out of His company ; that their need should be a spur to their devotion ; that thus in coming to Him for the Father's bread they may receive much more in a Father's blessing.

It is a social prayer and implies a company of suppliants. This at once suggests the family. They share the daily supply, and thus are taught to seek it together. Family prayer is not a mere puritan usage, the peculiarity of a party ; it is founded in the nature of man, and is as old and universal in its reasonableness and obligation if not in its practice. How seemly, how beautiful, the daily worship of the gathered household ; parents and children together looking up to heaven and saying, 'Our Father, give us this day our daily bread' ! How unnatural the opposite ! Instead of any argument being needed in defence of family worship, argument is needed for the neglect of it.

Public service in the church, however useful, should not be allowed to interfere with this more ancient worship of the family. The early Christians met on

the first day of the week to commemorate the Resurrection. As circumstances permitted they might assemble in the church more frequently. But each family necessarily met every day to partake of food, and so they met for worship daily, asking and receiving that food from their Father. There is no such argument for daily service in the church, however profitable some may feel this to be, as there is for daily worship in the family; and so far as the former discourages the latter, its claims become questionable.

The worship of the household preceded that of the congregation, and the priesthood of the Family has a more ancient title than that of the Church. Enforcing this truth, the late Dean Alford of Canterbury condemned the practice of the head of a household surrendering his position at family worship to a clergyman, who there is officially inferior, 'and without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.' Heb. vii. 7.

Y The pious practice of 'grace before meat' is encouraged by this petition. If we ask for food each day, so when we receive it we should give thanks for it. This should not degenerate into a mere fashionable form, but, however brief, should be solemn and earnest. How are we 'better than sheep and goats who nourish a blind life,' if we do not acknowledge the Giver of our food? The beasts of the field unconsciously 'seek their meat from God,' and we show our superiority to them when with reverence, truth and gratitude we ask our Father for our daily bread. 'Carnal men are like swine which raven upon the acorns, but look not up to the oak whence they drop.'

In this giving of thanks we have the emphatic example of our Lord when He exerted His miraculous power in multiplying the loaves, no less than when at Emmaus 'He took bread and blessed it.' Luke ~~xi.~~ <sup>ix</sup> 16, xxiv. 30. His giving thanks for the bread He had created seems to have impressed the mind of St. John quite as much as the miracle. 'Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks.' John vi. 23. The place was specially signalized by the fact of this thanksgiving, this 'grace before meat.' If then the Lord Himself gave thanks for bread He had provided by His Divine power, how much more should we who are entirely dependent on Him for it!

Such prayer for bread is fraught with spiritual benefit. It teaches us *humility*. How preposterous for those to be proud who are daily petitioners for the very bread they eat! As the heathen king said to those who flattered him as a god, 'I require sleep every night, I know I am not a god.'<sup>1</sup>

We cannot claim as a right what we ask as a gift. Whatever as creatures we might have expected from the Creator, has been forfeited by sin. It is only to mercy we may appeal. 'By grace we stand' in regard to the body as well as to the soul. We may say with the patriarch of old, 'I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant.' Gen. xxxii. 10. Not worthy therefore of the plainest, scantiest fare, not worthy of our daily bread, for which we therefore

<sup>1</sup> Saphir.

humbly petition as suppliant children, saying, '*Father, give!*'

It encourages *filial confidence* in little things. Some Christians seem as if they could trust God for eternal life and not for daily bread. This prayer is a constant monitor, bidding them 'cast *all* their care on Him who careth for them.' Believingly to say '*Give*' is the cure of care. Were we left to our own exertions, or were forbidden to appeal to God except for spiritual blessings, we might yield to anxiety, but when we are encouraged to unburden our hearts to Him in little things as well as large we may leave the caring to Him. So the Apostle teaches—'In nothing be anxious: but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God: and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.' Phil. iv. 6, 7, R. V. Do we rejoice that He gave His Son, and shall we not trust Him to give us bread? In addition to the plea that He is our Creator, we possess a covenant claim through Christ, by whom all things are ours. Grand as well as simple was that 'grace before meat' of the poor woman, 'Lord, I thank Thee for the porridge; I thank Thee for an appetite for the porridge; I thank thee for a *covenant-right* to the porridge.'

It prompts to *daily gratitude*. How small will be our tribute of praise if we render it only when we receive some extraordinary benefit! Our greatest mercies are the small but regular supplies for each day's small but essential requirements. What we distinctly ask, we are more likely consciously to

receive as a gift from our Father. A crust over which thanks are given and a blessing craved, becomes a richer repast than the costliest fare not received as a royal gift.

Daily obedience will be aided by daily petitions, gifts and gratitude. Surely we shall feel bound to use the strength nourished by His daily bounty, in accordance with His will and for His glory. With faculties each day invigorated by daily bread from His hand we shall pray, 'Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin. O Lord, our heavenly Father, who hast safely brought us to the beginning of this day, grant that this day we fall into no sin; but that all our doings may be ordered by Thy governance, to do always that is righteous in Thy sight.'

Although this petition asks food for the body, yet it suggests that which is needed for the soul. Our Lord in His teaching often referred to both, and spoke of the one as a type of the other. He said of Himself, 'I am the Bread of Life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.' 'The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.' He compared eating bread with faith in Himself; for as merely crediting the existence and nutritive qualities of bread will not nourish the body unless the bread is eaten, so it is necessary that Christ Himself be spiritually received into the heart; His truth, His love, His Spirit, to quicken, strengthen, preserve the soul. 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, ye

have no life in you.' John vi. 31-58. In His own case He illustrated this analogy. When the disciples returned to Him at Jacob's well, bringing food, they 'prayed Him, saying, Master, eat;' but He replied, 'I have meat to eat that ye know not of; my meat is to do the Will of Him that sent me.' John iv. 31-34. He said, 'Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life:' and promised to such seekers for heavenly food, 'Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.'

In the ordinance of the Supper the Lord honoured bread by using it as an emblem of His body; the body which once shared our infirmities, including hunger; but which is now glorified on the heavenly throne. How such a solemn association ought to lead us to honour food, not despising it as mean, and not abusing it by sensual excess! He also again taught that as bread nourishes by the reception of it, so He Himself maintains life in the soul in proportion as by faith He is received spiritually and dwells within us, to nourish and strengthen the life of the soul.

Therefore when we offer this prayer in its primary sense, seeking what is needful for the bodily life, no true child of God can refrain from asking supplies of Divine grace for the nourishment of the soul; daily instruction by the Truth, daily aid of the Spirit, daily grace for whatever need each day may bring. For past supplies will no more suffice for the soul than for the body. As we cannot live healthily to-day on yesterday's bread and without a fresh supply must soon die, so our spiritual health begins to decline

when it loses one day's aliment; and death will come to the soul that trusts to religious experiences of a year ago, as surely as it would to the body if we substituted dreams of former feasts for present daily bread.

Father, throned in heaven above,  
Might and Mercy, Light and Love!  
Give to us, as Jesus said,  
Day by day our daily bread.

Satisfy our daily need,  
Soul and body daily feed,  
Daily hear us when we pray,  
Succour, save us, day by day.

Give us daily faith to ask  
Needful aid for daily task,  
Daily guidance on our way,  
Daily warning lest we stray;

Sympathy for daily grief,  
Daily solace and relief,  
Daily patience, meekness, zeal,  
Hearts for others' woes to feel;

Daily help for daily cross,  
Daily gain in seeming loss,  
Daily strength for daily strife,  
Daily grace till close of life.



my bare necessities. I have forfeited as a rebel my claim as a creature. 'My Father! feed and forgive me!' We are also reminded that food is not enough for us. The bread has little value to those under sentence of death. All luxuries added to the supply of all necessities cannot allay the hunger of a soul convinced of sin. 'Father, feed me! but at the same time pardon me! Give us bread and forgive our debts.'

Man has three chief necessities: food, peace, purity; bread for the body, quiet for the conscience, x righteousness for the soul; and these three wants we urge in the last three petitions. With every lawful claim of the body fully met, the conscience may be oppressed with guilt, and there can be no peace without an assurance of pardon. This neces- y sity has been recognized in all ages and under all forms of religion. Prehistoric cromlechs, Egyptian monoliths, Grecian temples, Gothic spires, all seem to utter the prayer 'Forgive,' or at least to ask the anxious question, 'What must I do to be saved?' Penance, sacrifice, oblation, supplication, in all their varied forms, have ever acknowledged man's sense of sin, his fear of punishment, and need of pardon.

### I.—SIN CONSIDERED AS A DEBT TO GOD.

The words 'sin' and 'debt' are interchanged, as if synonymous. In St. Matthew we read—*ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν*; 'forgive us our debts:' in St. Luke—*ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν*; 'forgive us our sins:' but he adds—*καὶ γὰρ αὐτοὶ ὑφίσμεν παντὶ ὀφεί-*

λοῦντι ἡμῶν; 'for we ourselves also forgive every one that is *indebted* to us.' Thus not only does St. Luke describe as *sin* what St. Matthew describes as *debt*, but St. Luke connects our petition for the forgiveness of our *sins* with our own remission of our fellow-creatures' *debts*.

A debt is what is due; what we owe; 'oughtness.' We ought to render to God all righteousness, and this is the debt due from every being endowed with a moral nature. St. Paul says, 'We are debtors, not to the flesh;' implying that we are debtors to the spirit; or rather to God, to live according to the influences of His Spirit, and thus to fulfil His purposes in the creation and endowment of our own spirit. Rom. viii. 12.

This debt of obligation to be holy we do not ask to be remitted. 'Abatement of rent' may often be equitably asked and justly or generously granted between man and man, but there can be no lowering of the claims of a perfectly righteous God without dishonour to Himself and injury to His creatures. We ought not to desire it. It would be impossible for God to grant it. He is perfectly righteous Himself; and His law is a transcript of His perfect Will. To wish for a lower standard would be unworthy of ourselves as well as of Him. It is the glory of man to recognize this obligation, to confess this debt.

But we have failed to discharge it, and so have incurred the penalty of disobedience. This includes the displeasure of God. If He is perfectly holy, He delights in holiness, and must therefore regard its

opposite with contrary emotions. No one can be perfectly good who does not hate evil. Besides this displeasure, sin entails punishment. It brings injury to the sinner's own nature; and exposes him to the righteous retribution of the Law, the honouring of which is essential to the wellbeing of God's moral universe. Thus having failed in duty, we have incurred a debt of penalty, and this debt, whatever the nature of our sin, is due to God. x

Many sins are committed against ourselves. All abuse of the faculties both of body and mind, all offences against temperance and chastity, bring with them their own punishments. We cannot violate any of God's physical laws without injury. How often by sensual excesses the constitution is impaired, disease contracted, and life shortened! How does indolence entail penury, and dissipation end in social disgrace as well as a premature grave! And if such results do not follow, every sin dishonours though it may not destroy the body which is the agent of it. x The tongue is disgraced by every word that is false and injurious; the hand by every evil deed it is made to perform; the foot by every step it is prompted to take in the service of a corrupted will. The intellect is degraded when occupied with thoughts of wickedness, the imagination when its lofty powers are impressed in the mean servitude of vicious indulgence. Who can estimate the suicidal injury to conscience, when dragged from its viceregal throne, and gagged lest it even utter its indignant protests; the damage and dishonour to the grand nature God gave us, when, contrary to His purpose,

we compel the higher to serve the lower instincts, and bind reason to the chariot-wheels of lust!

Can I escape the debt because such sins injure myself?

† In most cases I cannot avoid the temporal penalty. The physical consequences of violating natural laws are not obviated by my repentance. Self-reproach however sincere, tears however plentiful, will not restore a shattered constitution. Laments for past folly will not call back the wasted property, and regrets however poignant will not regain the social position once forfeited. If it were possible to remedy such evils, the damage done to my moral nature would remain, and memory would never lose the record. And if I were to say—'Though I cannot remedy the evil I will reconcile myself to it, and by † willingly bearing my own burden cancel my debt,' † there would still remain a sense of guilt. In sinning against myself I have sinned still more against my Maker. Could I neutralize the evil consequences or accept and submit to them, I should still be a debtor to God.

My body and mind belong to Him as their † Maker; therefore by injuring myself I injure His property, by violating the laws of my own being I rebel against the Author of those laws.

So also as regards wrong done to my fellow-creatures. Even the lower animals have rights conferred by Him who made both them and ourselves, the observance of which is a duty, and the violation of which becomes a debt. Man is lord of the lower animals to use them for his need, not to torture them for his pleasure. Cruelly to urge them

to labour beyond their strength, to take advantage of their helplessness by coward tyranny or heartless negligence, to kill them not for necessary food but for the pleasure of killing, cannot be according to the Will of that beneficent Creator who gave them physical sensitiveness for their good, a sensitiveness which we share and therefore should respect. If there are many who feel with the poet,

‘I would not enter on my list of friends  
Though graced with polish’d manners and fine sense,  
Yet wanting sensibility, the man  
Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm,’<sup>1</sup>

much less can the universal Father regard as friends those who deliberately torment the creatures which with ourselves are the objects of His care. The Israelites, when delivered from the cruel oppressions of Egypt, were taught compassion to God’s inferior, yet not uncared-for creatures. The ass or the ox that might fall down was to be lifted up; and if a nest was taken, the dam sitting on the young or on the eggs was to be set free, that it might be well with the people, and that they might prolong their days. Deut. xxii. 4, 6. The Son of God said, ‘Your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.’ Matt. vi. 26, x. 29. It is vain to plead that they are our own property, bought with our money, bred on our lands, and to be used or abused as we list. They are God’s supremely, and ours only as stewards who must render account, and answer for all debts

<sup>1</sup> Cowper, *The Task*.

incurred by violation of the Will of Him who is their Protector and our Judge.

‘ But many a crime, deem’d innocent on earth,  
Is register’d in heaven ; and these, no doubt,  
Have each their record, with a curse annex’d.  
Man may dismiss compassion from his heart,  
But God will never.’<sup>1</sup>

† Similarly all offences against our neighbour are also debts incurred to God. Let us glance at some items of the great account. Wrongs to the  
\* *property* of our neighbour include not only wilful injury and open robbery, but all unfairness, however sanctioned by the customs of trade and disguised by terms wrested from the vocabulary of the Political Economist. Oppression of the labourer by inadequate wages, or defrauding of the employer in the quality of the work ; misrepresentations or unrighteous suppression of the truth in commercial transactions ; depreciation of goods when we purchase, exaggeration when we sell ; advantage taken of the distress of others for our gain ; debts incurred without reasonable prospect of payment ; speculation with the property of others without their consent ; withholding what is due when we possess the means of payment ; all cases of disguised injury or unfair advantage swell the catalogue of our debts to God.

To these are to be added wrongs to our neighbour’s *reputation* : not only by inventing calumnious charges and bearing false witness, but by ‘taking up a reproach against our neighbour ;’ by finding pleasure in giving currency to coin minted by others, bearing on it some injurious charge, without any endeavour

<sup>1</sup> Cowper, *The Task*.

on our part to certify ourselves of the truth, and not knowing but it may be altogether false ; thus injuring him possibly more than by any harm done to his property, which indeed may thus be most effectually injured, together with the loss inflicted on him of the good opinion, and perhaps the friendship, that he values more than gold.

Wrongs to his *person* include not only acts of violence which may result in wounds, sickness, or death ; but threats which may disturb his sense of security, and angry and unkind words which are calculated to provoke his temper or grieve his spirit. How often has a sarcastic speech been a lifelong sore ; a passionate invective more painful and lasting in its bruise than any blow ; a proud or chilling look or tone an abiding heart-grief ! To these are to be added faults of omission. As brethren invoking the same Father, we are bound to show brotherly kindness to each other. 'To do good and to communicate forget not.' But how often we have forgotten it ! Alas for the lost opportunities of helping the needy, tending the sick, cheering the sad, encouraging the timid, warning the foolish, saving the lost ! How many might have been rescued from sinking in despair by one kindly word which we failed to utter ! How many might have been brought back to virtue and God by one helping hand-grasp which we failed to give !

'The sorrow I might have soothed,  
And the unregarded tears ;  
For many a thronging shape was there,  
From long-forgotten years.

Alas ! I have walked through life  
 Too heedless where I trod ;  
 Nay, helping to trample my fellow-worm,  
 And fill the burial sod—  
 Forgetting that even the sparrow falls  
 Not unmarked of God !  
 The wounds I might have healed !  
 The human sorrow and smart !  
 And yet it never was in my soul  
 To play so ill a part :  
 But evil is wrought by want of Thought,  
 As well as want of Heart.<sup>1</sup>

The regrets of the *Lady's Dream* we are all in our degree liable to experience, and its lessons it would be well for us to ponder, especially if we cannot plead that all the evil we have done and all the good we have neglected was never intentional. Alas for the money, time, influence which have been employed merely for self-pleasing, as if these were our own absolutely instead of being held in trust ! Alas for the much we have spent extravagantly or hoarded covetously compared with the little given, and that often grudgingly, to benefit others ! And when we consider the priceless treasure of the gospel committed to us, not merely for our own salvation, but to communicate to others, how great becomes the debt contracted in our neglect of opportunities of benefiting the souls of those around us !

This debt which we owe our neighbours is one which we cannot discharge and which they are unable to remit. In most cases the injury cannot be redressed. The slander which went forth from our lips was spread from mouth to mouth, and no published refutation would ever overtake it. The occasion of doing a kindness which we neglected

<sup>1</sup> Hood, *The Lady's Dream*.

cannot recur. Other opportunities will arise, but that one is gone for ever. Many whom we have wronged have disappeared in the crowd or have entered another world. But could they be all convened and their forgiveness obtained, the debt against God would remain.

The 'false balance' was not only an injury to my neighbour, but 'abomination to the Lord.' Prov. xi. 1. 'The hire of the labourers kept back by fraud' is not only a robbery of those labourers, but it 'crieth' to heaven against the oppressor; 'and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.' Jas. v. 4. Every wrong done to man is a sin against man's Maker, and a debt incurred in the court of His impartial justice. David was deeply sensible of this. His great crime was an incalculable injury to the individual wronged, and to the whole nation whom the king by his example had so dishonoured, and whose respect for the law his own offence had so weakened. But when bowed down in overwhelming contrition, though not less sensible of the wrong done to his fellow-creatures, this was overshadowed by his sense of the still greater wrong done to God, and so he said, 'Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight.' Ps. li. 4. Above the human law is the Divine Will which appoints it, and which demands payment of the debt. 'We have broken a law which was not framed on earth, and cannot be repealed on earth.'

To these must now be added sins immediately committed against God. All injuries to our fellow-

creatures are, as we have seen, debts to God. But also the cherished purpose of evil not committed, and not injurious to men, is a sin against the Searcher of hearts. This our Lord taught on the Mount. The permitted idea, the allowed wish, bears with it the character of the act. Thus the lustful passion is adultery, and the cherished revenge is murder. Matt. v. 21-32. How great the debt thus accumulated in the records of Him who 'pondereth the hearts'! Prov. xxi. 2.

Duties owing to God not thus relating to our neighbour have been already suggested by the invocation 'Our Father.' We owe to Him habitual reverence, cheerful obedience, constant gratitude, filial trust, devout worship. This we should render every day throughout our lives. Alas! how often we have forgotten God altogether, received His gifts without thankfulness, murmured at His dispensations, disobeyed His laws! What excuses we have made for setting aside His authority, for resisting the voice of conscience, for pleasing ourselves! When we think of His love in redemption, our neglect of such mercy is an additional debt. How little we have studied and tried to practise the Word of God! How often we have refused to listen to the voice of Jesus and respond to His love! How often we have grieved the Spirit of God by not heeding His persuasions, by resisting His inward striving!

If 'the chief end of man is to glorify God,' how large a part of every life has been abused! Who can make himself an exception to the general condemnation, 'All have sinned and come short of the glory

of God' ? Rom. iii. 23. To come short of that glory is to sin ; to live without seeking to please and honour our Maker is to incur this debt. The rebuke of the prophet to Belshazzar is applicable to us all—'The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified.' Dan. v. 23. When we consider the varied opportunities within our reach of glorifying God in all the circumstances of our daily life, and how little we have acted up to the Divine ideal of our duty, we may well tremble at the thought of the great debt we have incurred.

Sins against God may be illustrated by the word 'debts' for the following reasons :—

They are *entered in His books*. Conscience is one of these in our own memory of guilt. Our moral character is another—all sins against God being wounds on ourselves and leaving their mark upon our nature. Divine Justice is another ; the record on high, in the mind of Him 'from whom no secrets are hid,' and who 'will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing.' Eccles. xii. 14. 'The books were opened, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.' Rev. xx. 12. A record is being kept unobserved by us. As a traveller calls for what he needs at his hotel and no demand is made at the time for payment, though every item is carefully recorded, so it is with our daily incurred debts against God. Sins record themselves. As a multitude entering some place of resort pass individually through the turnstile, and a record is unerringly made, out of sight of the visitor ; and as mechanical contrivances

in factories register every beat of the piston and every fraction of the result produced, so by the law of God impressed on our own nature, all our actions are registered, all our debts recorded.

↳ *They increase*; not merely by the addition of altogether new sins, but by accretions to the old debt, as interest and compound interest in human transactions. Non-repentance for a sin committed and non-renunciation of it augment the amount. Not only does every day that we delay such repentance increase the old fault, but renders more easy its repetition. If committed and not renounced, such a seed is prolific after its own kind. One sin also often begets another of a different kind, as falsehood to conceal vice, as murder to destroy the evidence of crime. It also produces increased alienation from God. As a man in debt without either the ability or inclination to pay it, avoids the presence of his creditor, and often cherishes towards him ill-will, so an impenitent sinner, conscious of guilt, increasingly shuns the thought of the God he has offended. 'The carnal mind is enmity against God.' Thus, like earthly debts, sin ever tends to augment its amount and degree.

These debts against God *can never be discharged*. We are apt to think lightly of what we owe to God. Injury to society involves our own liability to injury, and thus we are often severe with comparatively trivial faults by man towards man, while making light of offences against Heaven. 'Fools make a mock at sin.' Prov. xiv. 9. When some crime strikes at the very foundation of society and threatens the principle of government which upholds all civil rights, we are

alive to an evil which far exceeds the injury done to the individual. But who can adequately estimate the evil of sin as committed against the Sovereign Ruler of the universe, and against that law by obedience to which alone the happiness of intelligent beings can be secured? The magnitude of an offence is partly measured by the dignity of the person wronged and the nature of his claims. If the majesty of a ruler and the relationship of a father unite with the best interests of the community to require obedience to a law which is identified with Truth and Righteousness, disregard of that law is proportionably culpable. In this case the Ruler is the Infinite God, our Father in heaven. Our Lord indicated the greatness of our debt in the parable of the unforgiving servant who, unrelenting to his debtor of one hundred pence, owed his lord ten thousand talents, and was unable to pay.

In vain we say, 'Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay Thee all;' since all that is in our power to render is due each day, and the payment of it would leave the former debt undiminished. Matt. xviii. 23-26. This also our Lord taught in His description of the servant who waited diligently on his master, but was not regarded as exceeding his bare duty. Does the master 'thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.' Luke xvii. 7-10. Therefore those debts cannot be discharged nor even diminished. There

can be no 'composition with the Creditor,' no 'payment by instalments;' the debts are recorded, are ever augmenting, and can never be paid.

*They cannot be transferred to any fellow-creature.* No friend can interpose and say, 'Put that to my account.' No priest or pastor can lighten the load, since each is equally unable to pay his own debt. There is no treasury of good works in the keeping of the Church which can be allotted as a set-off to the debt of any applicant; for the Church is composed of members every one of whom has incurred a debt he has not discharged, and therefore there can be no balance in favour of the aggregate; no works of supererogation, when every member of the Church has come short in ordinary duty.

We ask that God would forgive '*our* debts.' Ours they emphatically are, and can belong to us alone. St. Augustine says, 'Nothing is so much our own as our sins.' Our bodies are God's creation; our mental faculties His endowment; our daily bread His gift; but our voluntary actions are our own, and our sins are all stamped with our own image and superscription. There is always a tendency to transfer them. Adam laid the blame on Eve, Eve on the serpent. Faults are attributed to organization, external circumstances, companionships, prevalent customs, the devil, or fate. But if the action was voluntary, our will made it our own. No such plea in justification of it would be listened to before an earthly tribunal, and they who urge it are condemned by their own conscience, their treatment of others, and their own daily life. The burden is our own; we cannot transfer it. Unless

God deliver us, we must carry it or be crushed beneath it.

These are *debts we cannot escape by lapse of years.* There is no 'Statute of Limitations' which annuls them after a certain period. They are as valid at the end of the longest life as in the days of youth when they were contracted. This David felt when in old age he prayed, 'Remember not the sins of my youth.' We cannot escape them by *change of residence.* To whatever country we migrate, we carry with us this burden. We cannot go beyond the reach of the King's writ. 'Whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I take the wings of the morning and dwell at the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Thy hand shall lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.' We cannot escape them by *death.* This event cancels human debts, but only closes the account with heaven, and is a summons for payment. 'Death is God's arrest.'

Payment *will be claimed.* It is not a nominal debt, recorded but never to be exacted. 'Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.' Gal. vi. 7. For having lived 'in the flesh to the lusts of men,' not 'to the will of God,' all 'shall give account to Him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.' 1 Pet. iv. 5. A day is coming to each when the summons will be heard, 'Give an account of thy stewardship.' The reckoning day may seem delayed but is surely approaching. 'After a long time the Lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them.' Matt. xxv. 19.

As debts, our sins against God when remembered cause distress and fear. How wretched men may be when they know themselves encumbered with financial obligations they cannot meet! Their seeming prosperity, by contrast with their real circumstances, aggravates their distress. The comfortable house, the costly furniture, the pictures, the grounds, the consideration paid them on account of their supposed wealth, seem to mock them. How ill at ease they feel in the presence of their creditor; in what daily apprehension they live; how a knock at the door, or the arrival of a letter, may startle them; what a burden is this debt, whatever the time granted for payment; what a relief when it is cleared off! So is it with sinners under the burden of unpardoned sin. They walk as men carrying a heavy load which impedes their progress and destroys their comfort. They are tied and bound by a chain which hinders their activity. So they try to dismiss the memory of the debt, as if by forgetting it they could be quit of it. But it is forgotten only for a season. The record may be written in invisible ink, but it is written, and at any moment may become terribly legible.

Yes, we must give account for 'duties unfulfilled, words unspoken or spoken violently and untruly, holy relationships neglected, days wasted for ever, evil thoughts cherished, talents cast away, affections trifled with, light within turned to darkness. So speaks the conscience; in some it may be a feeble voice, soon lost in the noises of the outward world, or silenced by violent efforts, or choked by the senses, or bribed by the fancy. In others, it is loud and terrible

to-day ; then comes a reaction of fierce merriment or a temporary lull. In some it is a low but perpetually sounding knell, witnessing of a death begun and going on in themselves ; of the past accursed, the present withered, the future vaguely terrible. . . . These obligations sit like nightmares upon him, stop his breathing, hold him chained. Why cannot he cast them from him as dreams of the night ? They come back with fearful distinctness ; every circumstance, look, tone, clearly recorded ; it is no dream of the night. The voice is a real one which says, "It is done, and cannot be undone, and thou art the man." What signifies it that years have passed away ? The act is gone, but thou art still the same. The act is gone into Eternity, and there it will meet thee.'<sup>1</sup>

The writer once conversed with a man who had been recently rescued from seeming death by drowning. He described his vain efforts to keep afloat, then his gradual sinking till he lay flat at the bottom. In a moment his whole life seemed to pass before him in review. Scenes and actions long unthought of stood out vividly on the canvas of memory. Then he saw his deliverer diving down for him, and lost further consciousness. The man who rescued him had plunged after him within a few seconds of his sinking. Thus in the case of every one, debts long ago contracted and forgotten may in a moment become legible and demand payment. Full of solemn warning is the word of Abraham to Dives, 'Son, remember !' Luke xvi. 25. Even in the present life we feel respecting these debts to God,

<sup>1</sup> Maurice.

‘The remembrance of them is grievous unto us ; the burden of them is intolerable.’

But if, even till death, a sinner remains unconvinced of guilt, his unconsciousness of debt does not alter the fact. Many a man is insolvent without knowing it. Carelessly or wilfully ignorant, he goes on blindly in reckless expenditure without considering whether his income can meet it. He neglects to take stock of his liabilities till sudden ruin overtakes him. Thus it is with multitudes in regard to God. ‘O that they were wise, that they would consider their latter end!’

The vastness of our debt to God has perhaps been too much overlooked in the glorious light of the gospel which provides and proclaims remission. But we cannot rightly appreciate the pardon without a due sense of the sin, as only those conscious of sickness seek the physician ; their earnestness in applying to him and their recognition of cure being in proportion to their sense of pain or peril. When sin is regarded as a trifle, the atoning sacrifice is undervalued or altogether denied. What need of the incarnation and death of the Son of God if we have not incurred a debt so heavy that nothing less would be an equivalent ? A light estimate of past sin will render us less watchful against sin in the future. If the debt already incurred can be easily set aside, no great harm need be feared from fresh trespasses. If our violation of God’s law be excusable error and not a debt recorded, indelible, augmenting, beyond all power of ours to discharge or escape, and which will some day be brought against us in judgment, such repentance as the Word of God describes

is excessive, and such a provision as the gospel announces for its remission is unnecessary.

## II.—THE DEBTS OF GOD'S PARDONED CHILDREN.

Can they who have repented and are forgiven appropriately present this prayer? All who truly call God 'Father,' who desire that His Name may be hallowed, that His kingdom may come and His holy Will be done, must have been welcomed home as His adopted children. They returned confessing their great debt, 'Father, I have sinned:' and He gave them the kiss of forgiveness, and put on them 'the best robe.' What need have they to come day by day for the pardon received once for all? And why ever again confess themselves 'miserable sinners,' instead of exulting as God's happy children?

When a sinner unfeignedly repents, he is forgiven all his great debt and is reconciled to God. But it does not result from this that he never needs again to ask remission of sin. As long as he is liable to transgress, it is suitable and necessary to ask for pardon. Unless he has attained a state of absolute perfection, he needs still to pray, 'Forgive us our debts.' Our Lord said to Peter, 'He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.' John xiii. 10 (R.V.). By repentance and faith, the converted sinner is bathed in 'the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness.' But as in walking from the bath the feet are soiled and need cleansing, so a pardoned sinner, though justified as regards his former ungodly life, is liable to contract fresh stains

which make the prayer for pardon as appropriate each day as that for daily bread.

To avoid this inference, some interpreters, at the opposite extreme from the ritualism which invests baptism with spiritual efficacy, maintain that this prayer is not evangelical, because it was given prior to the sacrificial death of Christ, and was intended only for the hearers of it as still under the Law. But the prayer was twice recorded long after those events. It was given to apostles, to the intimate friends of Christ, to those least likely to incur fresh debts, yet even they are instructed thus habitually to appear before the throne of Grace as penitents.

In this case, as in many others, error has arisen from isolating certain classes of texts instead of taking a comprehensive view of the whole counsel of God. It is true that when a sinner repents and is pardoned he becomes 'a new creature' by the power of the Holy Ghost. He is 'turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God.' He 'walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' 'The righteousness of the law is fulfilled' in him. 'Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized unto Jesus Christ were baptized unto His death? Our old man is crucified with Him, that henceforth we should not serve sin. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the Law, but under Grace.' Rom. vi. 1-14, viii. 1-15. Such statements of St. Paul are confirmed by St. John when he says, 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and

he cannot sin because he is born of God.' 1 John iii. 9.

On the other hand, this beloved disciple teaches in the same epistle, 'If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us' (1 John i. 8),—a passage which Dean Alford thus interprets: 'If we say that we have not sin, *i.e.* in the course and abiding of our walking in light: if we maintain that we are pure and free from all stain of sin. St. John is writing to persons whose sins have been forgiven them (ii. 2), and therefore necessarily the present tense ἔχομεν refers not to any previous state of sinful life before conversion, but to their now existing state and the sins to which they are liable in that state. And in thus referring, it takes up the conclusion of the verse, in which the outward cleansing power of the sanctifying blood of Christ was asserted: this state of needing cleansing from all present sin is veritably that of all of us; and our recognition and confession of it is the very first essential of walking in light.' The preceding verse teaches us that 'if we walk in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin;' the cleansing here spoken of being the pardon of the faults of the children of light who have already, in repentance and faith, been cleansed from their old sins. Again St. John connects a state of sanctification with the continued need of pardon when he says, 'These things write I unto you that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' Although the object of the gospel is to make its recipients holy, they are still liable to be overtaken by sin. 'They

cannot sin' if truly 'born of God' as they once did when wandering in rebellion; they cannot sin habitually, encouraging it, persevering in it; they hate it, resist it, mourn over it; yet are they liable to be overcome by occasional temptation; but they are not on this account to despair as though no fresh pardon were possible, since they who believe have One who ever pleads their cause with God. 1 John ii. 1, 2.

St. Paul teaches the same truth. The exhortations to practical holiness and the warnings to believers in every epistle show that he considered them liable to sin. Persuasions to aim at greater spirituality show that perfection was far from having been reached. He says of himself, 'Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' Phil. iii. 12-14.

The two classes of statement are in beautiful harmony. When a sinner repents, his old sins are pardoned and the help of the Holy Spirit is given to enable him to overcome temptation in future. But he is still in the body and liable to the influence of the flesh which 'lusteth against the spirit;' he is still in a world full of snares, and is still exposed to the crafts and assaults of the devil. Thus he is still liable to sin, although this is now alien to his renewed nature, and when he falls into it he has no peace till he repents of it. But he has often occasion to lament such failures. He still sympathizes with the publican

who prayed 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' rather than with the Pharisee who said, 'Lord, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are.' Moreover, the larger knowledge which, by the teaching of the Spirit, he now enjoys of God, shows the vast interval between himself and the Divine perfection at which he aims. An increasing sense of obligation with growing love to God makes him more sensitive to his failures. The more he grows in holiness, the more he perceives his imperfections. The stronger the light in a room, the more obvious the stains on the carpet. The brighter the sunbeam, the plainer the motes. The summit of the mountain piercing the skies with its glittering pinnacles and spotless dome is not seen from the low-lying valley, and he who wishes to climb has a very imperfect notion of the task before him. He sees the steep precipice concealing the distance, and this must first be surmounted, requiring the utmost efforts of which he is now capable. But when, after much toil and peril, this has been conquered, instead of thinking he has gained the goal, he is filled with admiring awe as he beholds the mountain rising far, far beyond and above him. The sinner first seeking pardon has no such conception of his need of it while climbing the craggy cliffs of penitence, as when from the table-land of forgiveness he gazes upwards at the mountain of God's holiness.

'Christian Perfection' is obedience to God by men on earth similar to that of angels in heaven. This all should hold as the true ideal: but when the term is used as actually characterizing individuals, the real meaning intended is generally that of maturity of

character, habitual faith in God, a steady purpose of obedience, and progress heavenward. To profess to have reached the goal indicates a low ideal; to be unconscious of defect betrays a dulness of the spiritual sense; to be satisfied with the service rendered is a gauge which reveals the low level of a love which, when the vessel is full, cannot be content with the measure of its manifestation. A diligent student both of the Bible and human nature once remarked to the writer respecting one who held the opinion here questioned, 'I always thought him perfect till he told me he was.'

Some persons speak of Sanctification as attainable instantaneously by a simple act of faith in Christ. As a sinner believing is at once justified and thus released from his debt, so, they say, if we believe in Christ as the Sanctifier, we are at once and fully freed from the liability to sin again. But this is confounding the two great blessings of salvation, which, while inseparable in fact, are essentially distinct in character and development. Justification is the act of Divine Grace annulling the sentence of condemnation; Sanctification is the work of the Spirit within the heart, operating in harmony with our own minds to produce holiness of thought, motive, habit, conduct, character. In the nature of things this must be gradual and continuous. The seed is sown as soon as we believe; there is no interval between the pardon of a sinner and his reception of the germ of the new and heavenly life; but this has to grow and blossom and bear fruit. The chains are struck off the captive, and he is animated with new courage and strength to win the victory

over his foes; but the battle is only begun, though the final victory is promised. The leaven has been put into the meal, but the whole lump is not immediately leavened. Thus we are admonished to 'grow in grace;' to 'add to our faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity;' St. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to 'be perfect;' but it is evident from the epistle that they had not yet reached the mark he set before them. 2 Cor. xiii. 11.

This has been the concurrent experience of the holiest of God's children. No one of ancient times is represented as nearer perfection than Daniel, yet we find him confessing not only the sins of his nation but his own. We are allowed to look into his secret chamber and listen to his devotions. 'Whiles I was praying and confessing my sin, and the sin of my people Israel.' Dan. ix. 20. There is scarcely one of the Bible-saints of whom some fault is not recorded, showing their need of pardon, and illustrating the words of David, 'Who can understand his errors? cleanse Thou me from secret faults;' Ps. xix. 12: of Solomon, 'There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not;' Eccles. vii. 20: and of St. James, 'In many things we all stumble:' iii. 2 (R.V.). We have already noticed St. Paul's repudiation of any claim to be perfect. Phil. iii. 12. Although he triumphed in the assurance of final victory, he was conscious of a liability to temporary reverses. It was said of the Romans, that they might be worsted in battle but never in war; and the soldiers of Christ, when most hopeful of the result,

are most aware of temporary failures, and confess them with penitence lest they should become permanent. St. Augustine speaks of 'sins of a daily infirmity in which even he who watches most will yet be entangled, and without which a life in the flesh can scarcely be led; scarcely without some of the world's dust adhering to him will even the faithful man walk through the world's paths. But in this prayer there is the shaking off this dust before it has settled and hardened upon him.'<sup>1</sup>

There are occasional seasons of spiritual calm when a believer may be induced to suppose that peace of mind means freedom from sin. 'It may be under some great affliction, it may be in some eminent enjoyment of God, in the sense of the sweetness of blessed communion with Christ, we have been ready to say that sin was dead and gone for ever. But have we not found by experience the contrary? Hath it not manifested that it was only retired into some unsearchable recesses of the heart, as to its nature, though greatly weakened in its power? God's delight is with the humble and contrite ones, and such are we only when we have a due sense of our own vile condition. This will beget reverence of God, sense of our distance from Him, admiration of His grace and condescension, a due valuation of mercy, far above those light, verbal, airy attainments that some have boasted of.'<sup>2</sup>

↓ To suppose perfection already reached, is not merely a theological error, but a moral defect and

<sup>1</sup> *Sermon on the Mount from St. Augustine.* Trench.

<sup>2</sup> Owen on *Indwelling Sin in Believers.*

disguised peril. It lowers the standard of duty to think we have reached it; it lessens the sense of obligation to consider we have discharged it; it weakens the motive to watchfulness to imagine the foe is slain. 'Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.' Because the faults of God's children differ from the daring sins of rebels, they do not therefore lose the character of sin, nor cease to incur a debt which must be cancelled or paid. It is possible to receive pardon of some great trespass, and by repeated commission of smaller sins unrepented of, to perish. It is only when God's pardoned children continue to 'give all diligence,' adding to their faith the cultivation of every virtue, that they are 'not barren nor unfruitful;' whereas 'he that lacketh these things is blind, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure.' 2 Pet. i. 5-10. Lack of diligence in watching against and repenting of the smaller sins of God's children weakens such surety. Little expenses multiplied may ruin a business or impoverish a family. Debts neglected because each is small, may so accumulate as to cause bankruptcy. Accretions of rust, each particle invisible, may stop a watch or fasten up a door. St. Augustine says, 'It is of little drops that mighty rivers, yea ruinous and wide-wasting inundations, are made up. The leak may be trifling, yet if waters are always coming in, and not being continually pumped out, they will in the end sink the ship. A mountain of minute grains of

sand will as effectually crush out the life, as the same bulk of solid lead. Little venomous insects, if only there are enough of them, will kill a man with their multitudinous bites, as certainly as some wild beast with its single one. But in this prayer there is for the man that faithfully uses it, the pledge and power of a daily cleansing, the medicine of his slight but ever recurring hurts.'<sup>1</sup>

The sins of God's children, though not those of rebels, have a speciality which forbids us to treat them as trifles. When a friendship is peculiarly tender and deep, we feel sensitive to every hasty word which may grieve the friend we love. The greater our obligation to a benefactor, the greater our regret for any act of seeming ingratitude. The pardoning love of our Father, and our privileges and joys now that we are at home, form a new obligation of a specially strong and tender kind. We know more than before of our Father's loving heart and the beauty and goodness of His laws. They who have tasted the bliss of filial relationship and intimate communion ought to feel that acts of negligence have now a guilt which in kind, if not in degree, could not attach to acts of wilful disobedience committed when they were strangers to their Father's heart and home. More knowledge of His Will increases the guilt of resisting it; higher privileges entail heavier responsibilities; filial love gives to conscience additional sensitiveness; and the child at home, without ever doubting the Father's favour, is conscious of the daily defects in his own love and obedience.

<sup>1</sup> Trench.

This very prayer serves to convince those who, as children of God, fully enter into its meaning, of their need of this petition. *Our Father*: but how often I fail in the reverence, trust, love, and obedience due from a child! *Hallowed be Thy Name*: but how have I come short in cherishing befitting reverence of it myself, and promoting it in others! *Thy Kingdom come*: but how little I have done to advance it! *Thy Will be done on earth as in heaven*: but how inferior my obedience to that of angels! *Give us this day our daily bread*: but how often I have doubted or murmured when that which I desired has not been given, and how often have I been unthankful to the Giver! If then I need to come 'day by day' for 'daily bread,' I need also to come day by day for daily pardon, and thank the Lord who knows the failings and necessity of His disciples, for teaching His apostles and His Church till the end of time to say, 'Forgive us our debts.'

A dear friend now in glory, who on earth manifested more of angelic piety than is often the privilege of men to witness, and who was a distinguished member and minister of a church including 'Christian perfection' in its doctrinal system, thus records his own sense of daily need of seeking remission of debts contracted as a child of God :—

'Sins unnumbered I confess,  
Of exceeding sinfulness,  
Sins against Thyself alone,  
Only to Omniscience known ;

'Deafness to Thy whispered calls,  
Rashness 'midst remembered falls,  
Transient fears beneath the rod,  
Traacherous trifling with my God ;

'Tasting that the Lord is good,  
Pining then for poisoned food ;  
At the fountain of the skies  
Craving creaturely supplies ;

'Worldly cares at worship-time ;  
Groveling aims in works sublime ;  
Pride, when God is passing by ;  
Sloth, when souls in darkness die.

'O be merciful to me  
Now in bitterness for Thee ;  
Father, pardon through Thy Son,  
Sins against the Spirit done.'<sup>1</sup>

### III.—OUR FATHER'S FORGIVENESS.

Belief in the possibility of pardon is essential to the asking it. 'He that cometh to God must believe that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.' Heb. xi. 6. But is pardon within the possibility of such reward? The 'Forgiveness of Sins' is an article of the Creed much more easily pronounced than explained.

The universe is under the great law of Cause and Effect. Every grain of sand and drop of dew, the rolling planets and the central sun, alike obey it. Influences once set in motion continue their operation both in the material and moral worlds. Violation of physical laws entails physical suffering, of social law social disgrace, of moral law deterioration of character. Conduct is followed by appropriate consequences, and 'whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' Gal. vi. 7. But in asking pardon we ask for a suspension of this law, for an intervention between cause and effect, for the neutralizing of influences

<sup>1</sup> William Bunting.

actually at work. We ask for the stone that has been flung to be stopped, for the flood that has been let loose to be arrested, for the fire that has been lighted to be quenched, and not only so, but also for the precious things it has ruined to be restored.

Nature does not forgive. The health enfeebled by folly is not renovated by remorse. The spendthrift's riches, which have taken to themselves wings, do not fly back at the call of regret. Repentance does not atone for crime, nor restore the criminal to his former social position. Thus it has been questioned whether there can ever be forgiveness of sin, and men, under various systems, have endeavoured, by methods of their own, to neutralize their guilt and its consequences, without attaining any assurance of success. Socrates doubted whether sin could be forgiven. Without revelation sinful men could never be free from fear.

Job felt the difficulty when he said that if he should justify himself, his own mouth would condemn him; that in vain he tried to forget his burden, and comfort himself; that if he made his hands never so clean, he would still be as one plunged in a ditch; that God was not as a man to come together with him in judgment; that there needed some intermediary to effect reconciliation; but that, alas! there was no such daysman to act as mediator, and lay his hand on both. Job ix. 20, 21, 27-35. 'The one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,' does 'lay His hand on both,' and by His atonement declares and explains forgiveness.

'When Christ came He spoke of forgiveness as the

most difficult of all God's secrets. He said that no one could tell of Atonement but He who had been in heaven. John iii. 1-17. If it were not for Christ's clear revelation, I could not believe in a free forgiveness. Cause and effect, antecedent and consequence, are so bound together on God's earth, that the idea of their severance—which is, in other words, the release of the soul that has sinned from the death which sin merits—can only be accepted as the explicit assertion, the direct revelation, of Him who knows all things.<sup>1</sup>

Jehovah had revealed Himself to Moses as 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin;' although 'He will not always clear the guilty.' Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7. The pardoning God is the holy God who will uphold His own righteous law, and punish those who persevere in sin. This truth is extolled by the Psalmist, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgiveth all thine iniquities:' Ps. ciii. 3: and by the Prophet, when, comparing the holy but forgiving Jehovah with the implacable deities of the heathen, he exclaimed, 'Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy.' Mic. vii. 18.

The typical sacrifices connected with the confession of sin were about to be set aside when the Baptist said, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' John i. 29. Jesus said of Himself that He came 'to give His life a ransom for many.' Matt. xx. 28. Him the apostles proclaimed as 'a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to

<sup>1</sup> Vaughan.

Israel, and remission of sins.' Acts v. 31. When Saul the persecutor was himself forgiven, he proclaimed to all that 'through this Man is preached the forgiveness of sins.' Acts xiii. 38. Though 'all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,' they who repent are 'justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus : whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past.' Rom. iii. 23-25. 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.' 2 Cor. v. 19. Christ is the medium of forgiveness, to whom all whose debts are cancelled owe their deliverance, however defective their knowledge of Him. 'Neither is there salvation in any other : for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.' Acts iv. 12.

However mysterious the doctrine of the Atonement, the Apostle plainly taught the fact 'that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.' 1 Cor. xv. 3. 'He was wounded for our transgressions, and with His stripes we are healed ; and the Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquities of us all.' Isa. liii. 5, 6. The truth that 'the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin,' is the theme of the new song of heaven. 'Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, be glory and dominion for ever and ever.' 1 John i. 7 ; Rev. i. 5, 6.

Some have supposed that Christ actually paid the debt we have incurred, His sufferings being exactly an equivalent for our punishment. If so, it follows that

the debt once paid cannot be justly exacted afterwards. But if any for whom Christ suffered should themselves suffer, it is inferred that their debt would be twice paid; and as many do actually perish, some theological logicians have taught that for them Christ did not die, while all whose debts were included in His Atonement must necessarily be saved. This is not the occasion to enter on so vast a subject as the nature and extent of the Atonement. Let it suffice to say that Scripture nowhere teaches the absolute payment by Christ of our debts, but that His sacrifice is a sufficient provision for the pardon of all who, by repentance and faith, are qualified, that is, are willing to receive it. If only one transgressor of the law is pardoned, the law seems to need to be honoured and righteousness vindicated; nay, we feel this to be needed for the mere offering of pardon. The difficulty which the doctrine of forgiveness suggests to our minds is that of reconciling the holiness of God and His position as Ruler of the Universe with His willingness to forgive sin, and with the proclamation of pardon, whether accepted or not. When this difficulty is removed from our minds, we cease to feel a difficulty in reconciling the holiness of God with the pardon of any multitude of penitent sinners. If the amnesty may righteously be proclaimed, it may righteously be ratified in the case of all who accept it. For one sinner to cross the great gulf dividing us from heaven, a bridge seemed to be needed which Deity alone could construct, but which, needed for one, was sufficient to bear the burden of all mankind. Yet if any refuse to cross, their ruin is the fault not of the

bridge, but of their own will. All may receive forgiveness of sins if they repent; but they who reject the mercy will bear their own burden, although provision was made by Christ for its remission in the case of all who 'repent and believe the Gospel.' When thus we come within the terms of the amnesty, 'God draws the red lines of Christ's blood over our sins, and so crosses the debt-book.'<sup>1</sup>

The Gospel of Jesus Christ explains the mystery of forgiveness. The evil wrought by sin is counteracted by Him who died for sin. The cross of Christ interposes between the sinner who believes and the punishment due to violated law, so that the final consequences are arrested. If the doctrine of forgiveness through the Atonement of Christ is mysterious, the doctrine of forgiveness without an atonement is inexplicable. Sin as a cause does not result in punishment as its effect on those who believe in Jesus, because the Atonement intervenes to accomplish that for which punishment would have been required in relation to the Divine government; and, in relation to our own nature, the injury of sin is counteracted by a new spiritual life produced in Regeneration, whereby the power of the former habit of sin is counteracted and eventually destroyed. Left to ourselves and the natural effects of sin, the bad seed sown must grow, producing its present and future harvest of 'corruption.' But by the heavenly life imparted this seed is destroyed; 'old things have passed away, and all things have become new.' The converted sinner has passed 'from darkness to light,

<sup>1</sup> Watson.

and from the power of Satan unto God.' This perfects the Divine forgiveness, for it is the actual cancelling of the debt as regards the wrong done to our own spiritual nature. The record is effaced from the tablets of character. We are 'new creatures in Christ Jesus.' Thus Sanctification, which is the result of Regeneration, is an actual evidence of forgiveness; it is the cancelling of the debt accumulated within us, it is the very sending away, the dismissal, the absolute discharge we pray for, when we say, *ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν*; the penalty of sin being remitted by deliverance not only from future punishment by God, but from present pollution in ourselves. Thus God remits sin; in Justification saving from its deserved penalty, in Sanctification from its resulting influence.

The doctrine of Forgiveness needs, however, to be explained consistently with certain revealed truths and natural facts. God is said to 'visit the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.' Ex. xxxiv. 7. Those children may themselves be penitent and pardoned and yet suffer from the sins of their parents, as by inherited disease, poverty, disgrace; and in the case of nations, one generation may have to bear the burden of debts incurred, and to be exposed to the animosities fomented, by wars they blush to think of. So an individual may suffer disease, poverty, dishonour, long after he has repented of the sins that caused them. God not only does not interpose to arrest these results, but may even specially appoint suffering as a sequence of sin the pardon of which has been assured. So it was with David. When he had

repented and was forgiven, he was not delivered from all the punishment threatened prior to his repentance. The temporal evils did come upon him, in the bitter shame that overshadowed his own home through the rebellion of Absalom, although his prayer was answered, 'According to the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.' He was assured of pardon, yet at the same time was adjudged to suffer. 'And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.' 2 Sam. xii. 10-14.

The sorrows resulting from sins forgiven are to be regarded not as penal but as disciplinary. They are often needed to illustrate the evil of sin, to show that even the children of God must suffer if they do wrong, and to deter others from similar faults. They are needed to teach the transgressors to cultivate humility, watchfulness, prayer and gratitude. Thus the absolute forgiveness of sin is consistent with chastisement. In the case of a pardoned child of God the sad consequences of sin which are still experienced are not a sign of wrath as against God's enemies, but of loving discipline towards His children. 'Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.'

The injury to character, though at once subjected to remedial influence, is not at once effaced. The

habits of long years of sin need to be supplanted by habits of holiness. From the pages of memory the records and images of evil do not at once fade away, nor can those pages become at once crowded with recollections of evil conquered and good achieved. We are solemnly warned against storing up evil memories by the word of the Lord to the people of Jerusalem. After being reproved for their abominable idolatries in the most terrific terms of indignation in order to lead them to repentance, although forgiveness is promised, they are warned of the sorrows resulting from the memory of those sins. 'Then shalt thou remember thy ways, and be ashamed; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord; that thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, said the Lord God.' Ezek. xvi. 62, 63.

The consequences of sin as regards memory cannot be destroyed. When God promises that our sins and iniquities He will remember no more, the meaning is that He will act towards us as if He forgot those sins. He would cease to be Omniscient if any fact were to fade from His mind. It is questionable whether from our finite minds anything that has once left its impress there is absolutely forgotten. St. Paul, when rejoicing that God had 'forgiven all trespasses,' did not cease to remember with self-abasement that he had persecuted the Church of God. And saints in glory give thanks to Him who 'washed them from their sins,' thus showing that the memory of sin remains. But as God acts towards us as if He did

not remember our sins, treating us as if we had never sinned, so He can cause our joy to abound in spite of our own memory of transgression,—a memory which, while encouraging humility, will also prompt to more intense gratitude and deeper tones of praise.

With these explanations we may rejoice to know that the remission of our debt by God is *absolute remission*; no arrears remain, no penalties, no penal demands to be paid, either in this world or the next. It is *immediate*, for no sooner is the prayer truly offered than the answer is recorded, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.' The guilt is at once removed, the sentence cancelled, and the work of progressive sanctification commenced, never to end but in the absolute removal from the soul of every taint of sin. Nothing is now owing on the account of sin repented of and pardoned. The liberated debtor is treated as if he had never been in debt: unlike the case of earthly debtors, who may be cleared by legal process, but do not recover their former credit. The sinner whom God forgives is trusted, adopted into His family, loved and treated as a child. The prodigal son is not kept in the outer court with the servants, but welcomed to the inner chamber and folded to the Father's heart.

The completeness of this pardon is expressed in the strongest language. 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' Isa. i. 18. The pardoned penitent may say with Hezekiah, 'Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back;' Isa. xxxviii. 17; but God's own representation far transcends our conceptions; for He says, by His prophet, that He

will cast all our sins 'into the depths of the sea;' Mic. vii. 19; 'I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions;' Isa. xlv. 22; 'Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more;' Heb. viii. 12; 'As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us;' 'As high as the heaven is above the earth, so great is His mercy;' 'I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.' Isa. xlv. 25. 'He delighteth in mercy.' Mic. vii. 18. We may safely appeal to Him as One 'whose nature and property is ever to have mercy and to forgive.' In nothing so much as in forgiveness are His own words illustrated, 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.'

'Kind hearts are here ; yet would the tend'rest one  
Have limits to its mercy : God has none!  
And man's forgiveness may be true and sweet,  
But yet he *stoops* to give it. More complete  
Is Love that lays forgiveness at thy feet,  
And pleads with thee to raise it. Only Heaven  
Means *crowned*, not *vanquished*, when it says *Forgiven*.'<sup>1</sup>

There is pardon for every penitent, for the chief of sinners. If there is any exception as to pardon, there is no exception as to the promise, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.' John vi. 37. A sin for which there is no possible forgiveness is only one for which there is no actual repentance. No one is shut out by God from remission who does not shut himself out by persevering in sin. Pardon is inseparable from penitence.

<sup>1</sup> Procter.

Christ 'is exalted to give repentance and remission of sins.' These gifts are indissoluble. The first is a pledge of the second. Repentance is our actually moving out from the shadow of death across the boundary into the sunshine of life and love. He who repents is already in the region of pardon and the light of God.

Christ the High Priest, through whose sacrifice and intercession this pardon is conferred, is the only Mediator at whose hands we receive it, by whose word we are assured of it. It is the privilege and duty of all who are forgiven to declare and pronounce to all others, being penitent, the same absolution and remission of sin which they have received; but it is Christ alone who can bestow it, and authoritatively declare and confirm it. He said to the man whom He cured of the palsy, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee,' and claimed that 'the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sin;' and as 'none can forgive sins but God only,' none but Christ can assume this function. Mark ii. 5-10. In the words of the Dean of Llandaff, 'I cannot believe that Christ meant any man to come, even as a helper, even as an abettor, between the soul and its God. It is the glory, it is the originality, it is the power of the Gospel, that it brings together, face to face, without any intermediate, the two Beings which are at issue, God and the soul. You say you can aid this meeting? Take heed that you do not hinder it.'<sup>1</sup>

Luther said, 'A pope or bishop has no more power to remit sin than the humblest priest, and even without any priest the humblest Christian, even though

<sup>1</sup> Vaughan.

a woman or a child, can do the same. For if a simple believer say to thee, "God pardon thy sin in the name of Jesus Christ," and thou receive that word with firm faith, and as though God Himself spake it to thee, thou art absolved.'<sup>1</sup>

The absolution Christ bestows is plenary, immediate, complete. If we have a multitude of transgressions to confess, He has a 'multitude of tender mercies' wherewith to hide them. 'Our sin in respect to His mercy is as a spark to the ocean; and cannot the ocean quench a spark?' Can the food be insufficient for the guests whom He invites? Can the life-boat He equips be too small for the shipwrecked crew?

#### IV.—PRAYER FOR PARDON.

This pardon is to be sought in prayer. God, by His Ambassador of mercy, bids us say, 'Forgive us our debts,' and encourages us by the promise, 'Every one that asketh receiveth.' The Only-Begotten Son, who 'was in the bosom of the Father,' and knows His purposes, bids us thus pray to Him. The Christ who Himself took our sins and suffered on our behalf teaches us thus to pray. The High Priest who intercedes for us above, instructs us how to plead below, so that our prayers and His may blend, and 'Him the Father heareth always.' Thus instructed by the Son of God, we pray to a Father who pitieth His children and calls them to Himself. Round about the throne of Majesty is the rainbow of

<sup>1</sup> D'Aubigné's *Reformation*.

Mercy dispelling our fear. Acceptable prayer for pardon includes

1. *Conviction of guilt.* We must recognise the fact of our indebtedness. Fallacies must be put away by which we may have tried to persuade ourselves that we are not guilty before God. We must not make weakness an excuse for wickedness. If we are helpless as a worm, if we are lifeless as a corpse, we cannot be guilty as men. We must feel that God has endowed us with spiritual capacities which make it possible for us to obey Him, but that we have abused those capacities, and so have incurred a debt by withholding that which was both due from us, and but for our sinful unwillingness, it was in our power to pay. Let us beware of the false humility that pleads helplessness to excuse sin; and let us cultivate the true humility, which, not to palliate but to condemn, confesses our abuse of ability and a depraved proneness to sin.

2. *Contrition.* Sorrow because of sin is an essential condition of the pardon of it; sorrow, not merely for the consequences but for the act. Many criminals are sorry when captured, arraigned and condemned, who, were they to escape, would forget their grief; and many sinners against God are sorry, not because they have sinned, but because they cannot sin with impunity, or because their sins are about to be judged. Godly sorrow mourns for the sin itself, as evil in its own nature, as rebellion against our Creator, as ingratitude towards our Benefactor, as undutifulness towards our Father. 'Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' Thus

the publican in the parable bows his head with shame and smites his breast for sorrow, while he cries, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' In some cases sorrow for sin has been overwhelming. The Psalms are full of the groanings of contrite hearts. All Christian biography records the anguish caused by sin. Without such sorrow there will be no true joy. 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.'

The hope of pardon does not altogether remove this sorrow. The remembrance of past sins will often cast a cloud over the most cheerful experience of true children of God. The prayer will often arise from the aged Christian—'Remember not the sins of my youth.' God forgives us, but we do not forgive ourselves. The wound is healed, but the scar remains. A little boy was told by his father to drive a nail into a plank for every grave offence committed. Whenever he did something worthy of special praise a nail was withdrawn. At length the father said with joy—'See, they are all gone now.' 'Yes, father,' said the son, 'but the marks are there.' The remembrance of some act of unkindness to a friend, who, though grieved at the time, has perfectly forgiven and forgotten it, is long afterwards recalled with an inward blush; and the sorrow caused to parents in the days of youthful heedlessness is a source of deep regret even in old age. Thus the children of God, as already illustrated, continue to lament their former rebellion, as well as grieve on account of the numerous failures of which they are still conscious, and which they cannot regard as trifles undeserving the notice of those who have

received the Spirit of Adoption. St. Paul never ceased to reflect with sorrow that he was once a 'persecutor, and injurious.' The writer cannot forget an illustration of such sorrow in the case of a very poor and very godly field-labourer whom he once visited in his last illness. The sufferer was groaning in extreme agony, and the visitor sat silent for some time at his side. When there seemed a little abatement of suffering, some words of sympathy were uttered, to which the dying man replied—'My biggest pain is to think that I ever grieved my dear Lord Jesus.' Such sorrow chastens the Christian's joy, and prevents his being 'exalted above measure.' Such sorrow is a mark of sonship and a sign of pardon. 'The seal is set on wax when it melts; so God sets pardon on melting hearts.' Such sorrow is a means of reformation. The seeds of truth watered by penitential tears will bear fruit in the heavenly paradise.

'He that lacks time to mourn, lacks time to mend;  
Eternity mourns *that*.'<sup>1</sup>

3. *Confession.* · The burden on the soul seeks relief by utterance: 'Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.' If we injure our neighbour we should not only regret it, but confess it as a step towards redressing it. 'Confess your faults one to another'—the faults committed by one against another. So our faults against God are to be confessed to God. 'He that covereth his sins shall not prosper.' If we wish God to hide them, we must not hide them ourselves. If we would be healed, we

<sup>1</sup> Sir Henry Taylor.

must show our wound to the Physician. If we would get our debt remitted, we must confess our obligation. 'When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.' Ps. xxxii. 5.

As God alone forgives, so to God we are to confess. No fellow-sinner, presbyter, or priest, may stand between ourselves and Him, except the One High Priest, who alone has power to cancel sin. To substitute auricular confession to a man for spiritual confession to God, and to be satisfied with a fellow-sinner's assurance of absolution, is calculated to encourage us in a continual vibration between false comfort and fresh sin, like the see-saw of children's play. The comfort which some say they find in frequent confession to a priest may be really found by daily confession to God. When there are no wilful sins burdening the conscience, relief by daily confession is still needed from the oppressive sense of the imperfections to which reference has been made on a former page, such as tainted motives, wandering thoughts, ingratitude, distrust, indolence, neglect of opportunities, selfish abuse of stewardship, and the long, long interval between our attainments and the perfect Example given for our imitation! If these are habitually passed over as not needing to be confessed, we cannot rejoice as we might in the full assurance of pardon, and our own character must suffer from the tacit allowance of such imperfection.

The most loving children are the most sensitive, and are not happy till any disrespectful word, any act of negligence is confessed and the parent's kiss of forgiveness received. And thus the children of God will daily cultivate their filial graces, and relieve the burden on their loving hearts, and seek the reassurance of their Father's pardoning mercy by repeated acts of confession, not 'dissembling and cloaking their sins before the face of Almighty God our Heavenly Father, but confessing them with a humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart.'

But while every sin of which we are conscious should be confessed, we are not required to ransack our memory in order to recall every item of debt as though remission depended on such exact enumeration. Many faults escape our consciousness when committed, and others soon fade from remembrance. Our Father accepts us when we come to Him with a humble sense of our indebtedness, without imposing on us the burden of detailing all the particulars as a condition of forgiveness. 'One earnest gaze upon Christ is worth a thousand scrutinies of self—the man who beholds the cross, and beholding it weeps, cannot be really blind nor perilously self-ignorant.'<sup>1</sup> No one need fear that a sin neglected in the catalogue of confession is omitted in the royal charter of pardon, if in self-abasement yet filial trust he says, 'Our Father, forgive!'

4. *Purpose of reformation.* Pardon is promised only to those who repent; and repentance is a change of mind in regard to sin and God. Sorrow for sin

<sup>1</sup> Vaughan.

involves detestation of it; confession implies a resolution to forsake it. It would be contrary to God's holiness to pardon the sins of those who intend to go on sinning. He is Holy, and the object of His mercy no less than of His law is to promote the holiness of His creatures. Promises of pardon are designed to promote obedience to precepts of righteousness. 'There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared.' Ps. cxxx. 4. This connexion is consistently maintained throughout Revelation. The promise, 'Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow,' immediately follows the precept, 'Wash you, make you clean; cease to do evil, learn to do well. Come *now* and let us reason together, saith the Lord.' Isa. i. 16-18. The assurance of abundant pardon is linked with the precept, 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.' Isa. lv. 7. Encouragement to ask the forgiveness of our debts is immediately followed by a petition which implies an earnest purpose to conquer temptation in the future. The purpose of Christ in redemption was not primarily to remit penalty but to purify the heart, the former being a means towards the latter. 'The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world.' Tit. ii. 11, 12 (R.V.).

Pardon is obtained only by the mediation of Him

whose very Name declares Him to be a Saviour, not from punishment merely, but from sin. 'His Name shall be called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.' None can believe in Him without accepting this salvation, and therefore resolving to renounce the sins they confess. Every prayer for pardon is a pledge of reformation, and every debt remitted as penalty increases the obligation of gratitude, and is an additional motive to obedience. The cost of our redemption being 'not corruptible things as silver and gold, but the precious blood of Christ,' supplies the strongest motive to forsake the sins the forgiveness of which we ask through such a sacrifice. 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. If we feel that every sin committed must be confessed to our Father, this also will surely help us to abstain from committing it. If the evil I do must be as far as possible redressed, why then do it? If it must be sorrowed over, why give myself this pain, as well as grieve the Spirit of my Father? 'He will speak peace unto His people and to His saints; but let them not turn again to folly.' Ps. lxxxv. 8.

This petition, like the rest, looks beyond the individual. First of all, we pray each for his own pardon: 'Have mercy upon *me*, a sinner.' And throughout life there will be daily need for each thus to seek pardon for himself. But having learnt the brotherhood of humanity, we extend our plea and embrace our neighbours in our request. We pray for the household, the congregation, the church, the world, when we say, 'Forgive *us our* debts;' and this helps us to comply with the condition attached to

the prayer. But in this community of prayer for pardon there must be no merging our individual guilt in that of the multitude, no lessening of our contrition because others share with us in the necessity for it. A deep sense of our own sin enables us to feel for others who are in danger of condemnation, and to bear them on our hearts at the throne of grace.

Some persons resolve to repent and obtain pardon at the eleventh hour, like the dying thief. They do not consider that the present hour may be to them the very last, that the end may approach unobserved, and that it may find them less disposed than ever to seek forgiveness owing to the strengthened habit of impenitent delay. They seem to think that repentance can be summoned to their bedside like the doctor, and that having been resolutely ordered during many years to keep far away it will come at a moment and at a word. The repentance which precedes pardon is not a sudden regret for the past or fear of the future, but a change of mind and heart. The dying thief was not saved without such change. This was emphatically expressed in his last utterances. Reverence towards the Most High was indicated in his appeal to his companion, 'Dost thou not fear God?' confession of sin in the words, 'We indeed justly;' admiration of goodness in the testimony, 'This man hath done nothing amiss;' faith in the royalty of Him whom men derided in the address to Christ, 'Lord, when Thou comest in Thy kingdom;' humble prayer in the request, 'Lord, remember me;' these, with avowal of his own allegiance and care for the soul of his companion, indicated a complete

transformation of character. Luke xxiii. 39-43. It took place suddenly in this case; but can such repentance be reckoned on in the case of those who, unlike him, have long known of Christ and neglected to seek mercy? Such repentance needs the assistance of the Divine Spirit, but it is still our work. 'God commandeth all men to repent.' It is a work so important and so difficult, that not a day should be lost in commencing it. If not one single true Christian can be found willing deliberately to spare one day from his religious life, so that for one day he should cease to pray, cease to be guided by the Divine Spirit, and cease to resist sin; if they who have had years of experience in religion so value one single day in continuing to work out their own salvation, is it not the utmost folly for those who have not yet even begun the work, to delay it for months and years? 'To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts. Behold, now is the day of salvation.'

Let this daily petition remind us of our sins and help us to renounce them. Alas that it should so often pass the lips without having been prompted by the heart! Our debt is in God's book; let us bring it to remembrance, that it may be confessed and cancelled ere the account be closed. It may come to our mind too late. Some men neglect to seek pardon because they underestimate their debt, others despair of pardon because the debt is so great. 'The devil shows some men their sins at the little end of the perspective-glass, and they seem little or none at all; but he shows others their sins at the great end of the

perspective, and these fright them into despair.'<sup>1</sup> They try to rid themselves of the burden of fear as though they could thus be rid of the burden of guilt. But if truly convinced of their debt, there can be no peace but in pardon. 'When conscience is troubled, they will try what merry company can do ; or drink, or cards ; perhaps a Lent-whipping will do the deed, or business so take up the time that they have no leisure to hear the clamours of conscience ; but still the wound bleeds inwardly, and they can have no peace. Suppose a man hath a thorn in his foot, which puts him to pain ; let him anoint it, or wrap it up, and keep it warm ; yet, till the thorn be plucked out, it aches and swells, and he hath no ease.'<sup>1</sup> Many a wounded soldier would recover if the bullet were extracted, but while it remains in the wound there can be no cure. So must sin be removed from us by penitence and pardon, or death must be the result.

Many on what has seemed their dying bed have expressed a repentance which, on their recovery, has been proved to be unreal. How perilous to postpone such a work till there will be the briefest time for it and the least capacity ! as if a man should defer a task needing great exertion till he was weak and weary, or one needing the clearest vision till the sun had set and the shadows of night had fallen. As if the torrent could be stemmed more easily when the boat had been drawn more into mid-channel ; as if the precipice could be better avoided after slipping partly over the impending slope ; as if a fire could be more effectually quenched when the flames had gained

<sup>1</sup> Watson.

greater mastery of the fuel; as if a disease could be better cured when its force had more fully developed, and the patient had less strength to rally! Every day's delay increases the debt, lessens the opportunity of pardon, and weakens the inclination to seek it. To no work more than to this does the exhortation apply, 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest.' Eccles. ix. 10. Therefore 'give not sleep to thine eyes nor slumber to thine eyelids. Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler.' Prov. vi. 4, 5. Luther said there were three things he dared not think of without Christ: Sin, Death, Judgment. But if sin be pardoned, the sting of death is extracted and the judgment has no terrors.

How 'blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity'! 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.' If poor in this world, countless wealth is in the assurance, 'There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.' The sick are healed when they hear His word, 'Thy sins are forgiven.' If dying, behold we live when our Father says, 'This my son was dead and is alive again.'

This petition blends with those that precede. 'Our Father;' being this, pity and pardon Thy erring children. 'Hallowed be Thy Name;' by the exercise of the mercy it implies, and in the hearts of grateful penitents. 'Thy Kingdom come;' in the extension of forgiveness, in the increased number of the forgiven.

'Thy Will be done;' by the manifestation of Thy love in the cancelling of debt. 'Give us this day our daily bread;' but in vain the supply of all temporal wants unless the hunger of the soul is satisfied—'Forgive us our debts.'

#### V.—FORGIVENESS OF ONE ANOTHER.

The appended clause, 'As we forgive our debtors,' indicates a necessary qualification for presenting the request, for they alone who forgive are in a state of mind truly to ask to be forgiven; it lays down a condition of obtaining the boon, for none may expect forgiveness who do not themselves forgive.

Many who offer the prayer overlook the condition; they desire the benefit but are not anxious to perform the duty; they seem to think they may confidently expect forgiveness, while only admitting that it is their duty to exercise it; at best they seem to think that the wish or the intention to forgive entitles them to expect actual and immediate forgiveness from God.

Some, out of professed regard for evangelical truth, interpret this clause with less literalness than the petition itself. They ask, How can any good quality in ourselves recommend us to Divine favour? How can our works be any sort of plea when we are suppliants for mercy? How can we dare to mention our imperfect forgiveness of each other's trivial faults when we ask such full forgiveness of so great a debt from God? and how can we venture to ask Him to pardon us in the manner and degree in which we

pardon our brethren? Thus the mental interpretation given to the clause is frequently this: 'Forgive us our debts, and help us to forgive our debtors;' or, 'Forgive us, and then enable us to forgive others.'

But the petition is conditional not on a purpose, but on a fact; not on the admission of a duty, but on the performance of it; not on something to be done hereafter, but done already. It is a precedent necessity, not a resulting effect. So the Revised Version accurately renders it. St. Luke expresses the habitual state of mind of the petitioners: 'For we ourselves also forgive every one that is indebted to us;' St. Matthew, the already accomplished fact: 'As we also have forgiven our debtors.'

We shall first consider this duty of human forgiveness, and then inquire what is meant by linking the performance of it with the prayer for Divine forgiveness.

### 1. *Human forgiveness.*

This is a duty difficult to practise. Our depraved nature is characterized by self-seeking. Our predominant thoughts, desires, exertions, have reference to our own safety, property, honour. We are apt to resent any invasion of what we regard our peculiar domain. We naturally think more of our rights than of our obligations, of what others owe us rather than of what we owe them. We are apt to demand all; we are impatient of delay or excuses, stand up for our rights, resent injuries, and insist on the uttermost farthing.

This is seen in the attitude of nations, which are

but combinations of individuals. Why are armies and navies maintained at such prodigious cost, if not sternly to demand national rights? How often some slight to an ambassador or insult to a flag is supposed to justify war, with all its slaughter, woe and destruction! Most of the wars of Christendom would have been prevented had there been a mutual disposition to forgive a debt instead of a blind determination to enforce it. Doubtless provision is needed for order within and protection without; but beyond all reasonable plea of self-defence, are there not many professed Christians, who, as individuals, recognize in theory the duty of mutual forgiveness, yet as citizens consider that national honour demands the enforcing of the payment of national debts at whatever cost? If this spirit is regarded as legitimate in public affairs, it is not surprising that the same men, acting individually, carry it out in private life.

This spirit is opposed to the plain teaching of Christ and His apostles: 'Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that spitefully use you. Avenge not yourselves. If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink. Charity suffereth long and is kind; is not easily provoked.' In giving this prayer, our Lord specially emphasized this appended condition, saying: 'For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.' Matt. v. 39, 44-48; vi. 14, 15; Rom. xii. 19-21; 1 Cor. xiii., etc.

It is important to have clear ideas as to what is meant by this forgiveness of one another's debts. The term is figurative as regards our relations with God, and means, as we have seen, our guilt and liability to penalty in consequence of transgression or neglect of duty. In relation to ourselves, therefore, the term does not necessarily mean pecuniary obligations. If all such debts are to be remitted, none would be incurred; no one would lend if lending were equivalent to giving; credit would be unknown in business, and commerce would be rendered almost impossible. Pecuniary obligations ought to be held sacred by the debtor; but though the creditor may rightly claim payment, he ought, in the spirit of this prayer, not to exercise undue pressure, not to take advantage of the debtor's difficulties, but if misfortune overtake him and he be unable to pay, to exercise patience and abate the claim rather than risk the ruin of the debtor.

Nor does the condition annexed to the prayer involve the loosening of moral obligations. There are social and relative duties always owing from one to another. We are not called on to submit to injustice. The interests of society require that law should be upheld. 'The magistrate beareth not the sword in vain.' True humanity requires that law-breakers be punished. A Christian, asking forgiveness from God, may therefore consistently prosecute the ruffian and the thief, whose immunity would encourage them in further outrage on others. But in thus vindicating the law, a Christian ought not to indulge any desire for personal revenge, but to feel kindly towards the

wrong-doer, even when he calls upon the law to exact its righteous debt.

Moreover, forgiveness by man must necessarily be very different to forgiveness by God. Weak, selfish, sinful, how can we measure our pardon of a neighbour who has wronged us with that of a God of infinite goodness? The nature of our forgiveness must be as inferior to His as we are to Himself. And as to the extent of it, our debts incurred to His supreme majesty must be immeasurably greater in amount than any of the petty obligations we incur towards each other. When therefore we ask God to forgive us 'as we forgive our debtors,' we do not mean that our forgiveness can measure His either in nature or amount.

But notwithstanding such considerations, the duty of forgiving as God forgives must not be explained away. Certain resemblances are essential.

Our forgiveness must be sincere. Much that passes current as forgiveness is so in appearance only. Sometimes payment is not exacted because there is no power to exact; 'we do not bite because we have no teeth:' sometimes because we deem it inexpedient, fearing discredit from so doing, or retaliation: sometimes because what we decline to do now we propose to do when a better opportunity arises: and sometimes non-exaction of the debt is counterbalanced by cherished ill-will, alienation, detraction, and the lingering resentment expressed in the words, 'Though I forgive I can never forget.'

This is not forgiving as God forgives. 'He maketh His sun to shine on the evil and on the

good;’ and they who are truly His children must cherish kind feelings even towards their foes. Our perfect Exemplar, ‘when He was reviled, reviled not again,’ but on the cross prayed for His murderers. Our forgiveness must be genuine; no secret grudge must be cherished against the offender; our state of mind towards him must be as free from bitterness as if the record of his trespass against us had completely faded away from the tablets of our memory.

But is not the repentance of one who has wronged us a condition of our pardon, even as our repentance is a condition of God’s pardon? ‘If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and *if he repent*, forgive him.’ This forgiveness is to be repeated again and again on the same conditions. ‘If he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.’ Luke xvii. 3, 4. God does not receive us into His favour until we repent; and we are not required to assure of forgiveness any one who has wronged us, until he has expressed sorrow for such wrong.

But prior to any repentance on our part, God cherishes pity, shows kindness, waits to be gracious, is ready to pardon, makes advances towards us, calls us to Himself, beseeches us to be reconciled. ‘Return unto me, and I will abundantly pardon.’ Therefore we, on our part, before a ‘brother’ who has offended us acknowledges the offence and asks forgiveness, are bound to cherish kind feelings towards him, to pray for him, and to be willing to express forgiveness when he repents. Many who are not Christians might

profess to forgive an enemy prostrate at their feet, crouching for pardon, for their pride might be satisfied with the humiliation of their foe; but a child of God is to overcome his resentment prior to the repentance of the evil-doer, and to be ready to forgive before forgiveness is sought. Although 'the wrath of God abideth' on all sinners who persist in sin, His mercy is already prepared to efface their offences. It is an ocean ready to flow out towards the sinner and cover all his transgressions, as soon as the sinner himself, by his repentance, chooses to open the flood-gate. If thus we are to cherish sentiments of forgiveness even towards those who, having wronged us, do not repent, how surely should we pardon frankly, generously, gladly, all who do confess their faults and ask our forgiveness!

Sometimes when an offender has been forgiven and repeats the offence, we are apt to feel discharged from further leniency. But this our Lord forbids. When Peter said, 'Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? till seven times?' Jesus said unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times, but until seventy times seven.' Matt. xviii. 21, 22. When the Apostles were told that they were to forgive the same offender 'seven times in a day,' they replied, 'Lord, increase our faith;' as much as to say that such forgiveness was impossible without strong faith; to which He answered, that faith would enable them to perform even this duty, which might otherwise seem impossible: 'If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamore tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the

sea; and it should obey you.' Luke xvii. 3-6. What is impossible in our own strength becomes easy by the power of Christ, and this becomes ours by faith. With increased faith we shall be able in the fulness of its meaning to offer this prayer, 'Forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive every one that is indebted to us.'

2. *Human forgiveness a condition of Divine.*

Our forgiveness of each other is linked in this prayer with our obtaining forgiveness from God. The parable of the unmerciful servant is recorded immediately after the precept to forgive 'until seventy times seven.' He who had obtained remission of ten thousand talents showed no mercy on his fellow-servant who owed only an hundred pence, but, deaf to his entreaties, cast him into prison till he could pay the debt. Then his lord, angry at such unmercifulness, 'delivered him to the tormentors till he should pay all that was due. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.' Matt. xviii. 23-35. So also we are taught in the beatitudes, 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.' Matt. v. 7.

Is such forgiveness by us meritorious, so that our mercifulness to man deserves mercy from God? Can we who are saved by grace, purchase remission by this or any other act of ours? If so, grace would be no more grace. And how can the pardon fellow-sinners give each other be a title to claim pardon from the God they have all offended? As well might a

company of rebels plead that as they had forgiven each other their petty wrongs in prison, they might all claim exemption from the penalties of high treason!

This is a statement not of claim, but of fact—a fact the principle of which is involved in every true asking of pardon from God. There cannot be any genuine prayer for pardon unless we are ourselves cultivating a forgiving spirit; for the following reasons:—

1. *Pardon is always linked with repentance of sins, and these include an unforgiving spirit.*—Repentance is the renouncing of sin, as already shown. I must 'cease to do evil' if I would plead the promise of the scarlet becoming white as snow. The unrighteous man must 'forsake his thoughts,' if he would hope that God will 'abundantly pardon.' Therefore he ceases from cherishing an unforgiving spirit, with which the penitence implied in the prayer is incompatible. My faults against God include faults against men. I say to God, 'I am very sorry for words, actions, thoughts, injurious to my fellow-men; sorry for a proud, exacting, unforgiving spirit. Forgive me this debt!' How can I be encouraging that for which I am sorry? My confession to God in asking pardon means that I do renounce the sins confessed. If penitent, I have a humbling sense of my debts to God, and must therefore be humble as regards debts to myself. Without saying the words 'for we also forgive,' the fact is implied in the prayer, 'Forgive us.'

2. *Faith in God's mercy is incompatible with unmercifulness in ourselves.*—True prayer for pardon implies reliance on God's pardoning mercy. We

believe that He is willing to forgive up to our need ; that He has great forgiveness for our great guilt ; and to this we appeal. It is impossible that we can at the same time be cherishing an opposite sentiment. If we do not forgive, we cannot possess true faith in God's mercy. To say, 'Forgive me, although I do not forgive others,' is a prayer which cannot reach the throne of grace. 'When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any ; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.' Mark xi. 25, 26. The forgiveness is to be exercised then and there ; not postponed. It must precede the prayer ; it is a condition of the answer. Whatever may be our sense of the justice of our claim and the wrong done us, we cannot as sinners truly ask or reasonably expect remission of our debt against Divine justice, unless cultivating in ourselves a merciful spirit to others.

'Though justice be thy plea, consider this :  
That in the course of justice none of us  
Should see salvation : we do pray for mercy ;  
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render  
The deeds of mercy.'

3. *Gratitude to God for pardon received or expected prompts forgiveness of others.* — Is this our daily prayer ? Then yesterday we received pardon in reply to yesterday's petition ; and to-day we should gratefully remember the many pardons of the past. The prayer of faith we now present anticipates a renewal of the gift, and augments our obligation.

Gratefulness urges us to please our Benefactor, and God who forgives us bids us glorify Him by forgiving others. Gratitude produces gladness and inspires beneficence. I am happy in release from debt. I thank God for it, and adore His mercy. Must not this produce mercifulness? My debt to God is infinitely greater than any debt of my fellow-servant to myself. If God loves me in spite of my many sins, may I not see something to love in the fellow-servant who wrongs me? 'Believers are not forgiven because they forgive; nay, they forgive because they are forgiven; and thus it is, that feeling themselves forgiven by God, they are lovingly constrained to forgive.'<sup>1</sup>

4. *The prayer includes those who wrong us.*—It is not 'Forgive me,' but 'Forgive us.' We appear before God in company with those who are our debtors. We pray for our enemies: 'O God, forgive *us*; with me, forgive also this man who has injured my property, my reputation, my honour; this man who has cheated me, maligned me, and hates me; for in so acting towards me he has sinned against Thee, and his debt to Thee exceeds that which he owes to me; our Father, forgive him!' How obvious it is that in truly offering this prayer, 'Our Father, forgive *us*,' we have already ourselves forgiven!

5. *It is the prayer of a child of God.*—They who truly say, 'Our Father who art in Heaven,' love, trust, obey, resemble Him. They are 'merciful even as their Father who is in heaven is merciful.' 'If a

<sup>1</sup> Juan de Valdez, tr. J. Betts.

man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?' 1 John iv. 20. Therefore it is evident that as those who are indeed God's children, and as such truly present this prayer, do already 'love one another,' and 'are in charity with their neighbours;' they who pray 'Forgive' have themselves already forgiven.

Unless we are cultivating a forgiving spirit, we can have no true assurance of being ourselves forgiven. The absence of it invalidates our profession of repentance and faith, and contradicts our prayer. Sin cannot have been forgiven so long as it remains unrenounced. If ever a fear steals over us to disturb our peace in relation to our forgiveness by God, it would be well to inquire what is our prevailing spirit towards men. Are we chiefly bent on maintaining 'our rights,' and compelling others to pay their dues? If so, is it not likely that we may in our hearts ascribe to God the same disposition? 'With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.' If in ourselves a spirit of exaction rather than of forgiveness is cherished, is it not reasonable that we should have our confidence in the Divine forbearance weakened? Suppose a master is harsh in his requirements from his servants, a parent severe in his demands on his children, a citizen eager in claiming all his rights regardless of others, a man of business stern in enforcing all his dues, is it not a natural sequence of this state of mind towards men that they will regard God rather as a stern ruler than a

forgiving Father? It is likely that they will transfer in thought to God the spirit of exaction which dominates their own minds, rather than attribute to Him delight in showing mercy to sinners.

‘Pay me that thou owest, servant, child, poor dependant, friend, wife, brother; is not that the first natural thought of our hearts? There is abundance of good-natured charity afloat in the world; but this is the fretwork of the building: the pillars of it, we seem to think, are our *rights*; rights to position, property, rank, the homage of others, their gratitude. It is the most fantastic of all dreams that a man can cut his being into two portions, call one of them religious and the other mundane, and administer them on directly opposite principles. One or other must come to nought. If we believe that the world is governed by a forgiving Being, His forgiveness must be recognized as the Law of the Universe; the Law of our being. If we believe that individual Right is the great principle we are to assert in all common transactions, that principle will be carried to the highest ground of all, and so far as we acknowledge a Divine Being at all, we shall regard Him as one like ourselves; we shall feel that His main desire is to assert His rights over us. If self-will do govern the world, if we confess it to be our lord, we may or we may not attribute to it personality; but it does, all the same, hold us in its iron bonds; we are in prison, the evil spirit is our jailor, and we cannot come out till we have paid the uttermost farthing.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Maurice.

On the contrary, if I from the heart forgive others, may I not hope that God who has helped me to exercise compassion, has had compassion on me? If in the smaller and lower world of my heart and conduct a pardoning rather than an exacting spirit prevails, is it not likely I shall have confidence that my own appeal will find response when I pray, 'Father! forgive'?

In this model-prayer our Lord has undoubtedly linked together the duty of forgiveness with the prayer for it. The connection always existed, but it is here so expressed that no one may ask the boon without being reminded of the duty. Knowing how apt we are to neglect mutual forgiveness, He gave us a prayer so expressed that in applying to God for the daily pardon we need from Him, we are compelled to profess before Him our readiness to pardon each other. Forgiveness is the law of Redemption, binding God to men, and men to one another. The obligation is involved in every clause of the prayer. 'Our Father;' therefore we are brethren, and as such should forgive each other. 'Hallowed be Thy Name;' we hallow it by cultivating the compassion it reveals. 'Thy kingdom come;' it is based on reconciliation, and comes in proportion as men live together in forbearing love. 'Thy will be done;' this is His will, that we forgive those who are indebted to us. 'Give *us* bread;' should we not forgive those who with ourselves are dependent on the same fatherly care? 'Forgive us;' should not we forgive who require so much forgiveness?

But while this petition comforts and admonishes believers, it passes a solemn condemnation on those who offer it while cherishing revenge and refusing to forgive. It almost amounts to asking God not to forgive them ! Chrysostom says, ' God appoints thee thyself the master of the verdict. The judgment thou passest upon thyself He will pass upon thee.' And Luther says, ' This prayer will, in the sight of God, be a sin ; for when thou sayest, " I will not forgive," and standest before God with thy precious *pater noster*, and mumblest with thy mouth, *Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors*, what is that but saying, O God, I am a debtor to Thee, and there is one who is the same to myself. Now, I will not forgive him, and so do not Thou forgive me. I will not obey Thy command, although Thou hast told me to forgive ; I will rather renounce Thee and Thy heaven, and all, and go to the devil for evermore.' <sup>1</sup>

Let us then cultivate this grace of mercy. One means of conquering an unforgiving spirit is ceasing to look back on the injuries which provoked it. Memory is good, but sometimes forgetfulness is better. Let us treasure the records of kindnesses to stimulate gratitude, but erase those of injuries lest they continue to rouse ill-will. When Antony in the Forum showed the rents in Cæsar's robe made by the daggers of the assassins, the people were roused to fury as if they beheld the murder in the very act of commission. So it is possible for imagination to brood over wrongs till they become a constant presence, rousing in us ever fresh indignation. Let us

<sup>1</sup> Tholuck.

rather banish such pictures by supplanting them with their opposites. Let us think of any good qualities in our enemies, any kindnesses shown us by friends, any wrongs done to others by ourselves. Let us not only extinguish the spark, but bury the powder. Let us above all consider our great debt to God and His great remission. Let us remember also that these injuries from men were not without His permission; and so let us in submission to *Him* cease to be angry with *them*. Let us remember how much we possess in Himself to compensate for any injury from man. As we may tell to Him all the injuries and insults we receive, though some of them we might feel to be too trifling to tell, let every wrong which pains us become an occasion of renewed intercourse with God. Let us feel that with such a refuge we should not be vexed with the storm which drives us into it for shelter; that with such an exhaustless treasury to supply the loss, we ought not to be reluctant to forgive the thief; and that God's love and Christ's example should have more effect in producing gentleness within us than any injuries from man in stirring up wrath.

We shall ever find that forgiveness produces real happiness, while an unforgiving spirit is ever a source of disquiet. We attain a higher dignity when we remit than when we resent. 'Greater is he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city. It is the glory of a man to pass by a transgression.' Does our foe raise a storm of anxiety, a tempest of passion? A forgiving spirit says to the troubled waters, 'Peace, be still.' Does he rob us of wealth or reputation? To forgive him more than restores it; our treasury becomes

richer by this grace called forth by seeming loss. Like those who fire in retreat, we conquer when we seem to yield. Our escutcheon is the brighter by the dishonour flung at it. 'When I am weak, then am I strong.' Anger may cast our foe prostrate at our feet, but forgiveness may raise him up as a friend. Wrath can do no more than slay him, but love transforms and makes him an ally. To punish him who wrongs me may conquer him by force, but to forgive is to conquer my own spirit by love, and so makes me 'more than a conqueror.' 'To render evil for good is devil-like; to render evil for evil is beast-like; to render good for good is man-like; to render good for evil is God-like.'

'The quality of mercy is not strained;  
It droppeth as the gentle dew from heaven  
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blessed,  
It blesses him that gives and him that takes.'

Our Father, forgive us. We all have sinned against both Thee and one another. By Thy grace we have been enabled to forgive others. This is no proof of merit in us, but the result of mercy in Thee. Grant us more grace to forgive the small debts due to us from our brother, and grant us day by day forgiveness of the great debts due from us to Thee.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### *THE SIXTH PETITION.*

‘LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION.’

**S**ALVATION is deliverance from sin: and therefore includes both pardon of its guilt and release from its power. A gospel would be unworthy of God which, encouraging the transgressor to ask forgiveness, promised no succour against the sin forgiven. We come forth from before the mercy-seat happy in the hope of absolution, but we at once encounter a world full of those temptations by yielding to which we have needed that mercy. Must we again fall as before, and only appear before God for repeated pardons? Is prayer merely a hospital for the wounded? Nay, it is also an arsenal to equip the soldier for the fight. He who, grieving for, ashamed of, hating his sin, implores forgiveness, is also encouraged to ask for strength to resist temptation and conquer evil.

We have been reminded in the preceding section that any true prayer for pardon involves the purpose of reformation. Such a purpose prompts this prayer for help, which implies the earnest desire, resolve, effort, to resist any temptation to sin again. ‘Good men fear temptation because they fear sin.’ The confession of sin is an acknowledgment of frailty, and

therefore of our need of Divine help to enable us to resist the temptation which has proved too strong for us. Therefore the more truly we pray, 'Forgive us our trespasses,' the more earnestly we shall pray, 'Lead us not into temptation.'

The liberated slave who has tasted the bitterness of bondage, all the more strives to escape from the enemy who is in swift pursuit to recapture him. 'A burnt child dreads the fire.' He who has been bitten by a serpent will ask not to be led where serpents abound, and will himself avoid sitting on the bank where he felt the poisoned fang. On a winter morning when the ground was covered with snow, a robin, urged by hunger, entered an open window of the writer's house, to eat the crumbs spread for it inside. This visit he repeated several days, flying away unmolested. But one day the servant closed the window, and the bird found its way of escape cut off. As there was no intention to imprison the trustful visitor, the window was soon reopened. But the robin never returned. For a brief moment it had been captured, and it would not again venture within the possible prison. 'In vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird.'

The more we have been forgiven, the more gratitude we feel. The prodigal son welcomed home, desires not again to grieve his father. The more hearty his forgiveness, the more earnest that desire. The greater the pardon, the greater the guilt if we repeat the offence. The pardon therefore is a deterrent from the sin. The fuller our assurance of such pardon, the stronger will be our endeavour not

to lose such assurance. We shall fear to defile the white raiment which has been given us; to obscure the writing on the roll of our acceptance with God. The sunshine will be so pleasant, that in proportion as we walk in it, we shall avoid the dark shadow into which renewed sin would bring us. The grace received in forgiveness will do more than the threat of punishment to guard us from yielding to temptation.

Thus, as we have seen (p. 316), the Scriptures link mercy to sinners with deliverance from sin. He who is blessed in the non-imputation of iniquity is the man 'in whose spirit there is no guile.' The prayer, 'Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities,' is immediately followed by, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.' Ps. li. 9, 10. The Divine promise, 'I will forgive their iniquity,' is linked with this other, 'I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.' Jer. xxxi. 33, 34. Our Lord's word of absolution, 'Neither do I condemn thee,' was followed by the command, 'Go, and sin no more.' John viii. 11. The gospel assurance, 'There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,' is applicable to those alone 'who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' Rom. viii. 1, 4. The penitent sinner hoping pardon because 'If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,' is reminded that this truth is recorded not to encourage but destroy sinfulness: 'These things write I unto you, that ye sin not.' 1 John ii. 1. It is in accordance with

all Scripture teaching, that they who pray to be forgiven, pray also to be saved from sin.

### I.—WHAT IS MEANT BY TEMPTATION.

The one Greek word for temptation is capable of various shades of meaning. But the fundamental idea is *test*, or *trial for discovery*. The qualities of a substance or a character are tested and discovered by a variety of methods. The strength of a ship which has hitherto never been outside the harbour is tested by the fierceness of the storm it encounters. And the stedfastness in virtue of a youth who has never been away from the watchful care of parents and the holy influences of home, is tested by the companionships, the seductions, the trials of the great world into which he must now enter.

In its broadest sense, temptation includes whatever presents to the will an opportunity of choice between good and evil. In this sense it would seem that temptation is unavoidable in the case of all beings who are capable of moral goodness; inasmuch as such goodness is not the result of unavoidable physical causation, but implies free choice, and therefore the power of choosing or rejecting the evil as well as the good. If so, unfallen angels are perfect not because they are incapable of free choice, and therefore outside the sphere of possible temptation, but because they always love and choose what is right.

It would also seem that temptation in this sense

is not only a necessity involved in our very notion of moral responsibility, but that it is essential to the full maturity and development of moral excellence. Every faculty is strengthened by exercise. Acts of right choice, repeated, form habits of goodness, which may become so strong as to constitute a moral necessity of acting in accordance with them; so that temptation, though still presented to the mind, loses all power of harm. We can only become strongly good by freely choosing good; and such free choice involves liability to temptation. As the limbs need to be developed by exertion and the mind by education, so also the moral nature by encountering and overcoming temptation. There must be a gymnasium for the soul if we are to become spiritual athletes. The most valuable soldiers are not those who have merely marched on the parade ground, or fought with imaginary foes at a review, but those who have been in real battles.

Adam, before he sinned, was capable of being tempted to sin. A persevering course of victory over temptation would have raised him to a far higher condition than that in which he was first created. The second Adam, partaking of human nature in all but its moral degeneracy, was tempted in the wilderness, as was Adam in the garden; but He overcame, and so not only opened the way for us to the heavenly Paradise, but in His humanity, and for His work as Mediator, was like ourselves, perfected through temptation. Heb. ii. 10, 17.

A test may be applied with various motives, for opposite ends: by a friend or by a foe; to benefit or

to injure; to save or to destroy. This consideration will easily reconcile texts seemingly at variance.

1. *Inducement to sin.* This is the most familiar use of the word. The very nature of God forbids the thought that He ever tempts thus. 'He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He.' Deut. xxxii. 4. The New Testament responds to the Old: 'Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth He any man: but every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed.' Jas. i. 13, 14. The essential nature of God, His eternal and unchangeable holiness: the purity of all His laws, forbidding the evil and enjoining the good: His promises to those alone who are righteous, His threatenings to all the wicked: above all His gift of Christ for the purpose of redeeming us from all iniquity, the infinite cost by which our restoration to Himself was effected: all this renders it absolutely certain that we are never tempted in the sense of allurements to sin by Him who said, 'As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.' Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

We are tempted when 'drawn away by our own lusts.' We have various instincts and capacities not in themselves sinful, but, as given by God, useful and holy. When employed according to His will, they glorify Him. Pleasure, beneficently connected with the exercise of them, may become an allurements to use them wrongfully, so that they become degraded

into sinful lusts. When uncurbed by conscience and used as instruments of unlawful gratification, they become tempters to sin. The devil avails himself of these instincts and capacities by a personal agency to which reference is made in the next petition.

2. *Afflictions or trials* are temptations in the sense of being tests of faith and patience; and are intended to be a useful discipline. These are either sent directly by God, or are permitted by Him. Their object is to benefit, not injure: to cultivate our submission, not to induce us to rebel. But by their very nature they must put our religion to the test. So the gale may test the tree, which thereby gains more than it loses; dead branches are broken off, enfeebling parasites torn away, while

‘Firmer he roots him the ruder it blow.’

It is possible we may not stand the test, and so, by our own fault, the trial may become an occasion of sin. Yet this is not its purpose: and the experience of the children of God concurs to testify that ‘Happy is the man whom God correcteth.’ Job v. 17. Samson’s riddle has frequent illustration: ‘Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.’ Judg. xiv. 14. David said, ‘Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Thy word.’ Ps. cxix. 67. Chastisement may confer true blessedness. ‘Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest.’ Ps. xciv. 12. St. Paul could ‘glory in tribulations; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope.’ Rom. v. 3, 4. He tells us that

lest he should 'be exalted above measure,' there was given to him a 'thorn in the flesh,' the result of which was that he was able to 'glory in his infirmities' by reason of 'the power of Christ' resting upon him. 2 Cor. xii. 7-9. The Apostle James calls on believers to be glad when such trials visit them: 'Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations (trials); knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.' Jas. i. 2, 3. This enduring of the test, and coming forth not only unscathed but purified by the flames, is the Divine purpose with believers. 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he hath been approved he shall receive the crown of life.' Jas. i. 12 (R.V.). The writer to the Hebrews echoes back the comforting truth long before revealed: 'Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children; My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him; for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.' Heb. xii. 5, 6. God sends the trial which may become a temptation, though He intends it as a gracious discipline for our good. 'What son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?' Heb. xii. 7. It is not as an enemy but as our Father that in this sense God tempts His children. So the fire purifies the precious metal by revealing and destroying its dross. Thus St. Peter comforts those who are 'in heaviness through manifold temptations' by the Divine purpose, 'that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto

praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.' 1 Pet. i. 7.

3. *Temptation for the distinct purpose of testing.*—Satan's tests are intended as allurements to sin. Providential tests are to sanctify by sorrow. Sometimes tests are employed by God for the purpose of teaching us self-knowledge, so that we may seek for grace to correct our failures and strengthen our faith. Thus 'God did tempt Abraham.' Gen. xxii. 1. The command to offer Isaac was a severe test of the Patriarch's resignation to the Divine will, his absolute self-surrender, and his firm faith that in spite of a seeming impossibility, should Isaac be slain, God's promise of posterity through Isaac would yet be fulfilled. Temptation for the purpose of testing may be of use in making known a fact, but do no good to the thing tested. A rope is not strengthened by the heavy weight that tries its tenacity; nor a boiler by the pressure of steam that tests its resisting power. But the skill of a sailor who steers his ship safely in a gale through a difficult channel, or the capacity of a general who fights a battle against great odds, is not only tested but improved by the struggle. And so it was with Abraham. His faith was not only seen to be strong, but was made stronger by its exercise.

It was so with the Israelites. 'Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or no.' Deut. viii. 2. A similar instance occurs in the history

of Hezekiah. 'Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.' Leighton says: 'Trials stir the water that was possibly clear at the top, to see whether it be not muddy at the bottom.' Many a domestic cistern has held concealed in its depths corrupting deposits, from which poisonous exhalations have carried fever through the household. How beneficent the rude stirring up, by however rough an implement, if it reveals the unsuspected cause of disease, and thus leads to its removal! So the fire purifies the precious metal by revealing and destroying its dross.

It was so with Job. The temptations which were permitted to assail him revealed, beneath very much that was virtuous and godly, very much of a self-righteous spirit, which he was led to renounce, and 'repent in dust and ashes.' He verified his own prediction, 'When God hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.' Job xxiii. 10. It was so with Peter. Prior to his denial of his Lord, he did not know his weakness and need of watchfulness. The 'sifting as wheat' which he survived, enabled him ever after to 'comfort his brethren.'

## II.—WHAT IS MEANT BY ASKING GOD NOT TO LEAD US INTO TEMPTATION.

The Revised Version renders the prayer: '*Bring us not.*' This, at first sight, may appear a needless alteration, the difference between 'bring' and 'lead' being too slight to justify a disturbance of the old

familiar sound. The revisers might defend the alteration on the plea that as the word *εἰσενέγκης*, rendered in the Old Version 'lead,' is elsewhere rendered 'bring,' it was thought right to use the same English word in the translation of the same Greek word. So in Luke v. 18, 'Men bring,' *ἄνδρες φέροντες*, 'on a bed a man which was taken with a palsy.' So in Heb. xiii. 11, 'The bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary,' *εἰσφέρεται*. So in 1 Tim. vi. 7, 'We brought,' *εἰσηνέγκαμεν*, 'nothing into this world.' Thus in our prayer we say, 'Bring us not into temptation.' It is suggested that the word 'to *bring*' implies more danger than the word 'to *lead*,' and less capacity in the person brought to escape or overcome it.

Whether or not this defence of the alteration may be accepted and the distinction between the two words acknowledged, it is a fact that God always does *lead* us in His Providence along paths which are perilous by reason of temptation. This is the unavoidable result of man's moral nature and the circumstances of the present life. We have seen that in this sense temptation is a necessary discipline. [P. 343.] This constitutes the difference between the child and the man. An infant is lovely in its innocence, and may well be dedicated to God in faith and prayer, and welcomed as one of the lambs of the flock; an emblem of purity itself. It has never committed one evil action, uttered one wrong word, cherished one sinful passion. But it has not been tried. Its goodness is only negative. It cannot be compared in moral excellence with the mature

Christian, whose faith has been tested in many a furnace, whose valour has borne him victorious in many a fight. Yet he has often yielded to temptation, fallen into the mire, been wounded by the foe. He has not the child's innocence, but neither has the child his experience, matured knowledge, disciplined piety and fitness for high service. Such men as Joseph, after the temptation of Potiphar's house and the trials of prison; Daniel from his open window and the lion's den; and even David; were far nobler characters than any babe, however stainless, uneducated and untried. 'Every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.' Heb. v. 13, 14. But none can attain this maturity without that 'exercise' of the spiritual senses which involves temptation.

The appetites and faculties of body and mind make temptation possible, and the unavoidable conditions of life make it actual. Over all these circumstances God presides. He, not the devil, is the supreme Arbiter of our life. We are not the creatures of chance, the victims of fate, the mere material on which stern law operates. We are ever in our Father's care. He is our Guide in all the paths of life, our Leader in a journey from which temptation cannot be excluded. We should not say, 'Lead us not in this way;' we would not if we might; the fulfilment would be disastrous. The only hope of the world is that God is the Supreme Ruler.

While God thus leads us, we necessarily go amidst temptations. God knows this, yet leads us on. He feeds us amid famine, opens fountains in the desert and guards us from foes; but the famine and the desert and the foes await us in the path. 'Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.' God has a bountiful table for His children, but He spreads it, in this life, within sight of the foe. He purposes that we should meet with difficulties and battle with temptations. He does not tempt to sin, but He guides us where temptation is. So it was with His Beloved Son. 'Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.' Matt. iv. 1. The devil tempted Him, but God led Him. So God leads all His children. There is a great difference between the purposes of Christ's temptation and our own. He was led where He was to encounter the full force of the foe in order as our Champion to conquer that foe and teach us as our Example. We are led where temptations assail us, not that Satan may do his worst, but that we may experience just so much conflict, and no more, as may make us good soldiers of Jesus Christ. But in both cases it is true that God leads and the devil alone tempts. Whenever we are exposed to temptation not of our own seeking, it is our Father who has led us.

A guide on the mountains leads the Alpine climber where dangers exist. The summit cannot otherwise be reached. In avoiding or conquering the danger, the traveller's skill, courage and endurance are both tested and improved. His health and manhood, as

well as his enjoyment, are secured by his being thus led where dangers abound. But the leader knows what path is practicable, what perils should be shunned, and is ever ready to lend a helping hand. Thus our Heavenly Guide leads us by His Providence even when we are beset by snares.

We are passing through a region claimed and partially occupied by the foe. His forces are encamped on every hand, and in places least suspected his skirmishers are lurking. We must needs pass through this Samaria to reach Jerusalem. We must, through much tribulation, enter the kingdom. Any step off our way may bring us within range of the enemy's guns, within reach of the dagger of some ambushed assassin. Our confidence is this, that God our Father leads us amidst this peril; and it is for Him and not for our foe to choose where and when and how we are to be exposed to it.

Exposed to it, in some way, we must be; this is our Father's Will, for His children's good. It is vain to suppose that certain conditions of life are exempt from it; and wrong to pray that our condition may be altered, as if that would preserve us from temptation. Our safety is not to be found in some hiding-place of earth where temptation cannot enter; there is no such place: but in having God for our hiding-place while following His providential guidance where temptations may abound. Poverty may tempt us to murmur, or deceive, or envy, or steal; but could we escape these temptations by becoming rich, we might be tempted to be proud, self-indulgent, forgetful of God and of the heavenly inheritance.

The vigorous and healthy, in abounding activities, may glory in their strength rather than in its Giver; while a sick-bed may be found not necessarily to produce patience, but to tempt to petulance, distrust of God and selfish murmuring. Society has its snares, substituting fashionable opinion for Divine truth, and the pleasing our fellow-creatures for the service of God: but the solitude to which we fly for safety may be found equally perilous in the nurture of a morbid imagination, and the thronging in as companions of vain thoughts and evil desires. If in honour—we may be vainglorious, despise our inferiors, and fancy ourselves free from restraint; if in obscurity—we may yield to temptation because we are unobserved, and make up for our lack of fame by reviling the famous. Many talents may tempt us to use them vainly or selfishly; few talents, to hide them as not worth cultivation. Religious privileges may tempt to a formal reliance on them; the deprivation of privileges may suggest excuses for indifference to religion altogether. A happy experience and the full assurance of hope may beguile us to remit watchfulness, and to rely on our feelings rather than on Christ; while depression of mind may tempt us to distrust God, and to halt in the plain path of practical duties while peering into the misty gloom of our doubts and fears.

‘If the busy man is every day tempted to worship the *idola fori*, how many *idola specûs* are there which continually seduce the contemplative man from his allegiance! How easy it is for monks to bring evidence that marriage makes the soul less free; how

utterly they fail when they would praise the safety of celibacy! How free from all debate and turmoil the halls of philosophy may be thought by one who has only known the region of politics: sometimes men escape from both for security to the religious world, and find that there they are in the midst of more fierce and implacable contentions. . . . Where then lies the security? In this, that He is, that He lives, and that in one condition or another we are still led by Him. Into what perils soever we have come, let us be sure it was not the Evil Spirit, but God Himself who ordered the whole frame and condition of our lives, and that this frame and condition is not the worst but the best possible for us, the best possible though—yea because—it is one of tremendous temptation. Let us be equally sure that He is not our tempter; that He never tempted any man to evil; that we fall into it only when we think He is not with us to deliver us from it; that at all times and in all possible states, this is a right and true prayer which He inspires and which He hears, "Bring us not into temptation."<sup>1</sup>

At the same time we may, we should pray that God would so guide us that we may not be tempted beyond our strength. However surely we may rely on Divine help in peril, inasmuch as to become the victim of that peril is sin, every true child of God will shrink from it. Each of us has his own special frailties arising from inward temperament or outward circumstances, and we reasonably pray to be protected in our most vulnerable part. 'It would be a great misfortune to

<sup>1</sup> F. D. Maurice.

a man with weak lungs to call him to live in a cold, bleak air. So would it be to a man with weak eyes, to fix him in a situation which required much study by candle-light. Now it is to the full as dangerous for the soul of the ambitious man to be put into the road which leads to high stations, as it can be for the lungs of the consumptive man to give him a house on a bleak hill. So it is just as dangerous for a man like Balaam, to have much to do with money-bags, as it could be for the sight of the weak-eyed man to spend his nights in hard study.<sup>1</sup> If, careful of our bodily health, we desire not to be lodged where the climate would try our constitution to the utmost; so, anxious for our spiritual health, we ask God to guide us in such a way that outward circumstances may not so accord with inward tendencies, that the resulting temptation might overpower us.

The meaning of the prayer is clear in the light of Divine precepts and promises. He who indited it said: 'Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.' Therefore we pray not to be so brought into temptation as to be overcome by it; not to be carried into it so as to be left in it. 'God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.' 1 Cor. x. 13. God does suffer us to be tempted, but we pray that no temptation may be beyond our strength; we pray, not that we may escape being tempted at all, but that our escape may be in the way of endurance and victory. 'The Lord knoweth how to deliver the

<sup>1</sup> Augustus Hare.

godly out of temptation.' 2 Pet. ii. 9. He who leads us where temptation is, will also lead us out of it unhurt. He has two methods; sometimes by leading us out of its reach, sometimes by leading us through it and giving special strength to conquer it. The Apostle was sorely tempted when, being brought before Nero, none of his friends stood with him, but 'all forsook him.' He was tempted himself also to shrink back, or to curse those who left him alone; but his faith failed not: 'the Lord stood with me and strengthened me:' he prayed for his faithless friends, 'I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge;' he was 'delivered out of the mouth of the lion.' He was led where fierce temptations abounded, but he was not so brought into them as to be overcome by them; he exulted in the confidence of faith, saying, 'And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom.' 2 Tim. iv. 16-18. Through 'the valley of the shadow of death,' abounding with perils, our Shepherd often leads His flock; and it is our safety to follow even there, this being our security, 'I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.' Ps. xxiii. 4.

After God has forgiven us our debts, there is nothing that we have so devotedly to watch and guard against as that we fall not again into the same filth. Since therefore, as David saith, there are in the great sea of this world 'things creeping innumerable,' that is, temptations and adversities which strive to bring us under debts again, we have need to pray from the inmost heart, 'O Father, lead us not into tempta-

tion. I pray not that I may be utterly delivered from all temptation, for that would be a fearful state, but that I may not run and fall against Thee. We are surrounded with temptations, but be Thou our help, that we consent not unto them, and thus be taken and overcome by them.' No one can be free from temptations; but a man may resist these, though it must be by imploring the Divine aid only. We have it related in the lives of the ancient fathers concerning a certain younger brother among them, that he expressed his desire to be free from the plague of his evil imaginations. To whom one of the elders replied, 'Thou canst not prevent the birds in the air from flying over thy head, but yet thou canst prevent them from building their nests in thy hair.' And again, the blessed Augustine saith, 'We cannot avoid temptations and adversities, but we can, by prayer and calling upon God for His Divine aid, take heed that they do not overcome us.'<sup>1</sup>

Without attempting to define or understand exactly the dealings of God with His children in thus leading them where temptation is, this prayer may be regarded as the natural heart-utterance of every believer. We say—Our Father! we mourn because of past sin committed against Thee; O keep us from fresh grief in grieving Thee! We lament that we have often failed to hallow Thy Name and to do Thy Will; help us in the future! We hate the sins that dishonour Thee and wound our own soul; enable us to conquer them! We distrust ourselves, for we have proved how inconstant are our best resolves,

<sup>1</sup> Luther.

how weak our own strongest efforts, how numerous our evil inclinations, how slippery are the paths on which we walk, how many are the snares laid for our feet; uphold us! We lean on Thee! We follow Thee! but O bring us not where temptation might be too strong for us!

Old Testament prayers express the same desire: 'Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe. O let me not wander from Thy commandments. Order my steps in Thy word, and let not any iniquity prevail against me. Remove from me the way of lying. Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments. Lead me in Thy righteousness because of my enemies. Lead me in Thy truth and teach me. Lead me in a plain path because of mine enemies, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me. I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O Lord, I will keep Thy statutes.'

Jehoshaphat, threatened by the armies of Moab and Ammon, appealed to God for help, saying, 'We have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon Thee.' 2 Chron. xx. 12. So, assailed by many temptations and conscious of our own weakness, we cry to our Father for help. This is our safety. Prayer is a chief part of the Christian's panoply. 'Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit,' we can go safely amidst any temptations towards which God leads us, sure that He will enable us to overcome them, and will bring us safely out of them.

This prayer, like the rest, is unselfish. It seeks

not merely personal preservation, but embraces our brethren who are exposed to the same temptations and need the same protection; as on board a ship in danger we cannot pray for our own preservation without including that of those who journey with us. For the whole Church we pray: for struggling, tempted souls altogether unknown to us in distant lands, of other tongues. We realize the 'communion of the saints,' the fellowship and brotherhood of all who are on their pilgrimage of trial towards the home above. 'O strange and mysterious privilege, that some bed-ridden woman in a lonely garret, who feels that she is tempted to distrust the love and mercy of Him who sent His Son to die for the helpless, should wrestle with that doubt, saying the Lord's Prayer; and that she should be thus asking help for those who are dwelling in palaces, who scarcely dream of want, yet in their own way are in peril as great as hers; for the student, who in his chamber is haunted with questions which would seem to her monstrous and incredible, but which to him are agonizing; for the divine in his terrible assaults from cowardice, despondency, vanity, from the sense of his own heartlessness, from the shame of past neglect, from the appalling discovery of evils in himself which he has denounced in others, from vulgar outward temptations into which he had proudly fancied that he could not fall, from dark suggestions recurring often that words have no realities corresponding to them, that what he speaks of may mean nothing because to him it has often meant so little. Of all this the sufferer knows nothing, and yet for these she prays—and for the

statesman . . . for her country . . . for all other countries in their throes of anguish . . . for one and all she cries, "Lead us not into temptation." Their temptations and hers, different in form, are the same in substance. They, like her, are tempted to doubt that God is, and that He is the Author of good and not of evil; and that He is mightier than the evil; and that He can and will overthrow it, and deliver the universe out of it.'<sup>1</sup>

### III.—CONSOLATION FOR THE TEMPTED.

1. *Temptation is not sin.*—We have seen that in our present state temptation cannot be avoided, and that we should be losers in moral discipline and maturity of character if it could. It only becomes sin when we invite, tamper with, and encourage it. But when we resist and pray against it, faith is strengthened and fortitude increased. Sincere prayer against it is evidence of a desire not to yield; and while we thus shrink from it, we may be assured we shall not fall under its power. We shall never be overcome through the weakness that causes us to lay hold on the arm of Omnipotence. 'When I am weak, then am I strong.'

God does not condemn us on account of the obstacles which hinder us in our efforts to climb the heights of holiness, but commends us for our efforts to overcome them. He does not judge us by the side-eddies and counter-currents and tiny whirlpools which here and there make the river seem to flow backward,

<sup>1</sup> F. D. Maurice.

nor by the rocks in the channel which retard the crested tide; but by the onward flood, which, despite such resisting rocks and returning currents, rolls steadily to the ocean of Infinite Love. If we can say with the Psalmist, 'I hate vain thoughts,' those thoughts are no evidence that we are wanderers from God; but the hating of them does prove that we are His children.

2. *Temptation is not peculiar to the individual.*—We are not alone in having to suffer it. This is taught us by the direction to pray for others as well as for ourselves. 'Lead *us* not into temptation.' All who call on God as 'Our Father,' need to ask Him to help them against the temptations by which they are all assailed. 'There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man.' It is incident to humanity as such, and therefore is no disparagement to the individual. It is no sign that we are more weak or wicked than others, or that the devil is allowed some special power over us, or that our Heavenly Father is displeased with us or has forgotten us. Because we are human we are tempted, and because we are Christian we feel temptation the more keenly.

3. *Christ Himself was tempted.*—As perfect Man He 'was made like unto His brethren,' and therefore was liable to be tempted. He shared all our bodily and mental faculties by the agency of which temptation is possible. Those faculties, however abused by us, are in themselves pure and holy, because given by a holy God. All these the faultless Christ shared with us, and by these was tempted to sin. His

hunger in the desert was real, and his desire to satisfy it was natural and intense, but to satisfy it in a manner opposed to the will of His Father would have been sin. Though to this desire He did not yield, He felt it as we do. So with all the temptations by which He was assailed. 'He was in all points tempted like as we are;' otherwise He could not have been an example to us of conflict and victory. He knew how possibilities of sin attend the exercise of the purest affections, even as shadows are cast from the loveliest flowers. He knew the loneliness the soul may feel when in some wilderness which the devil haunts. He knew the pangs of unsatisfied desire, the yearnings of natural instincts, the depression of mind caused by weakness of the flesh, and the strength which may thus by special circumstances belong to temptations which would be powerless at other times. He who, exhausted by the fierceness of the struggle, needed sympathy and succour, so that, in the absence of human friends, 'angels came and ministered unto Him,' will Himself be present to help us in our temptations. He can have no sympathy with the sinfulness which His law forbids, His example rebukes, His cross condemns; but His Divine compassion and human sympathy secure His help to all who offer this prayer, which He Himself taught.

4. *The prayer is presented to 'Our Father.'*—He loves the children He has redeemed. It is not His will that any of His little ones should perish. If a sparrow falls not to the ground without His notice, how surely His eye of love watches, His arm of power is outstretched to help those who, fearing to

grieve Him by sin, ask Him to save them from temptation! He first puts this prayer into our hearts, and 'He cannot deny Himself.' He is 'our Father in Heaven,' and therefore able to control all the circumstances of our lives, and must be mightier for our weal than all who seek our woe. His own word assures us that He will not allow His children to be tempted beyond that ability to resist which He will give them; and that with every temptation which He permits to assail us, He will bestow grace to conquer it. They who utter this cry to their Father may be sure that 'He pitifully beholds the sorrows of their hearts.' They have therefore 'strong consolation.'

#### IV.—PRACTICAL LESSONS.

1. *We should not go into temptation.*—If we sincerely pray God not to bring us into temptation, we cannot willingly bring ourselves into it; for, if we do, our prayer does not express our true desire and is but an empty form. The Author of the prayer said to those to whom He gave it, 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.' Guard against the first approach of danger, go not near it of your own choice, 'avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it and pass away.' Prov. iv. 14, 15. In this habit of life pray God not to bring you into temptation: if you ask God not to take you there, never take yourselves there.

This lesson is applicable to companionships, books, amusements, which are felt to be, if not sinful, yet

paths leading sin-wards. If the precipice is dreaded, beware of the slope leading to it, and do not venture near when no duty calls. If, because we are subject to dizziness, we ask our guide not to lead us too close to the edge of the abyss, let us not leave him and venture there to pluck a flower, or look down into the depth beneath. 'The way of sin is down hill. A man cannot stop where he would; and he that will be tampering with dangerous occasions in confidence of his resolution, shall find himself often carried beyond his purpose.'<sup>1</sup> 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.'

Some enter into temptation presumptuously, to show their power of resistance; some curiously, to see what the danger is, and taste the allurements; some carelessly, giving no heed to their steps; some imitatively, following where others go; and some pharisaically, boasting their piety and pretending to glorify God by showing what His grace can do in preserving them. Many, like Eve, begin by looking at the forbidden fruit, till looking leads to longing; longing, to approaching; approaching, to smelling and handling; then to plucking and eating.

Often has the case of Achan been repeated: 'When I saw among the spoils a Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them and took them.' Josh. vii. 21. Deliberate looking on what is forbidden is the temptation that leads to the sin. Many, like David, loiter on the roof to gaze at beauty that fascinates,

<sup>1</sup> Leighton.

beguiles, ensnares, destroys. Look not off from the path of present duty to gaze upon pleasant but perilous byways; 'Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look right before thee.' 'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.' To preserve the streams from pollution, guard the fountain. 'Keep thine heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.' Prov. iv. 23-27. If we would not have our house burnt down, let us extinguish the stray spark, the smouldering flame. 'Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals and his feet not be burned?' Prov. vi. 27, 28. They that carry powder must not stand amongst flying sparks. If we dread the jaws of the lion, we must not loiter at the mouth of his den. We should beware how we enter the dungeon-door which shuts of itself with a spring-lock, but cannot be opened without a key. 'There is no necessary connection between going into temptation and coming out.'

Habits are gradually and easily formed, which may become chains requiring more than human strength to break them. The noxious seed may be easily uprooted, but the tree may defy your strength. An infant temptation may be slain, which, full grown, will slay you.

'Fashion it thus: that what he is, augmented,  
 Would run to these, and these extremities;  
 And therefore think him as a serpent's egg,  
 Which, hatched, would, as his kind, grow mischievous,  
 And kill him in the shell.'<sup>1</sup>

The gentle current may float us into the raging

<sup>1</sup> *Julius Cæsar.*

rapids or the cruel whirlpool, and over the deadly fall. The writer was once persuaded by a friend, who assured him of the safety of the voyage, to accompany him and his family in a tiny steam-craft from Buffalo down the Niagara river. At first the broad smooth stream gave no sign of its never-ceasing downward flow. But presently the noise of the water splashing against the prow grows less. Now it ceases altogether. We are no longer forcing our way through it, but are being hurried along by it. The silence in the air, the smoothness of the stream, might in other circumstances have exercised a soothing influence, but are awful to those who now see in the distance a straight horizontal line suddenly terminating the view of the river. Over it is a white column of mist. Between us and it is a line of surf. We are rapidly approaching the tremendous fall, when we suddenly shoot into a small creek, hitherto unnoticed. An accident to the machinery, or insufficient power to counteract the current, would be fatal. Many a boat with its cargo of precious life has thus been carried over. Inexperience, lack of due precaution, foolhardiness, have been death to many who fancied they could at any moment stem the tide, and safely return to where the stream was gentle and the landing-place easy to reach.

The whirlpool was afterwards visited. Here the great cataract surging and roaring from its enormous plunge, has worn away a vast crater-shaped basin at the side of the main stream, round which the heaving, surging, foaming waters perpetually revolve. I watched a great tree which had been carried into this

whirlpool. Sometimes it gyrated on its own axis ; sometimes it rose suddenly in the air, pointing upwards as if some huge giant lifted his arm in distress ; then it plunged downwards and disappeared from view ; then as suddenly it shot up again perpendicularly in some other place, and fell back helpless on the whirling tide, ever borne round and round its prison. I looked till I fancied it was a sentient creature struggling to escape into the main stream, and so reach the quiet refuge of the lake below. Again and again it neared the mouth of the great basin, and I thought the main current might mercifully embrace and rescue it. But no ; after a brief struggle between the waters of the river and the whirlpool, back it was swept to repeat the same course of agonizing disappointment. I could bear it no longer and turned away, for I seemed to look upon multitudes of my fellow-creatures, the victims of evil habit. They have ventured on the placid stream of temptation to indulgence that seemed harmless, safe, and easy to be resisted when it might threaten injury ; they have been lulled by soothing pleasure, and the perilous silence of conscience ; they have become self-secure in the purpose of rousing themselves when in danger of going too far ; but they have been swept into the deadly whirlpool of sinful habit which is now alternately their chamber of insensibility and torture : they sometimes awake to a sense of their peril, they lift up their arms in despair, they resolve to escape, again and again they think deliverance near, but again and again the power of habit asserts itself, and they are still carried round and

round in 'the hell of waters' they have made for themselves.

' Habits are soon assumed ; but when we strive  
To strip them off, 'tis being flayed alive.  
Called to the temple of impure delight,  
He that abstains, and he alone, does right.  
If a *wish* wander that way, call it home ;  
He cannot long be safe whose wishes roam.  
But if you pass the threshold, you are caught ;  
Die then, if power Almighty save you not.'<sup>1</sup>

Alas ! how many a human moth flutters round the alluring flame till, with singed wings, it fall and dies ; how many a fly wilfully gets entangled in a web that seems so flimsy, yet is so strong, till the watchful foe enfolds and devours it ! The youth who would not become the victim of her whose 'feet go down to death, and whose steps take hold on hell,' must 'remove his ways far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house.' Prov. v. 5-8. He who would avoid gluttonous excess should keep aloof from the company of gluttons. 'Be not among wine-bibbers ; among riotous eaters of flesh ; for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty.' Prov. xxiii. 20, 21. To avoid their ruin, 'be not *among* them.' He who is in danger of 'woe, contentions, babbling, wounds without cause, and redness of eyes' by 'tarrying long at the wine,' is bidden to '*look not* on the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.' If he would not experience that 'at the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder,' he should 'look not upon it.' Prov. xxiii. 29-32.

v A good general is cautious as well as brave, else

<sup>1</sup> Cowper, *Progress of Error*.

his bravery is but foolhardiness. He respects his foe for strength and vigilance if for nothing else, and gives him no opportunity to 'steal a march' or assail an unguarded post. He does not go out of his way to 'demonstrate,' and provoke an unnecessary fight which may involve failure. 'Our safest course is always to be ready prepared to the battle, but not to provoke the enemy to fight: *fugiendo pugnare.*'<sup>1</sup>

'When fierce temptation, seconded within  
By traitor Appetite, and armed with darts  
Tempered in Hell, invades the throbbing breast,  
To combat may be glorious, and success  
Perhaps may crown us; but to fly is safe.'<sup>2</sup>

It is said that at the battle of Waterloo, a wealthy merchant of Brussels who had been allowed access to headquarters, asked Wellington whether he was not exposing his person to great danger, as shot and shell were falling around. The general replied, 'You have no business here, but I am performing my duty.' So let us never go into spiritual danger from idle curiosity, but only when duty calls: then, and then alone, may we expect to be safe.

In a matter of life or death let us not run dangerous risks, relying on what is 'deceitful above all things.' 'He that trusteth his own heart is a fool.' Let there be no sleeping on the Philistine's lap, if we would not have our locks shorn. Piety enfeebled by dalliance with pleasant danger is no match for the enemy when with strong cords he bursts in to bind and enslave. A recent shipwreck was caused by the captain venturing near a rocky coast, in too great reliance on his own skill, the depth of water and the

<sup>1</sup> Farindon.

<sup>2</sup> *The Task.*

changeable wind. Alas! how many have 'made shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience' not by purposely heading upon the visible rocks of sin, but by venturing into the shallow waters of temptation where shoals and reefs are hidden! Let us give a wide berth not only to those headlands, but to these shallows too.

Burglars have been known to send into a house they intended to rob, a child, who has secreted himself till night and has then opened the door to the spoilers. If we fear the burglars, let us beware of the child. 'Admit but some inordinate desire into your heart that you account a small matter, and it is a hundred to one but it shall prove a little thief got in to open the door to a number of greater.'<sup>1</sup> One temptation fondled instead of strangled, may open the door to a host of devils to rob us of our choicest wealth. Let us not allow the wedge to enter if we would not have our roof-tree split. However thin its edge, if once inside the crack, gentle pressure may be followed by sturdy blows, till the strongest resolutions and longest formed habits give way.

'It is the little rift within the lute,  
That by and by will make the music mute.'<sup>2</sup>

✓ Temptation is like a quicksand, which, when the tide has left it, is firm to the tread, but as soon as the water returns, proves treacherous to the unwary loiterer. The sea has its regular ebb and flow, and the hours may be calculated within which the sand may be visited; but temptation has no such limits. A wave of passion may suddenly rise and convert

<sup>1</sup> Leighton.

<sup>2</sup> Tennyson.

that pleasure-ground into a deadly swamp, into the mouth of hell. They cannot be innocent who venture there, nor safe because they mean to leave it when they see danger near.

‘ An hour, or more, not meaning any harm ?

It is hypocrisy against the devil :

They that mean virtuously, and yet do so,

The devil their virtue tempts, and they tempt heaven.’<sup>1</sup>

‘ The common excuse is, “ We wish to see *life*.” Life! my brother. Depravity is disease, evil is corruption; to call such *life*, is only the gloss of an artful delusion. You can only see life when you see truth, purity, goodness. If we wish to see physical life, we seek it where the pure airs of heaven hue the cheek with health, and the exercises of honest industry sinew the limbs with symmetry and strength; not where life lies marred and crippled with the loathsome disfigurements of self-entailed disease. Let the physician go—and God protect him!—on his benevolent mission into the infected region where the deadly epidemic is doing its ghastly work upon the sad and weary sufferers; but idle curiosity may not venture there. And remember that evil has its contagion, and sin circulates the subtlest infection.’<sup>2</sup>

The writer saw at Chicago notices placed on several houses with the warning, ‘ Small-pox is here;’ ‘ Fever is here.’ Only those having necessary business or bound on errands of affection and philanthropy would enter such a house. But may not the mark of moral pestilence be seen on the forehead of many a boon-companion, and over the entrance of many a saloon of

<sup>1</sup> *Othello*.

<sup>2</sup> *Lorraine*.

pleasure? Is it not inscribed on every fascinating temptation to sin? Should we be less cautious regarding the health of the soul than of the body?

Young men specially desire and boast of freedom. But over how many a door through which they enter to seek it, they would read if they would only look and consider, '*Slavery is here*'! Who is a more abject slave than he who yields himself to the government of sinful passions, and allows himself to be tied and bound by habits of evil-doing? How often, when the youth has become thus voluntarily enslaved, the man has been all his life afterwards the fag of other men or the drudge of adverse circumstances, so that his early boast of liberty has ended in a degrading lifelong slavery, and futile complaints of injustice and tyranny! To many such the grand words of Milton are applicable—'Instead of laying the blame on any but yourselves, know that to be free is the same thing as to be wise, to be temperate and just, frugal and abstinent, and lastly, to be magnanimous and brave. So to be the opposite of all these is the same as to be a slave; and it usually happens that those who cannot govern themselves and moderate their passions, but crouch under the slavery of their lusts, should be delivered to the sway of those whom they abhor, and made to submit to an involuntary servitude.'<sup>1</sup>

An excuse often made for young men's sins is that they must 'sow their wild oats.' It is forgotten that 'whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' Would any one expect to improve his garden by

<sup>1</sup> *Second Defence of the People of England.*

sowing weeds in it rather than by rooting them out? Will injury to a tool make it more fit for future use? Is a man the stronger because he was sickly when a child? Is that soldier the braver who, when a youth, yielded like a coward to the foe? It is monstrous to suppose that indulgence in fleshly lusts can be needed as a discipline for the practice of spiritual virtues.

In reply to those who 'assert that youthful vice is a preparative for manhood, a kind of mud-bath in which the youth is necessitated to steep,' Carlyle says: 'We hope they are mistaken; for sin and remorse so easily beset us in all stages of life, and are always such indifferent company, that it seems hard we should at any stage be fated not only to meet but to yield to them. Clear we are it cannot be the training one receives in the devil's service, but only our determining to desist from it, that fits us for true manly action. Surely such lessons are best learned from the lips of a devout mother, in the looks and actions of a devout father, while the heart is yet soft and pliant, rather than in collision with the sharp adamant of fate, attracting us to shipwreck us when the heart is grown hard, and may be broken before it will become contrite.'

Little drops of water may hurl down mountain-masses. Slowly and gently the tiny rills percolate the soil and undermine the rocky strata, till suddenly the land-slip carries away the forest and overwhelms the village. Thus many a catastrophe of sin has been caused by the accumulated force of unregarded temptation. The spiritual nature has been softened and saturated by allurements to evil, till it has

suddenly and for ever given way beneath the pressure.

Looking into a long railway tunnel, you see a tiny spark. It seems stationary, but it is approaching constantly, irresistibly, rapidly. Do not loiter on those rails, else the express train will be upon you. A jewelled cup is presented, filled with fragrant poison, and you hesitate to believe that what looks so radiant and smells so sweet can do you harm. Yet to drink will be fatal. Handle not that glittering toy; inhale not that stupefying odour; cast away the goblet if you would not drink the poison. Wisdom says, not, 'Look at it, but do not drink it; or if you drink, drink not much;' but—

Taste not at all 'the sweet Circean cup;  
He that sips often, at last drinks it up.'

The gospel says not, 'Go as near to the edge of the precipice as you can without falling over;' but, 'Keep as far from danger as you can without sacrifice of duty.' It says not, 'Venture into the rapids without plunging into the howling abyss;' but, 'Avoid the treacherous tide that has swept multitudes into hell.' It does not advise us to mingle with sinners as our associates, and handle without being  
v defiled by their toys, but, 'Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord; and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.' 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

2. *We must resist temptation in the way Christ  
v Himself has appointed:* not therefore boasting of our own strength of resolution, nor relying on a sense of

propriety and respectability, nor on well-matured habits, but in a spirit of humble dependence on God and faith in His help, as taught in this prayer.

We must not forge weapons of our own, but seek from heaven 'the whole armour of God.' We must take 'the shield of faith, wherewith to quench the fiery darts of the wicked one.' We must see 'Him who is invisible' if we would overcome the allurements of sense. We must behold the Lamb of God offered for sin if we would so hate it as to conquer it. We must look to the Intercessor on the throne and to things eternal, if we would prevail over the world, the flesh and the devil. We must take 'the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God,' if we would imitate the Captain of our salvation, who, in the wilderness, thus parried every hostile thrust, and by Holy Scripture refuted satanic sophisms. In the light of 'that Word let us look beneath the specious garb temptation wears; let us ask, Will it bear reflection in the season of sickness and in prospect of death, judgment, eternity? Is it worth the cost of conscience, God, and heaven? By dealing thus with temptation we shall detect the serpent lurking among the flowers. As on the moors or the mountains boggy places may be safely traversed by planting the foot only where tufts of heather grow, so let us tread only where some Divine promises can take root. Above all, we must obey the injunction of Him who encourages us to offer this petition. Our importunity in urging it is one of God's methods of fulfilling it. We must 'watch and pray' if we would not enter into temptation: 'praying always with all prayer

and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.' Eph. vi. 18.

3. *We should specially guard weak places in our defence.*—Past temptations should teach us where we can be most readily assailed; the joints in the armour by which the arrow most easily enters; the place in the roof which the rain soonest penetrates; the window or door most favourable for the burglar's admission; the part of the fence through which the cattle may pass to trample down our tender plants; the angle of our sea-bound estate, against which the high tides most threateningly dash. Let us then strengthen with special care the places which we have found to be most exposed to danger. Each has some weakness which temptation reveals. The rising water in the vessel detects the hidden leak which we should stop with special care. As skilful soldiers we should fortify with extra toil and watch with constant vigilance the weak part of our position, where the foe is most likely to deliver his assault. But while specially guarding weak places, we must not neglect the strong. A fortress has sometimes been captured by scaling the precipice which seemed to render it on that side impregnable. ✓ So the father of the faithful yielded to distrust, and Moses, the meekest of men, to irritation and disobedience.

Various temperaments are exposed to corresponding temptations, and they who are comparatively safe from one sin may be specially liable to another. Righteous Lot may be vexed and grieved at the profanity of the wicked, yet may be ensnared by the

intoxicating cup, and sink into shameful vice. Wise Solomon may become a fool, ensnared by women's wiles. Strong Samson may yield to seductive weakness. Heroic David may basely bend beneath the yoke of tyrant passions. An inspired prophet may be lured by lucre and preach to please. When by affliction removed from worldly scenes we fancy ourselves specially secure, we may be exposed to special peril. Foes often lurk in dark shadows. Years of freedom from fierce assault may generate self-security, so that we remit our vigilance and unclasp our armour. Many victors have been vanquished by carelessness after conflict, and many professing Christians have fallen away in old age by ceasing to watch against temptation before removal beyond its reach.

4. *Turn stumbling-blocks into stepping-stones.*—The opportunity of sinning may be made an opportunity of glorifying God. Blame not the flesh because Satan often employs it as a ground of temptation, but make that flesh a battle-field for winning trophies from the foe. The various faculties of the body and mind are not sins, and are only occasions of sin when we yield to temptation; but they may also, when curbed and controlled, become occasions for special glory to God.

Chrysostom says, 'We do not read, Let not the flesh act or live, but let not sin reign: for Christ came not to *subvert human nature*, but to *rectify the will*.' We cannot eradicate our natural instincts and faculties, nor should we desire to do so, but rather to regulate and use them in the service of God. Not the faculties are to be blamed, but our misuse of them. The

same weapon which might be used for murder may also be wielded by the loyal soldier; the moral quality residing not in it but in him. The same drug may be administered to preserve life or to destroy, and thus be either a medicine or a poison; and the same faculties of body or mind may be exercised in the practice either of holiness or sin. To preserve them from serving the devil, let them be yielded wholly to God. Let those members which temptation would desecrate for vice become consecrated vessels for the temple. 'Yield not your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.' Rom. vi. 13. This full surrender of the whole nature to God will be the best preservative against any particular member being employed in opposition to Him. Our body as well as our soul belongs to God; sin, the usurper, claims it as his domain; let us deny the claim, resist the usurpation, denounce the invader. Feudal lords held their estates as vassals of the king, and were bound to aid him in his wars in proportion to their holding. The ruler of a kingdom receives its tribute. If we recognize sin as ruler, we shall yield our faculties to its service; but if we give our entire selves to God, there will be no single faculty left wherewith to serve sin.

Let those faculties which otherwise might be degraded to toil as the vassals and serfs of sin, be constrained to render joyful homage to God. Let the hand, when tempted to dishonest grasp or

angry blow, be urged in Love's own service to benefit others by honest toil and gentle succour. Let the foot, when bidden by the devil to go his errands, be the more promptly moved forward in the path of God's commands. Let not the wondrous faculty of vision open the door for a rabble of unclean imaginations to enter and pollute the soul, or for sending forth looks of lust or malice; but when thus tempted let it the more ponder the lively oracles of truth, and be the inlet of images of purity and love. Let the voice, when prompted to utter angry, deceitful, or profane words, the more bear witness for God, plead before His throne, and blend with the anthems of angels in His praise. As all we have we hold from Him, let hands, feet, eye, tongue, imagination, memory, will, bearing the mark of His ownership, be devoted to His service. Let us take the harp which temptation may be preparing for the music of sin, and make its strings vibrate with the harmonies of heaven.

Circumstances which threaten peril, or at least obstruction, when we cannot avoid them, may become helps instead of hindrances. Are we inclined to be made angry by some fierce provocation? Let it become an occasion of cultivating patience. Does some sensuous pleasure allure? Let it be a summons to crucify the flesh. Does some accession of fortune tempt us to 'the love of money which is a root of all kinds of evil'? Let us seize the opportunity of doing good, and instead of allowing wealth to impoverish the soul, let us therewith 'lay up a good foundation for the world to come.' By a godly chemistry let

fragrant essences be distilled from filthy refuse. By a holy husbandry let deposits which might breed pestilence enrich and fertilize the soil.

If, in the course of Divine Providence, we find ourselves in the company of the ungodly, instead of merely resisting their assaults, let us be ourselves assailants. Would they allure us to sin? Let us persuade them to godliness. Instead of simply refusing to be led into the world, let us lead them into the church. Not content with saving ourselves, let us save others.

To avoid temptations to evil, let us dwell among incitements to good. If we would escape an epidemic, let us not only avoid infection, but be well supplied with its preventive. To be secure against the contamination of evil example, let us cultivate close fellowship with the righteous. Let their sentiments, aims and actions so impregnate and possess our minds that we may be proof against adverse influences.

v To counteract the chilling frost of the world, let us keep up the temperature of our inner life by devout reading of the Scriptures; by prayerful attendance on gospel preaching; by 'showing forth the Lord's death' at the feast of loving memory He has ordained; by self-examination; by intercourse with the godly; and above all, by habitual and earnest prayer. As we are exposed without ceasing to temptation, we must 'pray without ceasing,' if we would overcome it.

Thus feeding the furnace of the moral machinery within, we shall by Divine help resist the temptations



5. *We should not bring others into temptation.*—  
As our Lord taught that if we truly ask forgiveness we must also practise it, so also if we pray that God will not bring us into temptation we surely must not willingly bring others into it. If we need succour from our Father, we must render it to our brethren. If what we do is not perilous to ourselves, yet if by doing it we encourage others in what is perilous to them, the question arises, how far we are acting consistently with this prayer if we persevere in such a course of conduct.

There are two roads to a certain village amongst the mountains. One is solid, wide and safe; the other is narrow, slippery, precipitous. By strength, practice, well-nailed boots, I can, without danger, traverse the *mauvais pas*. But suppose by my example others are encouraged to follow, some of whom fall and perish. I may assert my liberty, and censure their folly; but would it not be more humane, more Christ-like, if for their sake I took the safer path? I am bathing where the river is deep and rapid. I make no secret of my enjoyment, and practically recommend others to bathe in the same place. But of those who attempt it, some, by lack of strength and skill, are drowned. Would it not be merciful in me to mark the place as 'Dangerous,' and bathe elsewhere?

All along our dangerous coasts lighthouses warn sailors against rocks, and guide them into port. But, alas for humanity! false lights have sometimes been exhibited to allure vessels to destruction, that the wreckers might seize the spoil. Spirits of darkness

do this for the ruin of the soul. But, without such fell purpose, it has often happened that the dubious example of Christian professors has misled the unwary to make shipwreck of faith. The more we are trusted as safe guides, the more dangerous is any misleading signal. Let us be quite sure that what we ourselves allow and do, prove not a snare to others. As true beacons we are to 'shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life.' Phil. ii. 16.

At the Greenwich Observatory a signal is given every day at the exact moment of noon. By this the captains of outward-bound vessels adjust the chronometers by which they calculate their longitude during many weeks, and ascertain their exact position though on the trackless ocean, hundreds of miles from land. An error at the Observatory would disarrange all the calculations of the navigator, and might cause the wreck of many a ship and the loss of many a crew. The reputation of the Observatory for accuracy increases the confidence reposed in it, and also the injury which might result from any inaccurate signal. Christians should specially be careful to give the true time, regulated by the Sun of Righteousness, otherwise some who think they may safely follow such example may suffer shipwreck.

St. Paul considered meat offered to idols as differing nothing from other meat. To him it was clean, and eating it was no homage offered by him to idolatry. But others had not this discernment. To them this meat seemed to represent the idol, and

eating it in some sort to be idol-worship. The example of the Apostle eating it might encourage them in an act which, in the state of their consciences, would be for them a sinful surrender of the faith. So he resolved to abstain from it, that he might not bring others into temptation. 'If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.' 1 Cor. viii. 13.

This principle may be applied to a variety of indulgences, not in themselves wicked, but owing to special circumstances, dangerous to many. The theatre, the race-course, the ball-room, games of hazard, intoxicating drinks, may be regarded as not in themselves necessarily sinful. But many Christians abstain from them because of their evil associations and tendencies; and because, however harmless to themselves, such pleasures might prove perilous to others, especially the young. Their personal sanction would be pleaded by those to whom the indulgence would act as the slope towards the precipice, and as the swift current hurrying onward to the cataract. The higher the character for wisdom, experience and piety, the more potent the example either for good or evil. Those therefore who have achieved a reputation for conquering temptation should take the most heed lest they lead others into it. 'It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.' Rom. xiv. 21.

Instead of being stumbling-blocks to others, we should rather show compassion towards those who

stumble and fall. They sinned, being tempted, and we know not how strong was the influence exerted. Perhaps their temptations were stronger than ours, their advantages less. Perhaps they had not our knowledge of the truth, our religious privileges and help from friends. Perhaps if we had been exposed to the same assaults, we might ourselves have yielded. Perhaps they resisted long and bravely, though overcome at last. Our own experience of the force of temptation should make us gentle in our judgments, earnest in our prayers, tender in our treatment respecting the fallen.

The world, except where its own standard has been transgressed and the sin is vulgar, is apt to excuse the fault, or 'make a mock at sin,' and even dress it up as virtue and give it titles of honour. Pharisaism, on the other hand, proudly gathers up its robes, and sweeps past the transgressor in heartless scorn. We are taught both to abhor the sin and to pity the sinner. There have been times when the stream of adverse influence that has swept him down was too strong for ourselves, and it is only by Divine mercy that we are now struggling against it. We remember conflicts with the same foe when we also have suffered defeat, and victories which long trembled in the balance and were at last only just won. We have weathered the gale and hope soon to be in port, but we shall always remember how narrowly we escaped shipwreck.

' Safe home, safe home in port !  
Rent cordage, shattered deck,  
Torn sails, provisions short,  
And only not a wreck.

'The prize, the prize secure !  
 The wrestler nearly fell ;  
 Bare all he could endure,  
 And bare not always well.

'No more the foe can harm,  
 No more of leaguered camp,  
 And cry of night-alarm,  
 And need of ready lamp :  
 And yet how nearly he had failed ;  
 How nearly had the foe prevailed !'<sup>1</sup>

Let us then deal gently with the fallen ; cheer them lest they despair, by telling of pardoning mercy and assisting grace ; and be ourselves hopeful of their recovery. 'Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness ; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.' Gal. vi. 1.

<sup>1</sup> Neale.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE SEVENTH PETITION.

‘BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL.’

SOME have considered this clause as a part of the sixth petition; a stating positively what had been already expressed negatively: ‘Bring us not in, but pull us out.’ Others regard it not as a mere amplification, but as a separate petition, associated with the preceding by the connecting *ἀλλά*, but reaching farther, more comprehensive, having affinity with it, but seeking a blessing higher in degree, the absolute reverse of what had been deprecated—deliverance from evil universally. As the petition ‘Forgive us’ refers to the past, and ‘Lead us not into temptation’ to the present, so this ‘Deliver us from evil’ reaches forward to the future. Thus it forms a separate and seventh petition, completing the perfect Jewish number.

The expression *ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ*, *from the evil*, may be neuter, meaning ‘evil’ in general, or ‘the evil thing’ specifically; or it may be masculine, and rendered, as by the New Testament revisers, ‘the Evil One.’ The older and more familiar rendering is sustained by Rom. xii. 9: ‘Abhor that which is evil,’ *τὸ πονηρόν*; ‘cleave to that which is good,’ *τῷ ἀγαθῷ*. If ‘good’ in the abstract is that which is to be cherished, ‘evil’

in the abstract, 'the evil,' is that which is to be shunned.

Dean Alford says, 'τοῦ πονηροῦ is here certainly neuter; the introduction of "the Evil One" would here be quite incongruous and even absurd.'<sup>1</sup> Stier says: 'This is the Liturgy of all liturgies, and here it reaches its sublime close; which through the deep lowliness of the believing "deliver us," immediately passes on to the heavenly doxology. And just at this point must the Conqueror confer that honour on the vanquished enemy to name him with his threatening power? Are the believing children of the Father, already redeemed, for ever to be subjected to the contumely at the end of every private and common prayer of mentioning *him*? Let him believe this who can! Our inmost sense of holy propriety recoils from it. The Redeemer has left His own name unmentioned: though Himself the ground, medium, end of every prayer: and can He be thought to have expressly mentioned Satan?'<sup>2</sup>

In defence of the Revised Version it is urged, that, as the rendering 'the Evil One' must be given to the same Greek word in most other passages, consistency requires the same rendering here. In the parable of the Sower, our Lord says, 'Then cometh the Evil One,' ὁ πονηρός (the masculine of person, not the neuter of thing), 'and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart.' Matt. xiii. 19. 'The evil' is here an intelligent agent performing an act. Our Lord in His intercessory prayer said, 'I pray that Thou shouldst keep them ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ;' on which

<sup>1</sup> *Notes on the Greek Testament.*

<sup>2</sup> *Words of the Lord Jesus.*

Alford says, 'Not *from the evil*, as E. V., but *from the Evil One*, John xvii. 15;' and refers to the usage of the same Apostle in 1 John ii. 14: 'I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one,' τὸν πονηρόν; and in v. 19, 'We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ,' 'in the Evil One,' as contrasted with the righteous, who are ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ. So it is said of Cain, that he was 'of that wicked one,' ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ, 1 John iii. 12. St. Paul, in describing the armour wherewith Christians 'may be able to stand against the wiles of *the devil*,' says, 'Withal taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the Evil One,' τοῦ πονηροῦ. Eph. vi. 16.

These passages amply justify the interpretation 'Evil One' as included in this petition. But is this the sole and exclusive meaning? Dean Mansel says: 'The words may also be rendered "from the Evil One;" but the neuter is more comprehensive, and includes deliverance from the evil thoughts of one's own heart, and from evils from without, as well as from the temptations of Satan.' We prefer the familiar and wider term, as relating to all 'the evil' connected with temptation: comprising the Tempter himself, the 'Evil One;' the evils directly and indirectly resulting from yielding to temptation; and the evil tendencies in our own hearts which incline us so to yield. Thus praying, we seek the final deliverance of the Church of God from whatever assails and pollutes it; the rescue of the world and all who dwell on it from whatever injures it; the

accomplishment of every holy hope ; the fulfilment of all millennial prophecy ; the perfect blessedness of all who call God 'Our Father who art in heaven.' Thus viewed, this last petition is the climax of the whole prayer, the chief, permanent, all-comprehensive longing of the believer. 'Whatever tribulation he may suffer, for this he groans, in hope of this he weeps ; from this begins, with this perseveres, uttering this completes his prayer.'<sup>1</sup>

### I.—THE EVIL ONE.

If the petition does not refer exclusively to Satan, he at least is included in it. Of the 'temptation' against which we pray, he is the chief promoter ; of the 'evil' from which we implore deliverance, he is the chief author.

It is the fashion of what is called 'advanced thought' to deride the idea of a personal devil as a nursery bugbear, a tradition of the dark ages, a Monastic and Puritan superstition, a fossil of the past fit only for the shelves of an ecclesiastical museum. And in popular literature and amusements the personality of Satan is employed for caricature, burlesque and ridicule. But if a fact and not a fiction, it is too solemn a truth, with consequences too momentous, to be treated with levity. When the devil is made a subject of jesting, his existence is as practically disowned as when formally denied.

Is this doctrine of a personal devil so absurd' as to be absolutely incredible, even if affirmed by testimony

<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine ; Tholuck.

in other respects worthy of reliance? Agnosticism finds no such Being; but does it possess positive evidence that no such Being exists? Ignorance of a fact is no necessary disproof. Until I know with absolute certainty all existences throughout the universe, I cannot absolutely pronounce that any particular person or thing has no existence, much less that such existence is impossible. Otherwise ignorance would become positive knowledge.

None will dispute the existence of the devil because he has not been seen, unless they dispute the existence of the air, gas, electricity, etc. There are occult agencies now regarded as distinct existences which were once never thought of except as phenomena. Things are now familiarly known which were recently hidden by reason of distance or minuteness, but which existed as certainly when unknown as when demonstrated by telescope and microscope. It would have been very unphilosophical to have pronounced their existence impossible simply because unknown. What is now so familiar to us in the achievements of science, telegraphy, the telephone, etc., might with equal reason have been derided as the idle dream of enthusiasm fifty years ago. True science holds itself ready to accept any fact when demonstrated, however unknown, strange, and improbable at present.

The 'Evil One' is a spirit, and therefore his existence cannot be demonstrated in the same manner as that of beings like ourselves, incorporate, visible, tangible. Yet we ourselves are spirits; not so much bodies in which spirits dwell, as spirits for a time

occupying bodies. We do not actually see each other, but merely the body thus inhabited. Is it absurd to suppose there may be other spirits existing apart from a material body, or from such a body as may be seen and handled? If so, we ourselves can have no existence after death, and a personal God is an impossibility.

We know that below us in the scale of existence are innumerable living things. Every day the microscope is bringing to view sentient creatures, elaborately constructed, hitherto unknown. From one gradation to another, closely linked together, the universe below us teems with life. May there not be other existences in the region *above* us? If man is the chief of all visible living creatures, may not visibility indicate the boundary beyond which life (does not cease to be, but) becomes imperceptible to our present faculties? Is it absurd to suppose that man, though at the head of visible existence, is not at the head of all existence; and that as beneath him there are innumerable beings of various orders, so also above him there may be beings superior to himself? The distance between man and nothing is measurable; between man and infinity is immeasurable: shall the lower and limited region be replete with living creatures, and the higher and unlimited region be a void?

If there are globes superior to the earth in size revolving round the same centre, and stars surpassing the earth's sun; is it inconceivable that there may be intelligent beings somewhere in the universe surpassing in capacity the dwellers on the earth?

If it is thought unlikely that beings with superior

capacities should be morally depraved and corrupters of others, we have only to look among men to see a similar sad combination.

Is it difficult to conceive that such beings can in any way influence our thoughts and conduct? We are, in fact, exposed to influences which we cannot understand. Material things affect our thoughts, emotions, purposes. A picture, a strain of music, a look, the condition of our body, even the state of the atmosphere, may suggest ideas and excite emotions, which may result in actions materially affecting the weal or woe of ourselves and others. We influence each other. How great the power of mind over mind, though often unsuspected! Is it incredible that other spirits may be able in some way to influence us?

It may be objected that Satanic agency would destroy our freedom of will, so that we should cease to be moral agents and responsible. But we are already exposed to various influences external to ourselves, and yet preserve our freedom. Circumstances, books, current opinions, fashions, companions,—these are ever more or less affecting without enslaving our will. No criminal would be acquitted on the plea that his surroundings suggested and encouraged the theft or the murder. On this plea no one would be accountable for his own actions, which would not indeed be his own. But consciousness refutes the fallacy that we are thus 'creatures of circumstances,' and not moral agents. There is no soundness in the argument against the agency of the devil, that the influence of mind on mind destroys responsibility.

But is it likely that the Supreme Ruler would

permit the existence of a Being, or a class of Beings, whose powers are employed in endeavouring to counteract His purposes? Whatever the mystery of the existence of evil, we know it to be a fact. There are, alas! multitudes of evil men, some of them possessing superior powers, which are exerted to contravene His pure and gracious laws, and alienate His creatures from their allegiance. If this is actually so as regards evil men, it may also be so as regards evil spirits.

We may venture to offer another suggestion. There have been events in history very difficult to explain by reference merely to circumstances and human nature. Individuals have exercised power in a manner so cruel, productive of consequences so disastrous, apparently from motives so inadequate, as to favour the idea of some malignant spiritual influence; so that the solution often suggested of such conduct is in the expression which may have a deeper truth than the speaker means—'the devil is in him!' And so with whole communities, which have sometimes seemed to be urged by an unreasoning impulse into acts of superstitious frenzy, or unprovoked and destructive war. Systems of iniquity have been developed during a long course of ages, which seem beyond mere human power to devise and establish, and bear the stamp of one presiding evil genius. There are minds to which the theory of the existence and agency of the devil, furnishes an easier solution to these problems than any explanation attempted by philosophy.

The object of these observations is not to prove

the existence of a personal devil, but to show that it is not the impossible absurdity which some assert it to be, and to clear the way for the positive evidence as to the fact. This evidence is afforded by Divine Revelation.

We believe that a Witness from the spirit-world has certified the existence of both good and evil spirits. After a life of blameless virtue and beneficence, after giving instructions worthy of their claim to be Divine, and working miracles beyond mere human power to effect; having declared Himself the Son of God, and predicted that in evidence of this claim He would rise from the grave, He did in fact so rise and ascend to heaven in the sight of witnesses, who, with no motive to influence them in testifying to an imposture, did, with a unanimity and assurance nothing could shake, encounter torture and death rather than cease to proclaim the gospel of a risen Saviour. We believe the fact so witnessed, and accept the authority of Him whose claims were so attested.

He not only made known the love of Him who sent His Son to save, but clearly warned us of that Evil One whose malice He came to thwart, and whom, as the prince of darkness, He, the Prince of Life, encourages and enables us to resist and conquer. On this authority we credit the existence of a personal devil.

He confirmed the earlier Revelation. The Scriptures He often quoted as the Word of God, speak of the 'Evil One' as the serpent who tempted our first parents. Whether he appeared to them in

serpent-form, or whether the term is to be regarded as one of the designations of 'that old serpent called the devil and Satan' (Rev. xii. 7-17), it is personal agency from without which is described in Gen. iii. 1-7. We read that 'Satan provoked David to number Israel.' 1 Chron. xxi. 1. The calamities which overtook Job are represented as connected with his malign agency. Job i. ii. The prophet saw in vision 'Joshua standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand, to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan.' Zech. iii. 1, 2. If Joshua was not a principle, but a person, so also was Satan who resisted him. The Jews were thus, by their Scriptures, made familiar with the idea of a personal devil. The Messiah, whom these Scriptures foretold, contradicted some of their opinions, but confirmed this. The account of His temptation must have been communicated by Himself to the Evangelist, who describes how the devil, a person, whether in visible form, or more probably unseen as when he assails ourselves, did tempt Christ. Matt. iv. 1-12. Our Lord said of such assaults: 'The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me.' John xiv. 30. There was no sinful principle or tendency in Christ to favour such temptation. The devil who tempted Him could not therefore be the 'evil principle;' for this can only influence when within the soul. That which came was therefore not a principle, but a person. To this personal devil our Lord referred when He said, 'If Satan be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand?' Luke xi.

18-21. He described the infirm woman as one 'whom Satan had bound these eighteen years.' Luke xiii. 16. He warned Peter, 'Behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.' Luke xxii. 31. He accused the Jews as being 'of their father the devil, who was a murderer from the beginning.' John viii. 44. In a text already cited, He spoke of 'the enemy, the devil,' who soweth tares, as 'the Evil One,' Matt. xiii. 38, 39; and in His intercessory prayer besought for His disciples, not that they might be taken out of the world, but be kept from the Evil One. John xvii. 15, R.V. The ancient promise foretold that He would crush the serpent's head, Gen. iii. 15; and He said, 'I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.' Luke x. 17, 18. It was His great work on earth to withstand this foe of God and man: 'For this purpose the Son of man was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.' 1 John iii. 8.

The Apostles confirm the truth of the agency of the 'Evil One.' 'The devil put it into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus.' John xiii. 2. Peter said to Ananias, 'Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?' Acts v. 3; and spoke of the devil as 'a roaring lion, walking about, seeking whom he may devour; whom' (a person, not a thing) we are to 'resist, stedfast in the faith.' 1 Pet. v. 8, 9. St. Paul said, 'The God of peace shall crush Satan under your feet shortly,' referring to each as a person, not a mere principle. Rom. xvi. 20. He warned the Corinthians against allowing Satan to get any advantage over them, 'for we are not ignorant of his

devices,' 2 Cor. ii. 8-12; and spoke of Satan being 'transformed into an angel of light;' of 'the messenger of Satan' sent to buffet him; of 'the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience;' of not giving 'place to the devil;' of 'principalities and powers' against which we wrestle, and of the 'fiery darts of the Evil One;' of Satan 'hindering him;' of 'the working of Satan with signs and lying wonders;' of falling 'into the condemnation of the devil;' and of those who are 'taken captive by the devil at his will.' 2 Cor. xi. 14, xii. 7; Eph. ii. 2; Eph. iv. 27; Eph. vi. 11-16; 1 Thess. ii. 18; 2 Thess. ii. 8, 9; 1 Tim. iii. 6; 2 Tim. ii. 25, 26. In the Epistle to the Hebrews the devil is said to have 'the power of death.' ii. 14. St. James exhorts, 'Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.' iv. 7. St. John writes to 'young men' who have 'overcome the Evil One,' and says, 'He that committeth sin is of the devil.' 1 John iii. 8, 12. St. Jude refers to 'the angels which kept not their first estate,' 6, 9; and the closing prophetic book describes how, at last, 'the devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world,' is to be 'bound and cast into the bottomless pit.' Rev. xii. xx.

If some of these passages can be explained on the evil-principle theory, others of them can only be regarded as referring to a personal agent, while none of them are incompatible with that idea. It may be said that the sacred writers were under the influence of Jewish notions, but it cannot be said that in this concurrent mode of speech they themselves only intended by 'the Evil One,' an evil influence. We

accept their statements as illustrating the testimony of the Lord to the existence and agency of a personal devil.

If such a being exists, it is important we should know the fact, and be on our guard against his designs. It was worthy of a Divine Revelation to open our eyes to our danger. It was worthy of the devil's great Antagonist to summon His followers to aid Him in the great conflict. It was fitting that in this comprehensive prayer He should teach His disciples, when asking not to be led into temptation, to ask deliverance from the 'Evil One,' the great tempter, the chief agent of evil, the destroyer of the souls of men. As a skilful general often hides his strength from the foe, who may thus by false security become an easy prey, so Satan has no stratagem more cunning than persuading those he seeks to destroy that no such destroyer exists. 'Dangers are no more light if they once seem light; and more dangers have deceived men than forced them.'<sup>1</sup> Let us thank God for revealing to us our foe, and showing us how to conquer him.

The names of this foe are so many lessons of warning. He is '*the Evil One*:' evil in its very essence; its author, agent, champion, king. He is Satan, *Adversary*, opposing himself to all that is true and pure, the enemy of all who call God *Father*. He is devil, *Accuser*, accusing us to ourselves to plunge us into despair, accusing us to justice to secure our condemnation. He is Apollyon, *Destroyer*, taking delight in undoing whatever tends to holiness and

<sup>1</sup> Lord Bacon.

righteousness, in destroying health and happiness, peace and comfort, purity and life. He is described as a *serpent*, on account of his crafty and venomous nature; as 'the *old serpent*,' from his long experience in evil; as a '*roaring lion*,' from his ferocity; as '*going about*,' from his activity; as '*seeking whom he may devour*,' from his insatiable rapacity in destruction.

We are warned that we contend with no mean foe. 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against *powers*, against spiritual wickedness in high places.' We must not underrate his sagacity. We are not to be 'ignorant of,' that is, we are to be constantly vigilant against, 'his devices.' We have need to pray against both 'the crafts and the assaults of the devil.' We are not indeed to think of the devil as omniscient or omnipresent, for God alone is in every place, and from Him alone 'no secrets are hid;' but if there are a multitude of evil spirits whose name is legion, and who serve him as their superior lord, what they do may be regarded as done by him. Combining as he does so much force of intellect with so much depravity of nature, such power with such subtlety, such long experience in evil-doing with the aid of such hosts of wicked agents, the devil is a foe too formidable to be treated with indifference, self-security, ridicule, or contempt.

How does he tempt? Not overtly, for this would put us on our guard. Not, therefore, as often represented in pictures, by hideous deformity or revolting expression at once proclaiming who he is, and bidding us beware; but rather hiding himself under the ordinary appearances of daily life, as a serpent may

lurk amid perfumed flowers, or a wasp lie hidden in a fragrant peach. He may look at us through a picture, charm us by a song, influence us through a book, beguile us in the person of a friend, whisper to us in our imagination by day or our dreams by night. He seldom appears as an 'adversary,' but in the guise of a helper; not thwarting our inclinations, but gratifying them; not opposing our will, but encouraging it.

He knows how to adapt his temptations to our special circumstances and temperaments. In the book of Job he is represented as 'going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth?' i. 7, 8. Whether regarded as history or parable, this opening chapter teaches that the devil is in constant activity amongst men, 'considering' their various characters, and how best he may succeed against them. The question implies that his inspection was on a very wide scale, so that he was able to compare Job with all other men. Satan had 'considered' both them and him, and supposed that he had discovered the weak places in the patriarch's armour. 'Doth Job serve God for nought? But put forth Thy hand now and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face.' i. 9, 10. Thus Satan 'considers' his intended victims, goes round about their defences, observes their weaknesses, takes note of their special tendencies, in order to plan his method of attack. So a farmer surveys his fields, and selects the seed suited for different kinds of soil. So a skilful angler chooses

amongst his cunningly-prepared flies the one suited to the season, the stream, and the fish.

Sometimes he tempts through curiosity, as with Eve. 'In the day ye eat thereof your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.' Gen. iii. 1-6. He employs pride, as with David in numbering the people; animal passions, as with Solomon; eager self-confidence, as with Peter; covetousness, as with Judas and Ananias. He comes to us when suffering the innocent infirmities of humanity, as to Christ, when hungry and faint. He takes advantage of us when weary in body or dormant in spirit. 'While men *slept* the enemy sowed tares.' He pretends friendship when most malignant in his designs, as Joab when he took Abner aside and then stabbed him; and as Judas when he kissed his Master in the act of betrayal. He can make use of the well-meaning but mistaken kindness of our dearest and most trusted friends to beguile us from our duty; as when, having in the wilderness failed to divert Christ from His path of suffering, he influenced Peter, from motives of generous affection, to say in reference to the cross, 'That be far from Thee, Lord!' But Jesus replied, 'Get thee behind me, Satan! for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.' Christ detected Satan in the disguise of Peter, and addressed, not His friend, but the foe who was using the friend as his unconscious instrument to persuade to self-indulgence instead of self-sacrifice. The devil employs even the truth of God as a weapon against those to whom that truth is dear. He dared to assault even Him who is 'The

Truth' with quotations from His own word, using as his plea, 'It is written.' Thus many have been deceived and allured to evil by what at first seemed deference to revealed truth, but was really Satan's perversion of the spirit under disguise of its letter.

'The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.'

He thus makes the very standard of truth an auxiliary to falsehood, and clothes sin in the garb of virtue. He often commends covetousness as prudence, anger as manliness, revenge as justice, prodigal excess as hospitality, frivolity as needful recreation, fashionable vice as becoming conformity to the opinions and usages of society, damnable licentiousness as pardonable gaiety.

'And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,  
The instruments of darkness tell us truths ;  
Win us with honest trifles, to betray us  
In deepest consequence.'<sup>1</sup>

An illustration of Satan's method of beguiling to destroy, was one day witnessed by the writer when rambling near Scawfell. His guide said he thought he could find a trout, and, stooping down over the grassy bank of a small mountain-stream, remained for a few minutes perfectly quiet, excepting a slight motion of the arm. Presently he brought up a large fish. He knew where it was likely to be ; he gently touched its back, drew his hand lightly backwards and forwards, soothed and charmed his victim, then grasped and captured it. So 'the devil's policy is to tickle his victims to death and damn them with delights.' He knows how to cast a fair screen over a

<sup>1</sup> *Macbeth*.

foul picture, which, seen at once in all its native grossness, would revolt the beholder, who is lured by the dissolving view which partially conceals till it gradually displays its true features to the now fascinated eye. St. Paul said, 'We are not ignorant of his devices.' We must be stronger and wiser than the Apostle if we can safely cease to watch and pray against 'the wiles of the devil.' Only when 'filled with the Spirit' are we safe from the Evil One, and then we shall be most vigilant and earnest both in avoiding his snares and repelling his attacks.

The temptation of our Lord teaches us both our liability to danger and how we may overcome. As He was exposed to the devil's malignity when removed from the haunts of wicked men and the noisy world, in a solitude specially favourable for meditation and communion with heaven, so we must remember that no season of religious seclusion, no scenes of rural solitude, are a security against the presence of the foe, who may specially assail us when we regard ourselves specially secure. As our Lord, when alone among the wild creatures of the wilderness, and needing human sympathy, was exposed to Satanic approach; so the devil may be waiting for us in some desert of affliction, ready to make the sorrows we imagine to be a security against sin the occasion of our falling into it, and the absence of human sympathy an opportunity of receiving forbidden solace. As our great Example was assailed when hungry and faint, so when we are suffering any deprivation the devil may tempt us to seek the satisfaction of what is natural and right in itself, in some

method which is wrong. As Christ's very faith in His Father's care was employed by the devil as an argument for presumption; so, when we are enjoying some season of special assurance of the Divine favour, the witness of the Spirit to our adoption may be perverted into an occasion of boastful recklessness and a testing of God's grace. As the true Prince was tempted by the usurper to secure the kingdoms of the world for their good by other than lawful methods; so our very zeal for God's glory and the welfare of men may become the devil's opportunity for urging us to attain holy ends by unholy methods, thus really worshipping Satan when seeming to be most zealous in our homage to God.

If our Lord was thus assailed, can we expect to escape? If to Him who said 'the prince of this world hath nothing in me,' yet that false prince did come, how certain it is he will come to us in whose hearts there is so much which he may claim as his own! The Ephesian Church was addressed as composed of those who had been 'quickened,' 'predestinated to the adoption of children,' 'accepted in the Beloved,' 'His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,' Eph. i. ii.; yet they were exhorted not to 'give place to the devil,' and warned against 'the fiery darts of the wicked one.' Eph. iv. 27, vi. 16. Whatever, therefore, our spiritual advantages, instead of thinking ourselves secure against assault, the greater our attainments the greater will be our vigilance.

Our Lord's example shows us how to conquer.

He did not employ any weapon out of our reach. He did not entrench Himself in His Divinity against the attacks of Satan. He fought as man, and as men we are encouraged by His victory. He quoted our Scriptures as one of ourselves. He contended, not that as the eternal Son He could live without bread, but that as one of mankind 'every word of God' was sustenance. He placed Himself on our level when He quoted the command against putting God to the test, and in any degree bowing down to the devil; and so we are encouraged to resist because Christ conquered humanly, 'tempted like as we are,' and resisting as we also have to resist.

Such illustrations of the character and power of the devil may well rouse us to watchfulness and prayer. He is not omnipotent, but great must be the power of him who is described by Christ as the 'prince of this world;' by St. Paul as 'the god of this world, who has blinded the minds of them which believe not,' 2 Cor. iv. 4; and as 'the prince of the power of the air, the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience,' Eph. ii. 2; and of whom St. John says: 'The whole world lieth in "the Evil One."' 1 John v. 19. 'He is the head of the great confederacy of fallen spirits and wicked men against the rule of righteousness and love; the protagonist in the warfare against the Son of God, holding all the threads of the rebellion against heaven in which the vast majority of the human race are entangled and enslaved.'

Our encouragement is this, that the world is not left to this 'Evil One,' but that the Son of God has come to destroy his works. 1 John iii. 8. No

wonder the devil strove to resist the Captain of our salvation. He excited Herod to slay Him in His infancy; tempted Him to save Himself and so leave men to perish; thought to overwhelm Him with sorrows, and crush Him by betrayal to His foes when He said to them, 'This is your hour and the power of darkness,' Luke xxii. 53; then stirred up the Jews to crucify Him, and yet suggested that He might save Himself and come down from the cross. But Jesus conquered, by resisting every inducement to evil; by suffering every sorrow ordained; by submitting to the very death which seemed His defeat but which proved to be His victory; by rising from the grave which was sealed and made secure as His lasting prison; and by ascending as our victorious champion to God. 'Having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in' His cross. Col. ii. 15. Now at the right hand of God He lives and reigns, to aid us by His intercession, to strengthen us by His Spirit, to overrule all events for our good, to reign until all His enemies, and this 'Evil One,' be made His footstool.

Let us rejoice in His ability to succour and save. If Satan is our accuser, Christ is our advocate. If our foe condemns, our Friend acquits. If the devil tempts, Jesus prays. If the strong man armed attacks, the Stronger than he protects. If the serpent beguiles and envenoms, the Seed of the woman will crush his head. The lion that devours is no match for the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He that hath 'the power of death' is vanquished by the

Prince of life. Satan the adversary must yield to Emmanuel the Almighty Friend, Apollyon the destroyer to Jesus the Saviour. If myriads of demons obey Beelzebub, our Leader is surrounded by 'an innumerable company of angels,' who under His direction are 'ministering spirits' for the heirs of salvation. 'More are they that are with us than they that are with them.' The Evil One is not at the same time with all he seeks to destroy, but Jesus is never absent from one of His disciples, to whom He says, 'I am with you always.' By the help of this ever-present Saviour, 'we know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not;' not habitually, not fatally, 'but He that was begotten of God keepeth him, and the Evil One toucheth him not.' 1 John iv. 18. Not that the devil never approaches and externally touches the believer, but that no fatal injury is done to those whom Christ protects, and for whom He intercedes: 'Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.' Ps. cv. 15.

Victory is sure. Satan is not God, nor shares in any sense the authority and power of God; is God's enemy, not His minister; is the object of God's holy anger as the foe of all goodness and happiness; and therefore we are not to 'give place to the devil' as an inevitable necessity, but to resist him 'stedfast in the faith' that God is against all that is evil and will eventually conquer it, and 'subdue all things unto Himself.' Therefore we are to be workers together with God, and fellow-soldiers with Jesus, in resisting and conquering 'the Evil One.' Imitating Him, let this petition, like

the rest, be accompanied by appropriate efforts. While asking from God deliverance from Satan, let us not lay ourselves open to his assaults, nor listen to his wiles. Let every evil desire rising within us be abhorred as the devil's suggestion. In every forbidden pleasure, however beautiful it may appear, let us see the serpent's coil and hear the serpent's hiss; so may we turn from it and pass away. Let neither his threats nor his bribes cause us to turn aside from the narrow path. Let us so act in our conflict with the Evil One, that the eulogy of Milton may be merited by us: 'No menace could divert him from his purpose; no intimidation on the one hand, and no promise of emolument on the other, could alter the serenity of his countenance, or shake the firmness of his soul.' Thus imitating our Great Leader, in His name we may confidently set ourselves

'Against whate'er may tempt, whate'er seduce,  
Allure, or terrify, or undermine.  
Be frustrate, all ye stratagems of hell,  
And devilish machinations come to nought.'<sup>1</sup>

When Apollyon in his fiercest form assaults us in our pilgrimage, and 'straddles quite over the whole breadth of the way,' let us boldly face him with a renewed avowal of our loyalty to our only Lord, and say, 'I have given Him my faith, and sworn my allegiance to Him; and, to speak truth, I like His service, His company and country; leave off to persuade me, I am His servant and I will follow Him.' When the devil who tempted us to hesitate

<sup>1</sup> *Paradise Regained.*

at the wicket-gate, to turn aside into bypath meadow, to slumber in the arbour, brings against us his own work to crush us with despondency, let us say with Christian, 'All this is true, and much more which thou hast left out; but the Prince, whom I serve and honour, is merciful and ready to forgive; these infirmities possessed me in thy country, but I have groaned under them, been sorry for them, and have obtained pardon of my Prince.' However fierce the fight, the shield of faith will 'quench all the fiery darts of the Evil One,' and the sword of the Spirit wielded with prayer will enable Christian to say, 'In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.' Thus may we realize the vision of the dreamer—'With that Apollyon spread forth his dragon's wings, and sped him away, that Christian saw him no more.'<sup>1</sup>

Our Champion has given Satan his death-blow. We fight secure of victory. Let us turn the devil's weapons against himself, and make his assaults occasions of our triumph. As St. Paul not merely endured 'the thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him,' but made his weakness an occasion of obtaining fresh strength from God, and gloried in his infirmity; as Christ 'by death destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil,' so let us turn every assault on his part into a victory on ours, ascribing all the glory to Him in whose strength alone we triumph. 'Thanks be unto God that giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

<sup>1</sup> *Pilgrim's Progress.*

- ‘ Even as Thine own angels of their will  
 Make sacrifice to Thee, Hosanna singing,  
 So may all men make sacrifice of theirs.
- ‘ Give unto us this day our daily manna,  
 Withouten which in this rough wilderness,  
 Backward goes he who toils most to advance.
- ‘ And e’en as we the trespass we have suffered  
 Pardon in one another, pardon Thou  
 Benignly, and regard not our desert.
- ‘ Our virtue, which is easily o’ercome,  
 Put not to proof with the old adversary,  
 But Thou from him who spurs it so deliver.’<sup>1</sup>

## II.—‘ THE EVIL ’ CAUSED BY YIELDING TO THE ‘ EVIL ONE ’—THE RESULT OF SIN.

### Temptation yielded to

‘ Brought death into the world and all our woe.’

‘ By sin came death.’ Rom. v. 12. Whatever might otherwise have been the lot of man, death as we know it, with all its circumstances of sickness, pain, infirmity, dread, anguish and mourning, is the penalty included in the threatening, ‘ In the day that thou eatest of it thou shalt surely die.’ The very ground was cursed by triumphant temptation. Sorrow and anxiety were superadded to toil. We are not dependent on ancient records for proof that sin causes suffering. Physical laws of health are expressions of the Divine will; and ignorance of them, arising from carelessness and indolence, is culpable, and entails various and heavy penalties. How many of the plagues that have decimated crowded cities have been caused by the wilful blindness, the selfish apathy or greed, which have neglected the

<sup>1</sup> *Dante*, Tr. by Longfellow.

first essentials of health—pure water, fresh air and cleanliness! How many diseases are brought on by excessive indulgence of the appetites, how many accidents by recklessness! Where the sufferer himself is not blameworthy, how many pay the penalty of the faults of others; and in the case of inherited and constitutional disorders, how often in the physical world the solemn word uttered on Sinai is illustrated, and the sins of the father are visited on the children 'to the third and fourth generation'!

Who can estimate the amount of evil caused to others by sensual excess? Take the one case of intemperance. Think of the tens of thousands of drunkards who bring disgrace upon their families, ruin on their homes, brokenness of heart on parents, wives, children. By prodigality, pride, improvidence, indolence, multitudes are beggared; by avarice and hoarding, multitudes more are left to suffer or perish, not because there is not enough and to spare, but because the stewards have yielded to the temptation of regarding what was entrusted to them, as their own. Think of all the sorrows caused by an ungoverned temper, angry words, cherished hatred and revenge; evils abiding and still extending like undulations in water, long after the first provocation was given. Think of the national disasters resulting from ambition whether of princes or peoples, the cruel wars of contending factions and rival dynasties, the woes of millions the fruit of the caprice or pride of one; the miseries entailed by cruel superstitions, blind prejudices, imperious customs, false principles of legislation, oppressive governments!

If we clearly see so much of the undoubted and immediate consequences of sin, how enormous must be the totality of 'the evil' which, whether we see the connection or not, has been caused by yielding to the temptation into which we pray not to be brought; by serving rather than resisting 'the Evil One.'

The word of God teaches us to regard all such sufferings as in themselves evil. The Stoicism which affects to treat them with indifference or to think them good, is contrary to human nature and the whole testimony of history. Men in all ages and countries have uttered one cry of distress because of abounding evil, and in various forms have united in one earnest prayer for deliverance. 'The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.' Rom. viii. 22. Christianity encourages resignation by teaching us that God is above all the evil, that He is our Father, that His name is Love, that we are to hallow that name by trusting Him to comfort us in sorrow, to help us in difficulty, to overrule all things for our welfare, but it nowhere teaches us to regard evil itself as good. Our Father takes the weapons aimed to hurt us and turns them into instruments to help us; but that which forged and aimed them is evil nevertheless. He converts what the devil intended for poison into heavenly medicine; but it was originally distilled from sin, and but for sin would not be needed as medicine. Poverty may be overruled to increase our spiritual store, and sickness to promote our soul's health, but poverty and sickness are evil and not good. The light afflictions that

'work out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,' are afflictions nevertheless, and though 'afterward they yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness,' yet 'they are not joyous but grievous.' They are mercifully utilized for the purifying of our faith, 'which is much more precious than gold that perisheth,' because at present there is a 'need be' for the process; but were there no inducements luring us to sin, there would be no necessity to be 'in heaviness through manifold temptations.' 1 Pet. i. 6.

It was a mistaken heroism that induced some of the early Christians to provoke persecution, that they might win the martyr's crown; and it would be foolish sentimentalism to regret that we did not live in times when such distinction could be gained. Let us not envy the martyrs as though such sufferings are essential to victory;

'Nor think who to that bliss aspire  
Must win their way through blood and fire:  
The writhings of a wounded heart  
Are fiercer than a foeman's dart.'<sup>1</sup>

But both the bleeding body and the wounded spirit, although giving occasion for the exercise of faith and the winning of reward, are in themselves evils which we may lawfully shun and deprecate as not of God.

We might well despair if our religion required us to feel the evils in the world to be good. Christ did not so teach. He regarded them as the work of the devil whom He came to vanquish. He unloosed the cords with which He said Satan had bound the cripple. Luke xiii. 16. 'For this pur-

<sup>1</sup> Keble.

pose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.' 1 John iii. 8. He set Himself against them. He did not submit to them as a necessity, nor bid us sit down under them in indolent despair or fatalistic apathy. He combated the evil of hunger, and fed the multitude; the evil of disease, and cured the sick; the evil of infirmity, and healed the lame and the blind. He rebuked the winds and waves that threatened shipwreck; He cast out the demons that possessed the insane; He vanquished death and the grave. Throughout the Old Testament, men were taught to expect deliverance from temporal evils as a Divine reward, and Christ fulfilled the Law and the Prophets. He Himself suffered as our High Priest, but those sufferings were in themselves evil. The cup which He, as our Substitute for sin, drank in Gethsemane, was in itself not sweet but bitter, and as our Example He prayed to be spared the drinking of it. His murder was the greatest atrocity the world ever committed; and though overruled for man's salvation, was the culminating curse of the nation that perpetrated it, the evil of evils. Our Lord willingly suffered, but never regarded the sufferings themselves as good; and we therefore may be comforted in all our troubles by the permission to think of them as arising not from our Father's original design, but, although He will overrule them for our good, evils to which He is opposed and from which He will deliver.

No! evil cannot be good; it arises from sin; it is not the normal condition of the world, but a frightful disorder which is to be corrected, against which we

are to contend together with God, for universal deliverance from which we are to pray. In our present state of discipline we dare not ask to be kept from all suffering, which may be needed for our spiritual welfare, but that we may be delivered from all evil which might injure the spirit. Our Father,

‘From seeming evil still educing good,’

knows when that which in itself is *real* evil can be turned into merely *seeming* evil, by changing its harmful into helpful tendencies; and therefore we offer this petition with reservation; we ask our Father to deliver us from trials not needed for our spiritual welfare, which might endanger our soul's health, which might make *us* evil by leading us into sin.

Mankind have universally sought deliverance from evils, but this has been the commencement and burden of their prayer. Christians are taught to begin with God, not with self. We first look up to Him as ‘our Father.’ We contemplate His holiness, wisdom, goodness. We are taught to regard ourselves as His children, the objects of His loving care. Reverencing His perfections and seeking His glory, desiring His rule to be acknowledged throughout the world, and His will to be everywhere done, we may confidently because filially pray, ‘Deliver us from evil.’

This gives us hope amidst innumerable evils, that we have not to expect deliverance by mere human efforts, which sometimes seem so powerless, and have been so often frustrated, but by the agency of God

Himself, the Almighty Father. 'For now it is not any longer by this or that man or unseen power, by this or that subordinate agency, by this or that alteration of events and circumstances, that we are forced to bound our plans and prospects of deliverance. We have not to work our way upwards by stairs winding, broken, endless, to an indefinite shadowy point, which we are afraid to reach, lest it should prove to be nothing. We begin from the summit; we find there the substance of all the hope men have drawn from the promising but changeable aspects of the cloudland below; we see that all the darkness of earth, all its manifold forms of evil, have come from the rays being intercepted which would have scattered it and shall scatter it altogether. Therefore we pray boldly, "Deliver us from evil," knowing assuredly that we are praying to be set free from that to which the will of the Creator is opposed.'<sup>1</sup>

This deliverance is effected in various ways. The evil dreaded may be altogether removed, the threatening cloud disperse, the stormy waves subside, the angry foe retreat; or we may be sheltered amid the storm, securely guarded in the fierce assault, and while sorely distressed be so strengthened as to sustain no injury. We may not only be enabled to endure but to rejoice, so that the season of greatest trial may become one of greatest privilege, and the evils most dreaded promote our eternal good. 'The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations.'<sup>2</sup> 2 Pet. ii. 9. He has many methods of answering this

<sup>1</sup> F. D. Maurice.

prayer, and the one He chooses must be the best. Let us leave the method with Him, and then with fullest assurance we may in all possible trials pray, 'Deliver us from evil.'

This petition, like the rest, has its practical and fraternal lessons. We are taught to say, not 'deliver *me*,' but 'deliver *us*.' We come to the throne of grace in company with our brethren, all exposed to similar evils. If we truly ask God to deliver them as well as ourselves, we desire such deliverance for them, and therefore should endeavour to promote it. How can I consistently ask deliverance from God if unwilling to exert myself for the deliverance of others; and how can I pray God to save those whom I am too indolent or selfish to succour? Sincerely to offer this prayer will stimulate our zeal in every branch of philanthropy; succouring the poor and the sick, teaching the ignorant, lifting up the fallen, comforting the sad, reclaiming the drunkard, promoting peace at home and abroad, reforming abuses, encouraging righteous legislation, and in every way according to our opportunity being 'fellow-workers with God' in delivering the world from the evil against which we pray.

### III.—'THE EVIL' IN OURSELVES.

We have been viewing the streams; we come now to the source: those may be termed 'evils,' this is emphatically 'the evil;' those surround us, this is within us. 'Out of the heart proceedeth' the sin that produces the evils, the heart which is 'deceitful

above all things and desperately wicked.' Whatever may be said of evolution from lower to higher forms of physical organization, the word of God declares the fact of moral degeneracy. This does not consist in any specific form of vicious indulgence, but in the generic root of ungodliness. The evangelical doctrine does not assert that all men are depraved in the sense of outward wickedness, but of disregard to the Divine will. The depravity of vice is happily far from being universal, but the depravity of setting up self-pleasing as the rule of life is, alas! characteristic of the race. This leads all men into different paths, according to the inclinations of each; but it is pleasure and not duty which is the guide; and though the path chosen may for a time happen to concur with the Divine will, as soon as this contravenes the human the latter prevails, with all its attendant evils. St. Paul, describing his spiritual condition prior to faith in Christ, says: 'I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.' Rom. vii. 21, 23.

'The evil' is not ourselves, originally, naturally, necessarily, by any Divine appointment. It is not resident in the body, as some have taught, else how hopeless would be our condition, ever dragging about with us a corrupting corpse from which death alone could free us! No, it is not in the body, but in the evil use of it. It is not in sorrows which, though the results of sin, may be overruled for our eternal good, but in our impatience and distrust. It is not in our joys; as if the beauties with which the Creator has

thickly strewn our path, the pleasure linked with the healthy exercise of every faculty, the delights of knowledge, social intercourse, endearing relationships, had in them a secret poison and must be regarded with suspicion and fear in proportion to their sweetness; no, but in our abuse of these blessings. It is not in the world itself; for we must live and work in it; must not dare to quit it till the Master calls; cannot if we would, should not if we could, come out of it by selfish isolation and indolent seclusion: but in being worldly in spirit, being of it as well as in it, living as though the present world was supreme. Christ was in the world, sharing its joys, sorrows and companionships, yet in Him was no evil. The evil is sin, and the root of all sin self-will. Outward temptation would be harmless but for this. 'Every one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed. Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.' Jas. i. 15. This inward lust, ungoverned appetite, self-will, this is 'the evil' of all evils.

While this radical evil remains unchecked in the heart, there can be no true peace and satisfaction. Apart from physical and social evils caused by sin, this condition of the soul is one of degradation and disquiet. 'The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt; there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.' Isa. lvii. 20, 21. The soul is made for God, and can never be at peace until centred in Himself. Diderot, the infidel Cyclopædist, makes a character in one of his

plays say : ' To do wrong is to condemn ourselves to live and find our pleasure with wrong-doers ; to pass an uncertain and troubled life in one long and never-ending lie ; to have to praise with a blush the virtue we fling behind us ; to seek a little calm in sophistical systems, that the breath of a single good man scatters to the winds ; to shut ourselves for ever out from the spring of true joys, the only joys that are virtuous and sublime ; and to give ourselves up, simply as an escape from ourselves, to the weariness of mere frivolous diversions, in which the day flows away in half-oblivion, and life glides slowly from us, and loses itself in waste.'

Another votary of pleasure, who, to silence remorse, encouraged himself in unbelief, has left this sad testimony to the bitterness of ' the evil : '—

'And dost thou ask what secret woe  
 I bear, corroding joy and youth?  
 And wilt thou vainly seek to know  
 A pang e'en thou must fail to soothe?  
 It is that settled, ceaseless gloom  
 The fabled Hebrew wanderer bore,  
 That will not look beyond the tomb,  
 But cannot hope for rest before.  
 What exile from himself can flee?  
 To zones though more and more remote,  
 Still, still pursues where'er I be  
 The blight of life—the demon THOUGHT.'<sup>1</sup>

Sooner or later, mostly in this life, always in the next, the votary of evil, the slave of self-will, discovers that the pleasure promised by sin is a delusion, and its seeming good only evil. A wise Chinese proverb says, ' Who finds pleasure in evil and pain in virtue, is a novice in both.'

<sup>1</sup> *Childe Harold.*

v Sin is the one great evil in the world, and deliverance from it the one great salvation. This is the object of the believer's chief dread, abhorrence and resistance. It burdens the conscience, disturbs our peace, prevents our usefulness, darkens our hopes, and hinders our converse with heaven. There is no real evil in what the world calls dishonour, poverty, pain. Sin is disgrace indeed, dragging us down from our true nobility, whatever our earthly distinctions; it is poverty, whatever our store; and sickness, though the body be robust; and death, while we seem to live. As a man's life consists not in what he has, but what he is, so his poverty is not the lack of 'things,' but of goodness. The wounds made by sorrow have no poison in them, and soon heal; but sin envenoms and destroys. Disease may mark the body, but 'the evil' brands the soul.

x 'The evil' against which we pray, the sinful principle in ourselves—it is this which militates against the whole prayer. Do we say 'Our Father'? This prevents the exercise of a filial spirit, and separates us from God and one another. Do we look up to Him as 'in heaven'? This unfits us for its holiness, and obscures our hopes of reaching it. 'Hallowed be Thy Name'? This dishonours it. 'Thy kingdom come'? This opposes it. 'Thy will be done'? This resists it. 'Give us our daily bread'? This claims it as a right, and renders no thanks. 'Forgive us our debts'? This augments them. 'Bring us not into temptation'? By this we bring ourselves into it. This seventh petition, there-

fore, appropriately closes, as it summarizes the prayer—*Our Father! deliver us from evil.*

All men naturally pray against temporal evils; those who are taught by the Holy Ghost pray also and chiefly against '*the evil.*' The former seek escape from what is inconvenient to themselves, the latter from what is displeasing to God. 'Evils' are light and transitory, soon forgotten, and leave no trace but the 'good' they 'work together' to produce in the hearts of God's children; but sin, 'the evil,' is unmitigated, permanent, destructive. The unregenerate may hate and strive against some special form of moral evil, as drunkenness; but Christians strive to destroy the root out of which all the branches grow. Others may dread the consequences, but these hate the cause. Others may join in the petitions for bread and pardon; but they alone who truly say, 'Our Father,' truly pray, 'Deliver us from evil.'

Is this our earnest prayer? By the essential difference it reveals between the regenerate and the unregenerate, we may discover our true relation towards God. If we are not seeking deliverance from sin above all other evils, its consequences cannot be escaped. It is vain to expect salvation from the sorrow sin entails, unless we are saved from sin itself. Death and hell are indissolubly linked with sin, and must be our portion so long as we cleave to it. There is no escape from its evils but by salvation from itself.

We are not left in doubt as to the possibility of such deliverance. To answer the prayer He Himself

taught, the Son of God came into the world. This was His one great purpose; the meaning of His name, 'Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins,' Matt. i. 21; the one central evil of the world. As our Example, He so ruled His own strong human will that it was ever subservient to the supreme authority of God, and He said, 'Father, not my will, but Thine be done.' His whole life was one of self-abnegation. Though rich, yet for us He became poor. He chose to be 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,' because 'He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows.' 'He pleased not Himself.' He shared all the evils sin had entailed on humanity, and was the victim of the greatest crime the world has known; but 'He was wounded for our transgressions,' and 'gave His life a ransom for many.' By His atonement He removed from all who repent the evil of condemnation, and by the gift of His Spirit He destroys the evil principle in the heart. He constrains us by His own love to love Him in return, and thus prompts us to that entire surrender to Himself which is the sure corrective and destruction of 'the evil.' Thus John the Baptist described Him as 'The Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world,'—the *sin*, not the sins: He does take these away with all their manifold evils; but He does more by taking away the root, the germ, the fountain, the producing cause, the very principle of evil, the *sin* of the world. To Him who taught us thus to pray, we look for the deliverance which He died and lives to accomplish. He, the pre-eminently good, our mighty and gracious Lord,

will assuredly hear the prayer He taught, ' Deliver us from evil.' ' Good Lord! deliver us. By Thy Baptism, Fasting, and Temptation; by Thine Agony and bloody Sweat, by Thy Cross and Passion, by Thy precious Death and Burial, by Thy glorious Resurrection and Ascension, good Lord! deliver us.'

We look for the coming of the kingdom in this world, when the victory over evil shall be complete. Till then we cannot escape ' evils,' but we may be delivered from ' the evil.' Paul and Silas were suffering the evils when they were in the inner prison, with bleeding wounds and feet fast in the stocks; but, delivered from ' *the evil*,' they were praying and singing to God, and the prisoners were listening in wonder. Sufferings merely external may be easily endured when the heart's great malady is healed; as the roaring wind and the rattle of rain and hail at the windows outside do not diminish the pleasure of a company of loving friends, with cheery converse and sweet music, before a blazing hearth. ' Outward troubles do not disturb inward peace, but an unholy affection doth. All the winds without cause not an earthquake; but that within the earth's own bowels doth.'<sup>1</sup> ' One drop of sin hath more evil in it than a sea of sorrow.'

The entire prayer is an argument in support of the closing petition. ' Our Father in heaven;' save Thy children, and let us not, by yielding to evil, grieve Thee: ' Hallowed be Thy Name;' keep us from the evil that dishonours Thee: ' Thy kingdom come;' let us not, by yielding to the ' Evil One,' retard it:

<sup>1</sup> Leighton.

'Thy will be done;' let us not by sin oppose it: 'Give us this day our daily bread;' preserve us from the evil of ingratitude to the Giver: 'Forgive us our trespasses;' let us not repeat them: 'Bring us not into temptation;' lest we fall into sin: 'But deliver us from evil.'

✓ Deliverance is the climax of the prayer. Not 'evil,' but salvation is the closing note. O blessed hope! O glorious certainty, that all who call God Father will some day be delivered perfectly and for ever from evil of every kind—from the power of the 'Evil One;' from all the evils sin has caused; from every taint of evil within; dwelling in our Father's presence, seeing Him as He is, and sharing His perfect purity and bliss. Dying Jacob invoked 'the Angel that redeemed him from all evil;' and we will adore the Saviour who for us conquered the 'Evil One;' and with the Apostle will exult in the assurance, 'The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work.' 2 Tim. iv. 17, 18.

The Author of the prayer is Himself the Mediator by whom it is fulfilled. He reveals God as 'Our Father;' saying, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father:' He hallows the 'Name' by exhibiting the nature of God: Of 'the Kingdom,' He is the Vicegerent and Head: 'The Will' was perfectly done by Him, and, through the Holy Spirit He gives, is done by us: the 'Daily Bread' is a symbol of Himself, the manna from heaven: 'Trespasses' are forgiven through His sacrifice: He is the most illustrious example of 'Temptation' resisted, and the Giver of the grace by which we resist: He conquered

the Evil One, neutralized the evils of sin, and delivers us from the power of evil by His love ‘shed abroad in the heart.’

‘ A safe stronghold our God is still,  
A trusty shield and weapon ;  
He’ll help us clear from all the ill  
That hath us now o’ertaken.  
The ancient prince of hell  
Hath risen with purpose fell ;  
Strong mail of craft and power  
He weareth in this hour ;  
On earth is not his fellow.

‘ With force of arms we nothing can,  
Full soon were we down-ridden ;  
But for us fights the proper Man,  
Whom God Himself hath bidden.  
Ask ye, who is this same ?  
Christ Jesus is His name,  
The Lord Sabaoth’s Son ;  
He and no other one  
Shall conquer in the battle.’<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Luther, tr. Carlyle.

## CHAPTER X.

### *THE DOXOLOGY.*

‘FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND  
THE GLORY, FOR EVER. AMEN.’

THE doxology is omitted by the Revisers. It is not in St. Luke’s version of the Prayer, nor in the oldest manuscripts of St. Matthew, nor in the ancient Latin version of the Bible known as the Vulgate. Alford says, ‘It must on every ground of sound criticism be omitted.’ It is supposed to have been placed by some devout transcriber on the margin of the MS., and subsequently transferred to the text, such doxologies being in frequent use.

Although a commendable resolve to retain nothing which critical evidence did not prove to be part of the original Scripture, has excluded this time-hallowed formula, it will be long before a doxology so dear to our associations will cease to be used as an appropriate close to the Lord’s Prayer. Though it may not have been contained in the original text of St. Matthew, it expresses scriptural truth, and may therefore be retained as our response to the prayer taught us by the Lord. It reminds us of David’s thanksgiving, when the princes and people offered

willingly for the building of the temple: ‘Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and the earth is Thine: Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as head above all.’ 1 Chron. xxix. 11. St. Paul utters similar ascriptions of praise: ‘The Lord will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.’ 2 Tim. iv. 18. ‘For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen.’ Rom. xi. 36. The closing words of St. Jude’s Epistle are a grand doxology: ‘To the only wise God our Saviour be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever;’ and St. John tells us how the universe of holy beings ascribes ‘Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power unto Him that sitteth upon the throne.’ Rev. v. 13.

The doxology is not only in harmony with the general testimony of Scripture, but it is implied, if not expressed, in this very prayer; for His must be ‘the kingdom’ who is asked to do kingly acts; and He must possess adequate ‘power’ who is asked to accomplish what needs Divine strength; and to God alone must belong the ‘glory’ of all His works. It is an offering of adoration to the Most High naturally arising from all devout hearts; it has been hallowed by immemorial usage in the Christian Church; we therefore feel justified in including it in our meditation on the Lord’s Prayer. Let us consider it as a Confession of faith, a Plea in prayer, and an Ascription of praise.

## I.—THE DOXOLOGY A CONFESSION OF FAITH.

‘Without faith it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh to Him must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.’ Before performing a certain miracle, our Lord asked, ‘Believe ye that I am able to do this?’ In using this doxology we profess our belief that God is both able and willing to do what we have asked.

1. *The Kingdom.*

In ascribing to Him the kingdom, we deny that it is the devil's, from whom we have just asked deliverance. The ‘Evil One’ who tempted our Lord, and who tempts us by displaying the allurements of the world, saying, ‘This is delivered unto me, and unto whomsoever I will I give it,’ is a usurper, having no true authority; his pretended kingdom is one of darkness and falsehood, is now overruled by God, and will soon be overthrown for ever. Away with the idea of a malignant spirit sharing the kingdom, as if there must ever be two occupants of the eternal throne, for ever engaged in conflict with each other. No! the kingdom is God's altogether, unchangeably, eternally, and this God is our Father in heaven.

The kingdom of *Nature* is His. Its laws owe their origin to Him, and if He pleases He can suspend or change them. The kingdom of *Humanity* is His. Men aspire to control each other, to mould society, to rule in larger or lesser spheres, to be kings. History abounds with the follies and crimes

of men who persuaded themselves that theirs was the kingdom for their own selfish ends, claiming a Divine right to do wrong and serve the devil. Thus Nebuchadnezzar boasted: 'Is not this great Babylon that I have built, for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?' He claimed the kingdom, power, glory, for himself. It cost him seven years of humiliation to learn that 'the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will.' Dan. iv. And how often have proud aristocracies and turbulent democracies abrogated all obligations of Divine justice, as if God had vacated His throne, or delegated His authority to them; as if human might was Divine right.

Still more monstrous has been the claim to personate Deity, as when fallible men have pretended to be Christ's infallible representatives and vicars, condemning those who questioned their authority as guilty of rebellion against God. And not only so; but when, in a less degree, the headship of Christ in His Church has been claimed by princes, prelates, presbyteries, congregations, as if their decisions must be accepted as endorsed by His sign manual; as though the abuses and corruptions incident to every system, if not from selfishness and pride, yet from ignorance and neglect, could be Divine; and as if efforts towards reformation must be repressed as presumptuous interference with the government of God. All such claims need to be held in check by the avowal that the kingdom is God's; not man's, who is at the best ignorant, foolish, frail; but God's, the infinitely Wise,

Holy and Good, our Father ; to whom, above all the false claims of human authority, our final appeal is made.

If the kingdom is our Father's, every one of His children has some place in it, and may claim, not its authority, but its privileges and service. // The poorest peasant with the proudest peer, the meanest servant with the mightiest monarch, may rejoice in being fellow-subjects of the one king ; there being for each some allotted place, some work, some honour—for each the watchful care of the loving Father, whose is the kingdom.

‘ If the words “ Thine is the kingdom ” are true words, priests, kings, saints, must say as much as any, yea, more than any : “ It is not ours. We exist only to testify whose it is, only to bring all whom we can reach within the experience of its blessedness.” . . . We are bound to affirm that a Fatherly kingdom is established in the world ; that to be members of it is our highest title, and that the beggars of the land share it with us ; that in it the chief of all is the servant of all ; that under Him all may in their respective spheres reign according to this law ; that all ranks and orders stand upon this tenure, and are preserved or overturned by their honour or contempt for it ; that all offices, the highest and lowest, have hence their responsibility and dignity ; that this kingdom has its highest rule in the human will, and its secret impulses and determination ; that it reaches to the most trifling acts and words ; that not one of the suffering myriads in a crowded city is forgotten by Him who is its Ruler, any more than one of the

spirits of just men made perfect; that when all the subordinate vassals of the kingdom shall confess their dependence upon Him, shall know that He is, and shall feel towards those who are beneath them, and to one another, as He feels towards them, then His kingdom, which *is* now, will indeed have come in power.<sup>1</sup>

This acknowledgment has its practical admonition. If we confess that the kingdom is God's, how great our inconsistency if we withhold our personal homage of heart and life! 'Thine is the kingdom' means: 'We are subjects of Thy kingdom, yielding homage not to worldly opinions and personal interests, but to Thee our only Lord.' If the kingdom is Christ's, it is ours; for He said, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom;' He 'opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers,' and will say, 'Come, ye blessed children of my Father, inherit the kingdom.'

## 2. *The Power.*

This belongs to the God to whom we pray. It would be vain to ask favours of a man who, as king *de jure*, might think himself entitled to promise, but who, not being king *de facto*, would be unable to perform. But our Father has both the might and the right. The kingdom of nature is not endowed with independent powers. The King does not sleep on His throne while impersonal forces work their will. We are not subjected to unfeeling, irresistible laws; we are not reeds shaken by the wind, pebbles rounded by the wave, dewdrops exhaled by the sun; whatever

<sup>1</sup> F. D. Maurice.

the forces of nature and our feebleness, we affirm our confidence in our Father's all-controlling power. And we know Him in His Son who said: 'All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth;' so that power is in the hand of gentleness, swayed by Him who blessed little children and cleansed the leper.

The power does not belong to man, great as are his achievements. The steamship plunging forward in the teeth of the wind, piercing the crests of the mountain-waves, seems to defy the forces of Nature; but this illustrates not man's resistance to those forces, but his obedience to the laws which govern them. Steam and machinery avail us only when in using them we render homage to the power of God. The victories of modern science are achieved, not by compelling Nature to conform to our theories, but by building our theories on a reverent study of Nature; so that in science as well as morals it is true, 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth;' the most docile and obedient making the resources of the universe their own. All our boasted victories of science over matter are so many tokens of the truth that 'Thine is the power.'

So with human life and history. There is power in wealth and station; much more in genius; more still in goodness; but all comes from the Divine Fountain of all power. We are apt to regard the agency and overlook its Lord. Yet Providence often teaches that calculations based on human probabilities may be utterly falsified. The wisest have been controlled by fools, the strongest overthrown by babes.

Many a Goliath has fallen by a stripling's stone. Solomon says: 'I saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor favour to men of skill.' Eccles. ix. 11. The power is our Father's; so that when we feel 'we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do,' we can say—'but our eyes are upon Thee.' 2 Chron. xx. 12.

So, in the birth-throes of the Christian Church, when all seemed lost in the death of its Founder, by the power of God He burst the tomb and ascended to His throne. The powers of the world were enraged, and sought to destroy the infant Church; but the power of God turned their plots to foolishness, their force to feebleness. 'The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together' against the fishermen of Galilee; but they took refuge in prayer, and said, 'Lord, Thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is.' *Thine is the power!* 'Now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto Thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak Thy word, by stretching forth Thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of Thy holy servant Jesus.' *Thine is the power!* When thus they prayed, 'they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.' Acts iv. 24-31. God chose 'the weak things of the world to confound the mighty,' and proved that 'the weakness of God is stronger than men.' The victory was not with the princes,

but with the despised Nazarenes. When the foes of the Church have seemed to prevail, it has not been by their own power, but by Divine permission. When Pilate boasted, 'Knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and power to release Thee?' Jesus replied, 'Thou couldst have *no power* against me, except it were given thee from above.' John xix. 11.

So, whenever we see power in hands least fit to wield it, and fear the consequences of its exercise to our nation or the Church, let faith look up and say, 'Our Father who art in heaven, what is man, whose breath is in his nostrils? Thine is the power.' So in all efforts to extend the kingdom, let us remember that we have talents to improve and work to do, but no self-originated strength. As the work is God's, so is the power to accomplish it. We might well despair if we were left to depend on our own resources. Who are we to conquer ignorance, prejudice, barbarism, wickedness? to convince the careless, soften the obdurate, purify the corrupt, save the lost? The power belongs to Him who bids us do the work; and so, conscious that without Him 'we can do nothing,' we believe that 'we can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us.' Phil. iv. 13.

This ascription also has its practical lessons. Do we confess that the power is God's? Alas for many who say this and yet resist the power of truth, of conscience, of the Spirit! How certain the overthrow of those who strive against the power of God! But on the other hand, what consolation is theirs who fall in with this power, by the assurance that He whose is the Power, uses it for their succour, and

imparts it to themselves! 'He giveth power to the faint.' I may glory in my weakness if the power of Christ rests upon me. I am safe in my Father's care, for His is the power; and Jesus said of His sheep, 'They shall never perish; no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.'

### 3. *The Glory.*

This also is our Father's. Men seek their own glory. In its proper place the love of honour is a worthy motive, but it should never be uppermost in our minds. We admire one who spurns the largest bribe and sacrifices life itself for honour. But men often seek false glory; thousands have died on a single battlefield, a holocaust to fame; and one man, intoxicated by dreams of glory, has been the curse of nations. But the glory of God is the manifestation of Himself, and therefore of perfect wisdom, holiness and love. His glory is inseparable from the welfare of His creatures, the highest happiness of the Universe. This is the confidence of faith in prayer, that we ask for what it is His royal prerogative to award—*Thine is the kingdom*; what is within His capacity to secure—*Thine is the power*; what it is for His own honour to give—*Thine is the glory*.

Let our ascription of the glory to God be also an admonition to ourselves. How difficult it is to render all the glory to Him! How often, when seeming to ascribe it to Him, we are trying to retain some for ourselves! We detect this tendency when extolling some institution of which we form a part. In glori-

fyng our country, its wealth, power, fame, do we not unconsciously glorify ourselves? So in religion, is not much of the praise we give to our own Church, its formularies, usages, successes, a disguised glorification of ourselves as belonging to it? Are we equally ready to praise whatever is excellent in other communions? O to live more in the spirit of this ascription: then we should not envy our fellow-men their share of earthly praise, but feel that it is God's, and His to give; not our own to clutch at, and be proud of, or to lament if we do not obtain it; but our hearts would always feel what our lips often utter, *Non nobis Domine*, 'Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Thy Name be the praise.' Such acknowledgment is essential to true prayer.

No petitions can be acceptable which are not in harmony with the attributes of Him to whom we pray. We may ask nothing which His own character does not warrant us to expect; nothing which it would not be for His honour to give. We ask virtually if not formally, in the name of the Lord Jesus, when we thus, by His direction, pray to the Father whom He has taught us to trust as the Almighty King, and whose glory we have to seek as our highest end. In the spirit of this doxology we may expect that 'what we thus ask faithfully we shall obtain effectually.' We ask God for the coming of His kingdom, and we acknowledge 'Thine is the kingdom.' We ask blessings which only Divine power can secure, and we testify, 'Thine is the power.' We ask for whatever may best promote the welfare of His children, which is identified with His glory, and for nothing

derogatory to it, and we say, 'Thine is the glory.' The doxology is thus a confession of the faith which is essential to the efficacy of this and every true prayer.

## II.—THE DOXOLOGY AN ARGUMENT IN PRAYER.

Although prayer is designed partly for the spiritual benefits derived from its exercise, and although such benefits are often primary in importance, yet, as shown in the introductory chapter, they are secondary in order. We are warranted to ask from God blessings which might otherwise be withheld, and to obtain which we are encouraged to be importunate. We may plead with God, employing arguments the strongest of which are drawn from His own character. When appealing to our fellow-men, we urge their capacity to do what we ask, their generosity, their past favours, and their own encouragement for us to apply to them when in need. And our Father permits us thus to pray.

The Bible is full of illustrations of the use of such pleading in prayer. 'Have mercy upon me, O Lord, according to Thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Thou hast been my help, leave me not, neither forsake me. Thou hast delivered me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me and hear my prayer.' So here we plead what God is known to be, as an argument why He should act in accordance with His own attributes in granting our requests. We plead, not what we are, but what He is; not the smallness of

our sins, but the greatness of His mercy ; not the minuteness of our wants, but the magnitude of His power ; not the sincerity of our prayer, the depth of our penitence, the force of our resolves, the response of our gratitude ; but the majesty of His throne, the rights of His sovereignty, the wealth of His resources, the depth of His love, the tenderness of His pity, the faithfulness of His word, the glory of His grace.

We plead first the prerogative of royalty. We have prayed that His Name may be hallowed, His kingdom come, His will be done. It is for the King to establish His own rule. We have asked for a kingdom which is His own and not another's. It is His already. 'Thine is the kingdom!' Therefore, O Lord, establish it, reveal it, extend it, perfect it, help us in promoting it, plead Thine own cause, assert Thine own authority, 'Thy kingdom come, for Thine is the kingdom.'

We also plead for ourselves. The King is the fountain of grace. He alone can forgive offences against Himself. The best of men can do nothing more than direct us to Him. This is our encouragement, that our long-suffering Father is on the throne of grace, and that His 'property is always to show mercy and to forgive.' 'He delighteth in mercy.' Therefore we plead, 'Forgive us our sins, for Thine is the kingdom.' The King is the fountain of honour. None carry titles in a land but by sanction of its ruler. In appealing to God as Father, we seek the highest of all honours, that of adoption as His children—an honour infinitely surpassing whatever earthly kings can give. He to whom we pray is

able to confer this, for He is sovereign Lord. Grant us this nobility to call Thee 'Father'—for 'Thine is the kingdom!' All things may be ours because all things are our Father's. No fear of asking more than He has to give, need trouble those who can say, 'Thine is the kingdom.' It is reported of Alexander, that he once gave permission to a friend to demand of the royal treasurer any gift he pleased. The request was for a sum so great that the treasurer appealed to the monarch, thinking it too much for any subject to receive. The king replied, 'But not too much for Alexander to give.' When we consider the boon we ask,—pardon of all sin, victory over all evil, the supply of all need, the honour of calling God 'Father,'—we might be discouraged by thinking how infinitely more is all this than we have any right to ask, were it not for the assurance that it is not too much for Him to bestow to whom we say, 'Thine is the kingdom.'

So also we plead His power. Men may say, 'I would, if I could;' but in prayer to God we are checked by no misgiving. 'Is anything too hard for the Lord?' He who said, 'Let there be light,' has only to say, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee;' and we may go in peace. The leper urged this plea, 'Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou *canst* make me clean.' The Israelites in utter helplessness invoked Jehovah, and He showed that He could make a path through the sea and send down bread from heaven. They knew Him as the God of Abraham, His promise to whom was joined with the assertion, 'I am the Almighty God;' which title all the children of Abraham by faith may

plead. When we feel the force of unholy influences without and within, the corruption of the heart, the power of evil habit, our own weakness, and the strength of the foe who seeks our ruin; and when in the cause of truth and philanthropy we feel discouraged by the opposition of some and the apathy of others; and when we are ready to say, 'I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought,' how we are encouraged to continue to pray, 'Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done,' by the plea, 'For Thine is the power'!

So also we plead God's glory. All we ask tends to promote the glory of Him to whom the glory belongs. 'It is Thine already; wilt Thou not act in the future consistently with Thine honour in the past? Has it not been Thy glory to listen to the cry of Thy children, to supply their need, to forgive their sins, to defend them from evil? Has it not been Thy glory to uphold Thine own authority, to establish Thy throne, to secure the performance of Thy Will? Do this still, for Thine, O Lord, is the glory.' Thus Moses pleaded: 'Pardon the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Thy mercy, and as Thou hast forgiven this people from Egypt even until now.' Num. xiv. 19. Thus Joshua appealed: 'O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies? For the Canaanites shall hear of it, and what wilt Thou do unto Thy great Name?' vii. 8, 9. Thus David prayed: 'For Thy Name's sake, pardon mine iniquity:' Ps. xxv. 11; 'For Thy Name's sake, lead me and guide me.' xxxi. 3. Thus Jeremiah implored: 'O the

Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, do Thou it for Thy Name's sake.' xiv. 7, 8. Thus Daniel entreated : ' O Lord, hear ; O Lord, hearken and do ; defer not, for Thine own sake, O my God : for Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name.' ix. 19. Thus our Divine Exemplar pleaded : ' Father, glorify Thy Name.' Thus we also plead His own reputation and honour. ' We have heard with our ears, and our fathers have told us, what things Thou didst in their days, and in the old time before them. O Lord, arise, help us and deliver us, for Thy Name's sake ! O Lord, arise, help us and deliver us, for Thine honour.'

### III.—THE DOXOLOGY AN ASCRIPTION OF PRAISE.

Praise is the expression of gratitude. This is both due to our Benefactor and good for ourselves. It is also the utterance of admiration. It is natural to feel and express approval when power is directed by wisdom and beneficence. It is good for a nation to honour its great men ; it is elevating to ourselves to appreciate superior excellence in others. We offer praise when we render thanks for a gift, still more when we extol the giver. We praise God in the best manner when both gratitude and admiration combine, each increasing the other.

We praise God *for His gifts*. Precepts and examples abound in Scripture. The Psalmist says, ' Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits ;' and the Apostle responds, ' In everything give thanks.' Our Lord, who revealed the Father,

welcomed the expression of praise in the one leper who returned to give thanks for his cure, while the nine departed without thanksgiving. So He Himself gave thanks at the miracle of the loaves, Mark viii. 6; when He instituted the Supper, Mark xiv. 23; and at Emmaus after His resurrection, Luke xxiv. 30. This He did as our Representative. 'I will declare Thy Name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee.' Heb. ii. 12.

For every blessing of the present life we should praise the Giver day by day; but above all for His 'inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace and for the hope of glory.' 'In Him we live and move and have our being,' both for time and eternity. We are every moment recipients of His bounty and partakers of His salvation. Therefore 'it is meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty Everlasting God.'

Delight in the giver is a still higher form of praise than gratitude for the gift. A loving child says not so much 'I want a gift,' as 'I love my father.' A mother is pleased with the recognition of her tender heart more than of her helping hand. The children of God thus delight in Himself. Moses and the Prophets, with the authors of the Psalms, anticipated the songs of the Revelation. Rev. xv. 3. The glorious company of heaven unite in the anthem, 'Glory and power be unto our God for ever and ever.' Rev. vii. 12. The Church on earth responds in adoration of God, not only for His gifts, but for

Himself, saying, 'We praise Thee, we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee, for Thy great glory.'

Such praise should ever blend with our prayers. The Psalms illustrate this; the Apostle enjoins it. 'In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.' Phil. iv. 6. Thankfulness is a condition of mind essential to the reception of fresh favours from God, without which it would not be for our good that they should be bestowed. On the wings of supplication we soar to the throne, and while gazing on its glory our petitions are brightened by the lustre, and transfigured into praise. Thy kingdom come; we adore Thee; Thine *is* the kingdom! Thy will be done; we magnify Thee; Thine *is* the power! we desire Thy glory; Hallelujah, Thine *is* the glory! We know our requests are already heard. 'Before ye call I will answer, and while ye are yet speaking I will hear.' Therefore while praying for a blessing we may be praising for its bestowal. So our Lord, before Lazarus was raised, said, 'Father, I thank Thee, that Thou *hast* heard me,' John xi. 41; and so we, while praying 'Thy kingdom come,' may join the Church triumphant in the song, 'We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which wert and art and art to come, because Thou *hast taken* to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned.' Rev. xi. 17.

Such praise to God is the best expression and aid of union amongst the worshippers. Christians who differ in opinion may agree in praise. As at a political meeting of loyal citizens who sincerely and zealously advocate differing methods of promoting

the common weal, there may be many voices so uplifted together in debate that no coherent utterance may be distinguishable, yet when the national anthem is sung, all those discordant voices blend in the harmony, making one sound together; so is it in the songs of the Church. Controversy is hushed when we 'praise God from whom all blessings flow.' This also links earth with heaven. Departed saints have ceased to need many of the prayers we offer, but they still praise as we do, if not for the same gifts, the same Giver. And angels unite in the Liturgy. They have no higher employ, or purer joy, than praise. 'I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.' Rev. v. 11, 12.

#### 4. *'For Ever.'*

'Thine is the kingdom for ever!' A kingdom which cannot be moved. We rejoice that it must so remain. 'Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.' 'Thine is the power for ever!' Not a reservoir which may be emptied, but an ocean to which every outflowing stream returns; not a force which may be spent, but an infinite energy. The arms which sustain us are 'the everlasting arms;' the power to which we look for the perpetuation of the kingdom is 'for ever.' 'Thine is the glory for

ever!' Not like earthly glory, whose emblems are the fading flower, the passing wind, the transient meteor. No additional knowledge of the past, no events in the future, can dim its radiance in the sight of the children of God. As it was in the beginning, so is it now, and so ever shall be. The glory of God is His love, and this endures. 'I the Lord change not, therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed.' 'His mercy endureth for ever.' Jesus is the brightest manifestation of the Divine Glory, and He is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.'

Is it unreasonable to hope that they who praise a God who liveth 'for ever,' will share in that 'for ever'? Will beings so endowed as to conceive of and adore a 'God for ever,' be allowed to perish? The Old Testament says little of immortality in direct terms; but its records tell of those who worshipped God as the Everlasting. Must not they whose faith and love thus rose up to the eternal throne, have cherished some hope of immortality themselves? Our Lord showed that life eternal was thus revealed to them. They worshipped Jehovah, the Self-existent, the 'for ever' God. He proclaimed Himself as 'the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.' He was not ashamed to give Himself this title. 'I am the God of those who worshipped, trusted, served, and praised me.' If dead and extinct, God who could have continued them in being for His service and love, allowed them to perish; He had permitted and enabled them to extol His Name, to adore His everlastingness, and yet allowed them to sink into nothingness. Would He boast of being

their God? Nay! 'He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.' 'He has prepared for them a city;' an endless life with Himself; 'wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God.' Heb. xi. 16.

Their praise of a 'God for ever' lifted them into the region of an endless life, and made them partakers of the Divine nature they adored. Nevertheless their apprehension of eternal blessedness reserved for them was dim and indistinct. 'Life and immortality' are clearly 'brought to light,' fully made known by the Gospel. 'We know that we have eternal life;' 'our life is hid with Christ in God;' 'because He lives we live also;' and when we worship a God who is 'for ever,' we rejoice that we share His immortality. We stand before the throne and join in the angel-anthem, and exult in a kingdom, a power, a glory, which can never cease. We rapturously repeat the Hallelujah Chorus, 'For ever! For ever! For ever!' Can we who are privileged and empowered by God to render such worship, be allowed by the same God to perish? Can we conceive of Him looking with complacency on such worshippers, listening to their ascriptions, and then allowing one after another, thousands after thousands of them, millions after millions, with this word 'For ever' on their lips, to drop into the grave and be themselves *dead* 'for ever'?

No! We are ourselves for ever if we really worship a 'for ever God.' All our interests are thus lifted up into the great future. It is not for the present merely that we pray. The kingdom we seek to promote is for ever; the will we wish to be done is for

ever; the bread we ask in the strength it imparts for promoting that kingdom and doing that will, has a bearing on the 'for ever:' the forgiveness is pardon for ever; the trials in which we ask succour are a discipline for the for-ever life, and the deliverance from all evil is a deliverance for ever. Thus all things about which we now pray are linked with the life that is for ever. It is God our Father for ever who provides our bread, orders our steps, appoints our trials, for our good and His glory for ever. Thus, nothing that happens to us is mean and low and trivial when we bring it in prayer to the region of the 'for ever.'

When the writer was in Jerusalem, he visited the ancient quarries beneath the city, where are seen heaps of chippings, and marks on the rock showing the size and form of the stones which had been excavated for building the temple. These were laid in their courses without sound of hammer, axe, or chisel. Here, in these dark caverns, were prepared the goodly stones which were to form parts of that majestic structure on Mount Moriah, where the sacred feasts were celebrated, and the sacrifices were offered, and the anthems of Hallelujah resounded, and the Shekinah of God was revealed. How mean in itself the condition of any one stone, hewn and chipped in that dark cave; but when its purpose was contemplated, what dignity invested every touch of the shaping tool, and every minutest part of the process that was preparing it for taking its place in the temple of God! And so with all the circumstances of our earthly life. Our daily joys, sorrows,

trials, and cares are no longer insignificant when overruled by God, the great Master Builder, to constitute us temples of the Holy Ghost now, and to prepare us for a place in the heavenly Jerusalem, the house not made with hands, where God reveals His unveiled glory, and every stone of the structure is resplendent with the reflection of Himself; not insignificant when we consider that these little things of our earthly existence are fashioning us as living stones for the temple of God, by establishing His kingdom in our hearts, by moulding our will to His, by giving us victory over temptation, by purifying our hearts from sin, by enabling us to appeal to Him as 'Our Father who art in heaven,' and to ascribe to Him 'the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, FOR EVER.'

5. *Amen.*

Amen is the most comprehensive, emphatic, solemn word which human lips can utter, next to any word denoting Deity. It is the echo of earth to heaven: it is man's response to God. This very word was uttered three thousand five hundred years ago, when the Israelites worshipped in the wilderness, and afterwards when they responded to the worship of the priests in the temple. Our Lord often uttered it, and the apostles and early Church habitually employed it; martyrs have died with it on their lips, and at the present day it is used throughout the world by 'all who profess and call themselves Christians.' For it has been transferred without translation into the Scriptures of every language, so that Chinaman and Hottentot, Greenlander and

Hindoo, however varied their speech, utter the same Amen.

Thus it is a bond and badge of union among Christians of all denominations, of every tribe and kindred, on the face of the earth. Day by day, among all nations, this response is made to the one Father, anticipating the day when the kingdom shall fully have come on earth, and when the whole creation will resound with one harmonious, all-comprehensive Amen to God.

Amen is a strong affirmation; so our Lord employed it in uttering important truth in relation to regeneration, John iii. 3; and immortality, John viii. 51. He is Himself the Divine Amen, testifying and ratifying the truth of God. This is one of His titles, 'Thus saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness.' Rev. iii. 14. This gives special interest to His own prayer. 'All the promises of God in Him are Yea, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God.' 2 Cor. i. 20. The promises are ratified, fulfilled, established for ever by Him. His life on earth was His Amen to all that God is in heaven. His words of wisdom, miracles of goodness, life of purity, proclamation of mercy, death on the Cross, were His Amen to the types and prophecies of the Old Testament. His resurrection and ascension were His Amen to His own claims and His people's hopes. His gift of the Spirit was His Amen to His promises and the need of His Church; and His intercession is a continual Amen to us, who in His Name 'come with boldness to the throne of grace.' This gives special interest to our use of the word. Keeping in mind that Christ

is the great Amen, every Amen we utter is prayer and praise in His name.

The more general use of the word is the expression of confirmed and earnest desire. The Amen of affirmation says, 'So it is;' of supplication, 'So let it be.' We utter our petition, and then, briefly reconsidering and summing up the whole, we say Amen; which means deliberate and earnest *desire*. We have expressed no mere opinion, but our heart's intense longing. It also means *expectation* of receiving what we ask. Our petitions have not exceeded what it is in God's power and for His glory to bestow, or what He has encouraged us to ask; and so we utter the Amen of faith. It means *confidence* in our Father. Whether He answers us in the way we wish or not, we trust His wisdom and love. This word is the riveting of a nail to make it fast, the sealing of a document to render it valid, the endorsing of a cheque to give it currency, the addition of an oath to confirm a promise.

The word is suitable in private prayer, but is specially valuable in united worship as the adoption by the many of the utterances of the one who speaks in their behalf. So the tribes solemnly assented to the blessings and curses pronounced by the Levites on Ebal and Gerizim. Deut. xxvii. So, when David brought up the ark to Mount Zion, after the doxology, 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for ever and ever . . . all the people said, Amen, and praised the Lord.' The words and music were new, and the congregation could not unite with the choir in the anthem, but at its close they associated

themselves with the whole of it by their own Amen. 1 Chron. xvi. 36. On the return of some of the Jews from captivity, when Ezra on a pulpit of wood opened the book of the Law and 'blessed the Lord, the great God,' 'all the people stood up and answered, Amen and Amen, lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground;' indicating not only their concurrence with the words of homage uttered, but their willingness to hear and obey the word. Neh. viii. 6.

That such response was general may be inferred from the words of the Psalmist, 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting; and let all the people say, Amen.' Ps. cvi. 48. Not the ministers alone, or the choir, but 'all the people:' men, women, children; not mentally merely, but audibly. 'Let *all* the people *say* Amen.' If, as Archbishop Leighton says, 'All Christians are God's clergy;' if, as St. Peter says, they are a 'royal priesthood;' if, as the anthem of the Blessed says, they are 'kings and priests unto God,' let them not leave all worship to the church officers,—priest, presbyter, or pastor,—but assert their own priesthood by this united response. This was the custom of the early Church. Giving directions respecting public worship, St. Paul asks how can people 'say Amen at the giving of thanks,' if the language is unknown? 1 Cor. xiv. 16. This is a feature of the worship of heaven, where the Amen of gathered voices is the most familiar sound. To the anthem, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain,' the four living ones, representing

the highest orders of angelic nature, 'said Amen;' Rev. v. 14. And again, after the Hallelujah anthem by the congregation of heaven, 'The four-and-twenty elders, and the four living ones, fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen, Hallelujah!' Rev. xix. 4.

This impressive mode of response was practised in the time of Jerome, who says that at the end of every public utterance of prayer and praise, the united Amen of the people sounded like the waves of the sea falling on the shore, or the voice of thunder. 'The hollow idols, and their temples that were empty, did echo and rebound the Church's Amen, so that their fabrics shook.' It was not a merely mental assent, nor a smothered whisper, but such an outburst of emotion as made it evident that all the people assented, thus stimulating the devotion of the worshippers, and testifying to strangers their steadfast faith.

Alluding to the early method of celebrating the Lord's Supper, Dean Stanley says: 'The consecration was not complete till it had been ratified in the most solemn way by the congregation. For it was at this point that there came, like the peal of thunder, the one word which has lasted through all changes and all liturgies—the word which was intended to express the entire, truthful assent of the people to what was done and said—Amen.'<sup>1</sup>

A Puritan writer says: 'When we set our seal to the truth of God and say Amen, it is a word that fills earth and heaven: there is not a joyfuller

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Institutions.*

word in the world than when whole congregations say and shout Amen.’<sup>1</sup> Another says: ‘The united breath of God’s people sends a blast upon their enemies; the trumpet blew, and the people shouted, and Jericho fell down to the ground. If any single soul pray in faith, it shall be heard; much more if two have a symphony (as the word imports) they shall be answered: how much more when the whole congregation is in harmony, and unanimously cries “Amen”! God will say “Amen” to such Amens.’<sup>2</sup> Such a collective response to prayer, whether liturgical or ‘free,’ is grander than any music of organ and choir, and more impressive than any sermon is the confession thus given by all to the reality of worship and the truth of God.

But let it be the soul’s response to God. ‘Martin Luther said of the Lord’s Prayer, that it was the greatest martyr on earth, because it was used so frequently without thought and feeling, without reverence and faith. This quaint remark, as true as it is sad, applies with still greater force to the word “Amen,”—a word which is frequently used without due thoughtfulness, and unaccompanied with the feeling which it is intended to call forth, loses its power from this very familiarity, and, though constantly on our lips, lies bedridden in the dormitory of our soul. But it is a great word this word Amen; and Luther has said truly, “As your Amen is, so has been your prayer.”’<sup>3</sup>

Many, alas! are prompt in practice, if not by speech, to say Amen to the world’s fashions, opinions, and

<sup>1</sup> Sibbs, 1632.

<sup>2</sup> Woodcock, *Morning Exercises*, 1682.

<sup>3</sup> Saphir.

favour; Amen to the allurements of self-indulgence and sin, to the flesh and to the devil.

Let our heart ever respond with its Amen to God. He says, 'Seek ye my face:' let us reply, 'Amen! Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' He calls, 'Return, ye backsliding children:' 'Amen! behold, we come unto Thee.' Jesus stands at the door and knocks: our opening the door is the soul's Amen. He commands: Amen, we obey. He promises: Amen, we believe. He leads: Amen, we follow. Amen is the answer of a good conscience towards God. Amen accepts the Divine covenant: 'Come out from among them, and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty.' What condescension, that He should ask our concurrence! What honour and joy for us to respond to all His appointments, even unto death; as Cyprian, when condemned to be slain by the sword, exclaimed 'Amen!' When the heavenly Bridegroom says, 'Surely I come quickly,' the Bride replies, 'Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus.' 'If we say Amen to God's invitation, He says Amen to our salvation.'

Amen is an emphatic and comprehensive summary of the Lord's Prayer; responding to it as a whole, omitting no one petition. 'It winds all up together in one bundle. Many are willing to have God forgive their trespasses, but cannot so readily forgive others; we may be free for God to give us daily bounty and bread, but cannot make it as meat and drink to do His will. Men will easily accept of God's kindness—not so roundly pay their tribute of praises. Such

cannot roundly pray, nor say "Amen." "Oh Lord!" and "Amen" are two long prayers in few words, managed by the whole soul; and so it is an Amen with a Hallelujah.<sup>1</sup>

'Our Father which art in heaven.' Amen! Creator and Preserver of all men, Redeemer from sin and death, and Giver of spiritual life to all who believe; help us, Thine adopted children, to look up to Thee with filial confidence and say, 'Abba, Father;' Amen! We bless Thee for revealing Thyself to us in such a relationship, and that we may call the Monarch of the Universe 'our Father.' Thou art more than our largest conceptions of the meaning of a word so dear. May we rejoice in Thy love as our Father. May we rely on Thee for parental sustenance, protection, culture, discipline, comfort, and all we need to fit us for the inheritance Thou hast provided for Thy children. May the word 'Our' reprove selfishness and promote love. May we recognise the brotherhood of man in the one Fatherhood that links all classes and nations together: Amen! Thou art in heaven, dwelling in light unapproachable; high, glorious, mighty, mysterious, unchangeable; pure as the blue ether and ever near us as the surrounding atmosphere. May we reverence Thy heavenly majesty while rejoicing in Thy Fatherly love. May obedient homage blend with filial confidence. Trusting Thee fully, yielding ourselves to Thee absolutely, delighting in habitual, reverential and familiar communion with Thee as children, may we more and more respond to

<sup>1</sup> Woodcock.

this title by which we are taught to address Thee, 'Our Father which art in heaven : ' Amen.

'Hallowed be Thy Name.' Amen! Let this very name of Father be universally known, understood, honoured. May God, as revealed in His Son, be worshipped, loved and revered. May the Name of Jesus, who is 'the Image of the invisible God,' be dear to the hearts of all! Amen! May we have true conceptions of this Name, cherish appropriate emotions, manifest suitable reverence, fail not in worship and service; and by thus hallowing it ourselves, impress others with its majesty and goodness: Amen! May Thy glory take precedence in our desires and aims, and Thy Name be more to us than worldly good. 'God is LOVE.' Let all mankind know and honour Thee; by the whole earth 'Hallowed be Thy Name!' Amen!

'Thy kingdom come!' Amen! Let Thy spiritual dominion spread till all hearts are fully surrendered to it. Let Thy rule of holiness and love universally triumph over all that is false, wicked and cruel, overcoming infidelity, idolatry, superstition, ignorance and sin. And may we who pray for it strive diligently to promote it: Amen! Let Thy kingdom come in every church by its increasing purity and usefulness; let it come by the conversion of multitudes to God; let Jew and Gentile together joyfully welcome it; let it come in our hearts by more absolute self-surrender to the King: Amen! O for the blessed time when Christ shall come again to claim this world as His; when tyranny, war, greed, lust, pride, poverty, sickness,

sorrow, death, shall be known no more! We love Thine appearing! We are looking for this blessed hope! Let the whole earth be filled with Thy glory! Amen, and Amen!

‘Thy will be done on earth even as it is done in heaven.’ Amen! We rejoice that Thy will rules the universe; not fate, or force, or chance. Thy will is like Thyself, and as Thou art our Father, that will must be wise, must be kind, must be for our good; O let it be done! Amen. Let it conquer self-will and reign supreme. Let it be done by men on earth as by angels in heaven, and therefore done not from compulsion but from love; cheerfully, promptly, unstintedly, freely! Let it be done intelligently, prayerfully, always. Let it all be done, and done as in Thy presence. Let *me* do it; let *us* do it; let *all* do it. Amen! In passive submission as in active service may it be done. Help us to imitate Him who said, ‘Father, not my will but Thine be done.’ In the blending of our own will with Thine may we enjoy ‘the peace of God that passeth all understanding.’ So let it be done here on earth, and now, even ‘as it is done in heaven:’ Amen!

‘Give us this day our daily bread.’ Amen! We look to our Father to supply His children’s wants for the body as well as for the soul. Thou who hast made us to hallow Thy Name, and long for Thy kingdom, and do Thy will, wilt not suffer us to lack any good thing. Thou givest food to all flesh. Thou who didst feed Israel with manna, and perform the miracle of the loaves, dost by that same

word, 'Give and preserve for our use the kindly fruits of the earth.' Give us seasonable food; enough for our need; give it from day to day; and help us to trust Thee for to-morrow. We ask for one another, for the family, the nation, the world; for our friends, for our foes, Give *us!* Amen! May we feel our dependence on Thee; cherish gratitude towards Thee; be diligent in the use of means, and not waste Thy gifts; may the bread we eat be our own by industry and honesty, and as Thy gift; and remembering our brotherhood with our fellow-men, may we be willing to share our food with those for whom we ask it. And while we ask food for the body, and all other needful things, give us the living Bread to strengthen the soul, the heavenly Manna: Amen!

'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.' Amen! Against Thee, Thee only have we sinned. All wrongs done to ourselves and our neighbours are sins against Thee, our Father. Our debts are written in Thy book. They increase, and cannot be discharged, nor transferred. O cancel them! We Thy children remember with shame our old faults and confess our daily failures. 'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.' But we rejoice that Thou hast sent Thy Son to discharge the mighty debt, by His life given for us all. We ask for pardon in His Name: Amen! May we be truly contrite because of sin, confess it, and forsake it. Pardon us, as well as feed us, day by day. Pardon also our neighbours, our enemies, mankind! We do not ask mercy which we ourselves

refuse to show. We cannot ask pardon for those to whom we refuse it. We have forgiven, we do forgive! O help us to forgive others more generously, more fully, and do thou forgive both them and us; Amen!

‘And lead us not into temptation.’ Amen. Past sin is our grief and shame, guard us from the repetition of it. It has shown us our weakness: be Thou our strength. So direct the circumstances of life that the temptations we cannot avoid may not be beyond our strength to resist through Thy help. Break the force of hostile influences in the world, in our companions, in our condition, in ourselves. Set a hedge around us to keep us from going astray. If we can never be out of reach of temptation, may we ever feel Thy hand upholding us. Let us not be tempted above that we are able, but do Thou with every temptation make a way of escape that we may be able to bear it: Amen! Thou who Thyself hast suffered, being tempted, art able to succour us the tempted. Let us not go into the perils into which we ask Thee not to bring us. May we watch and pray that we enter not into temptation. May we resist it with the armour Thou hast furnished and in the strength Thou dost give. Preserve others also from the danger which we dread for ourselves; and let us not by carelessness or selfish indulgence encourage them in dangerous paths from which we ask Thee to preserve both ourselves and them: Amen!

‘But deliver us from the evil.’ Amen! Save us from the Adversary who tempts us to destroy us.

May we be watchful against his devices, and brave in resisting his assaults. Thou, O Christ, didst come to destroy the works of the devil. Destroy his works in us. Give us the victory! And deliver us from the evil in ourselves which affords him such advantage. Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts. May we be filled with the Spirit, and so have no vacant space for the Evil One to enter. 'Deliver us from the evil, whatsoever it is, that lurks even in the best of good things: from the idleness that grows out of youth and fulness of bread—from the party-spirit that grows out of our political enthusiasm or our nobler ambition—from the fanatical narrowness which goes hand in hand with our religious earnestness—from the harshness which clings to our love of truth—from the indifference which results from our wide toleration—from the indecision which intrudes itself into our careful discrimination—from the folly of the good, and from the selfishness of the wise, good Lord deliver us.'<sup>1</sup> Deliver us from all the deceitful and wrong tendencies of our own hearts; then shall we be saved from all the evils to which we are exposed through sin, when sin itself shall be destroyed, and we are conformed as children to the image of our Father: Amen.

'Our Father which art in heaven'! Hear, we beseech Thee, these Thy children's prayers, which have been taught us by Thy Son. Wilt Thou not grant what Thou hast instructed us to ask? Accept also the praises of our hearts. We respond to the Prayer taught us by our Lord. Earth echoes

<sup>1</sup> Dean Stanley.

back the voice of heaven. We ratify with rejoicing hearts the Divine word. Thine is already the kingdom for which we pray! Thine is the power to secure obedience to Thy will! Thine is the glory which in all our prayers we seek! We bless Thee for Thy gifts! We adore Thee for Thyself! King for ever; mighty for ever; glorious for ever! OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN, THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY, FOR EVER. AMEN.

The kingdom, Lord, is Thine,  
 The right o'er all to reign;  
 None can assail Thy throne Divine,  
 Nor of Thy laws complain.

The power, O Lord, is Thine  
 To vindicate the Right;  
 With strength Thy love doth intertwine,  
 Mercy allied to might.

The glory, Lord, is Thine;  
 All praise to Thee be given!  
 Through all Thy works Thy wonders shine,  
 In earth and highest heaven.

For evermore the praise,  
 The kingdom, power, belong  
 To Thee; throughout eternal days  
 Creation's endless song.

Amen! the chorus rings  
 From earth to heaven again;  
 The universe adoring sings  
 One blessèd, glad AMEN.

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