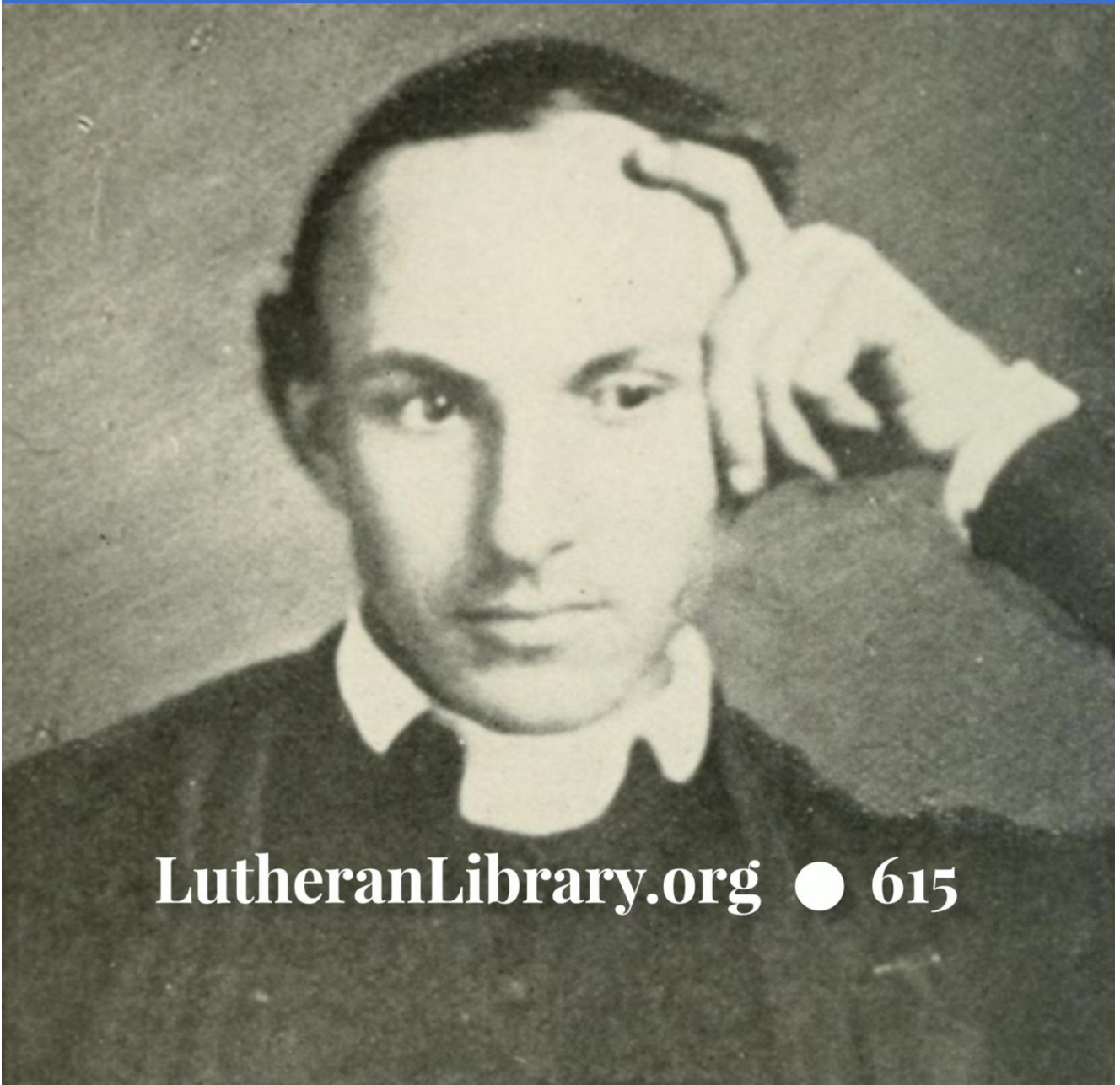


# Matthias Loy

## Christian Prayer



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# Christian Prayer: A Jubilee Gift

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# Christian Prayer: A Jubilee Gift

By Prof. Matthias Loy, D.D.  
PASTOR OF FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH, MANSFIELD, OHIO

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# Dedication

To  
Rev. Prof. M. Loy, D.D.,  
President of Capital University,  
President of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Ohio and Other States.

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# Preface by Lutheran Librarian

In republishing this book, we seek to introduce this author to a new generation of those seeking authentic spirituality.

MATTHIAS LOY (1828-1915) is a theological giant of American Lutheranism. He served as president of the Joint Synod of Ohio, the Columbus Seminary and Capital University, and edited the *Lutheran Standard* and the *Columbus Theological Magazine*. In 1881 he withdrew the Joint Synod from the Synodical Conference as a result of Walther's teaching about predestination. Many of Matthias Loy's books are available in Lutheran Library editions.

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Please have patience with us when you come across typos. Over time we are revising the books to make them better and better. If you would like to send the errors you come across to us, we'll make sure they are corrected.

# Dear Brother in the Lord!

BY AUTHORITY and in the name of the Publication Board of the Joint Synod of Ohio the undersigned Committee would hereby dedicate this volume to you as a Jubilee Gift. You have been favored by the Head of the Church with the grace of serving Him as a teacher of His truth, faithfully for twenty-five years. The Lord's blessing has rested abundantly on your work as a professor at Capital University and editor of the LUTHERAN STANDARD and other publications. Especially would the Publication Board acknowledge the services you have rendered the Lutheran Church by your literary labors. In the present book your articles on the subject of CHRISTIAN PRAYER, found in the volumes of the STANDARD, have been collected to be preserved and put into the hands of the Church anew as a precious treasure. It is hereby presented to you as a token of esteem and gratitude, and may the Lord reward your work.

The Committee:

C. H. ROHE, F. W. STELLHORN, J. BECK, D. SIMON, F. H. SPIELMAN.

# 1. The Model Prayer.

Originally Published in the *Lutheran Standard*, 1867.

## Article One.

“It came to pass that as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased one of his disciples said unto Him: Lord, teach us to pray.” Luke 11:1.

THIS IS A REQUEST which Christians daily repeat: for all must feel that much coldness and indifference to the high privilege of prayer still prevails in their own bosoms. All who have once tasted the blessedness of communing with God will, if they continue in Christ, have an ardent and constant desire to draw nearer still. Whilst we pant after God, the actual prayers in which we engage must often seem wholly inadequate: our praises are so beggarly and our petitions so feeble: and dissatisfied with their inadequacy we cannot fail to cry at times: “Lord, teach us to pray!”

We have, indeed, the prayer which Jesus gave in answer to the petition of the disciples; and we are thus taught by the same teaching which they received. Yet we are constrained to repeat the request, in order that we may have the Spirit who breathes life into our form. As every good gift cometh down from above, so must the gift of prayer. Without Christ we can do nothing: without His Spirit we can properly ask for nothing: and the earnest prayer for the gift of prayer in larger measure is never offered in vain. But the answer which our Lord gives to His disciples is just what some, who think the spirit of prayer necessarily expresses itself in noisy tautology and excited rant, would not have expected; they are disappointed when He gives them a form of prayer and tells them: “When ye pray, say, Our Father,” etc. But it can be disappointment only until the Spirit gives them more light respecting the import of prayer and more true life to exercise it. They must learn, if they are sincere Christians at all, that there is a holy calmness and

confidence which is far more pleasing to God, as indicating a far greater degree of spiritual growth, than the storm and excitement which is indicative of unrest within. The former leans upon the Lord and is content: the latter would drown the cry of inward doubts and struggles, but cannot attain to quietness. The true child of God, who has reached maturer years in grace, is usually characterized by serenity in his spiritual exercises; his piety is too deep to admit of the excitement which ruffles and renders uneven; and his humility fears the roused passions, lest much that is yet unsanctified should mingle with his devotions, and strange fire be brought upon the altar. The soul is secure in its quiet faith; it needs no assistance from transient gusts of passion. The deepest Christian feeling certainly is that of calm repose upon the Savior's breast. Nor can the soul which thus reposes be wanting in fervor. There is a steady glow which is all the more effective because the wild passions are tamed and ebullition is restrained. It is the warmth of live coals as distinguished from that of crackling flames. Where this exists there can be no disappointment at our Lord's answer. With this the Lord's prayer corresponds perfectly in its firm and confident, yet quiet, childlike tone. It is a perfect model for all Christians and if its contents or spirit harmonize not with their spirit and wishes, it should stand as an admonition to them to turn from their own ways to the ways of the Lord. This will become more manifest as we proceed.

There are two mistakes into which men have fallen with regard to the use to be made of the form which our Savior gave us. Some maintain that this form of prayer should be used to the exclusion of all others, understanding the Savior's words: "When ye pray, say, Our Father," etc., to mean that all prayer must be couched in these words. Others contend that this form should not be used at all, but that it should only be considered a sample after which all of our prayers should be modeled, and as a proof of this, they cite the Savior's precept: "After this manner, therefore, pray ye." It will be our first object to show that neither this form to the exclusion of others, nor others to the exclusion of this, are intended to be used.

That this form was not intended to exclude all others is evident from the fact that the Lord Himself, as well as His apostles, used others. John 17; Matt. 26:39; Acts 1:24; 4:24—30. Their practice must be considered a fair interpretation of the Savior's words. And this practice was followed by the early Christians, who used other prayers beside this model one. Not till centuries after our Lord's ascension was the opinion expressed that Christians

should confine themselves to this one form, whilst the Lord who used other forms Himself, never rebuked His disciples for doing the same.

Besides, there are circumstances which render a departure from these words an inward necessity. For although they contain all that Christians need ask, and all which the Holy Spirit prompts them to ask, yet they contain much only implicitly. But there are times when a particular want demands a particular utterance; the heart being full of it the mouth must speak it. A mere comprehension of it in some broader petition will not satisfy the soul, which desires an explicit utterance. The Lord's Prayer never can be inappropriate, under any circumstances, because its petitions embrace all our continued wants. But there are times when some of these are much more pressing than others; they lie heavily upon the heart, which sighs for relief. The petition for the supply of this want will then naturally be dwelt upon: to expand the petition of the Lord's Prayer in which the pressing want is contained, becomes itself a want which should be gratified. The model prayer is not, in its simplest form, sufficient in such cases; it contains both too much and too little: too much, because it expresses requests for all we need, whilst just in the moment of trouble and difficulty we would confine ourselves to one urgent petition: too little, because there is only a general expression of the pressing want, whilst the soul is full of the particulars.

It is vain to reply to this that our hearts should always preserve such a perfect equanimity, through the grace of God, us to feel no want more deeply than another, inasmuch as all are pressing; that because all things for which we are taught to ask daily must be equally necessary, the prominence given to one petition over another can arise only from our weakness, which should rather be overcome than encouraged. It is vain, because we are not perfect, and therefore pray as we can. If we had perfect faith and love, so as to be intimidated by nothing, we could stare the most imminent danger in the face with perfect composure; our prayer for deliverance from it would be as calm and as brief as our petition for our bread, because our trust in our Father's care would be perfect. But we are weak; and when a visible danger besets us it often requires a protracted communion with God, in reference to the impending evil, to gain composure through the assurance of faith. To wrestle for this is not a weakness which Christians must overcome. That we are not always confident, and therefore always calm, is indeed an indication of sin dwelling in us: but the particularity of our prayer as originating in the burdening character of some special wants, is the very means to overcome

the weakness which, as it has an actual existence, is not banished by expressing the want in general and ignoring the inward unsteadiness and longing for a more minute specification. Nor is such specification to be at all opposed, even when no danger besets us. Why may we not, when we have given expression to all our wants at stated times, perhaps frequently, also, at irregular intervals as opportunities present themselves, sometimes stop at the very threshold, and dwell lovingly upon the name of “Father” and reflect upon all that this blissful name implies for us, and pray and give thanks as we reflect? Why may we not, as circumstances suggest, stop at any one of the petitions, expanding it as our hearts expand under the influence of its precious words? It would indeed be worse than weakness to dwell only upon one petition and that always; or to pray only when circumstances of trial urge us through fear, and then confine ourselves to that which constraineth us to pray; this would indicate the want of true spiritual life; but it is strength, and conduces to strength, to strive against all temptations by opposing special prayers to special evils, and to strive for masteries by special meditation upon cheering promises.

That there is great danger in following mere feeling and allowing our prayers to be always dictated and shaped by it, we do not think of doubting. When the objections mentioned are directed against this, we concede to them all the force which they possess, and admit this to be great. We do not contend for the right of emotions to rule our prayers. But we do contend that these, when they urge to proper petitions, must not be always denied, although they must be prohibited from banishing all other petitions which our Savior has taught us to present. Specifications will arise in our minds spontaneously; they will present themselves in spite of us; and God reads them in our hearts, even if we suppress the utterance. If utterance is denied any absorbing want, we incur the danger of repeating the other petitions merely formally, while in fact we continue to dwell upon the absorbing theme. As there is time enough for all to which the Holy Spirit prompts us it is assuredly best to satisfy the soul’s longing to dwell upon any one particular for a while, that it may not be hindered from entering fervently into the other petitions which our wants require us to offer.

## **Article Two.**

But these specifications, so far as they are merely individual, obviously belong to the closet, not to the great congregation. They are improper in public. But to confound their impropriety under circumstances with impropriety absolutely, is an error which is evident to all who reflect. Particularizing our individual wants does not become improper in itself because it is improper in the audience of the people. It is improper in public because our individual emotions and feelings do not concern the public, and because the public does not share them: if we express them at all our prayer will be essentially a private one, though publicly presented; and such a presentation of private concerns will subject us to the charge of Pharisaism, on the one hand, or, if we present them in the name of all, of submitting what is equally without taste and without truth. On this ground, not on that of its being a departure from the Lord's Prayer, is such particularity in public prayer objectionable.

The circumstances in which Providence has placed the individual will give their coloring to his praises and petitions, so far as particulars are concerned; and it would be vain to expect that all should accompany him as he converses with God about them. But in the closet his own individual concerns are quite in place, and there is no conceivable reason why it should be deemed a wrong to indulge the heart in its desire to be particular in its conversations with God. He who would bring all his individual interests, and trials and encouragements into the sanctuary in the form of public prayer, would be guilty of a double mistake: first, in giving prominence to that which is but a passing spot of sunshine or shade, whilst matters of higher moment for the whole Christian life are set aside; and, secondly, in taking his own subjective condition as the measure for all present, whilst that which is actually a want and desire of all is overlooked. But he who brings before God his individual hopes and fears, even those which are entirely peculiar to himself, only lovingly lengthens out his thoughts as he communes with God, even as a loving child converses with a loving father.

But this inward impulse to specify renders the simple form of the Lord's Prayer insufficient also for all occasions of public prayer. For if the peculiar wants of an individual cannot be presented as the wants of all, there are desires which all Christians share and which the model prayer does not express with that degree of particularity which the heart demands. All wish to dwell more upon their sins and upon their Father's abounding grace, and to express their gratitude at greater length. Both joy and sorrow, as they live in the believer's soul, prompt to this. All have not the same actual sins to con-



fess; all have not received the same special mercies: but all have the root of all sin within them in original sin, and all have the sum of all mercies bestowed in the grace of God unto salvation. And if there is an inward longing to be more particular, whenever we assemble, in our prayers, if our hearts will lingeringly mourn over our sin and dwell upon the mercies we all receive, and earnestly wrestle for blessings that all need: there is, self-evidently, a stronger impulse still to specify when some great calamity impends over, or has befallen all, or some great blessing is in prospect or in possession. We need but give a single instance. We can, indeed, in time of famine, or pestilence, or war, embrace one whole heart's desire in the one comprehensive petition: "Deliver us from evil!" and yet what heart, suffering under the evil, weighed down by it, would be fully satisfied with this? When the heart is full it must find vent through a wider channel than these few words, and no man can forbid it. It is enough, however particular our prayers have been, that beautiful form is given to them all, by way of summary and complement, by the repetition of the Lord's Prayer, which will thus retain its honored and appropriate place as the best of prayers—as the perfect prayer—while no violence is done to the soul's longings.

This perfectly agrees with our Savior's direction: "After this manner therefore pray ye," and "When ye pray, say Our Father," etc., Luke 11:2. For we pray after this manner when we use the Lord's Prayer as a model after which to fashion our own: and we say "Our Father" when we express, whether in these words or in a more expanded form, what "Our Father" expresses. No one conversant with the Word of God will contend that the import of His command is, that we must imitate the very sound which He taught His disciples. The word of the Lord is the meaning which His words convey, not the sounds nor the letters separated from the meaning. If the sounds were essential, then our English Lord's Prayer would itself be a gross departure from the command given us, as being vastly different in sound from the original. We are to use it as to its meaning, not merely its sound, its material, not merely its form. We are to use these petitions, pray for the blessing which they embrace, and thus say "Our Father;" we are to model our petitions in general, according to this form, and thus pray "after this manner." We use the prayer just as really when we expand the petitions, provided we include among the particulars only what the general really contains, as when we use the form originally given. It is our model, showing us what we ought to pray for, and in what order the several petitions should be

placed. We should pray for what is in it, and for nothing that is not in it, whether we simply say these words, or whether we gratify our heart's desire, at times enlarging upon them. It is for this reason St. Augustine says, and says with undeniable truth, that "the prayers of all saints are only a Lord's Prayer;" and it is for the same reason that Herberger says: "The Lord's Prayer is the best in the world; high above all others: all good prayers flow from it and run into it again."

## **Article Three.**

Whilst we are convinced that the Lord's Prayer never was intended to be used as an exclusive form, we cannot agree with those who reject or neglect the use of it entirely.

The fact that it contains everything that our prayers should contain; that it is a divine form, in the use of which we incur no danger of asking amiss; and that it is a prayer of such simple, compact, comprehensive beauty, should induce us to love it and use it in preference to all others. Indeed of the two extremes of using only this form, and of not using it at all, we deem the latter much the worst. For, aside from the over-estimation of ourselves and the irreverence towards our Redeemer which it implies, inasmuch as it is a preference of human compositions over the divine form, it is a neglect of the command, at least in many cases, which enjoins us to say "Our Father" when we pray. The use of other forms to the exclusion of this, is an indication that the Lord's Prayer has never been used as a model; and that it should be so used, is undeniably implied in the command. For had this form been sufficiently studied and loved to render it of service as a model, it would have been sufficiently studied and loved to render it superior in our eyes to any human compositions, and therefore worthy to be used in preference to all others. Until this superiority is acknowledged it cannot possibly be our model, and when it is acknowledged we see not how the sincere soul can be content to set it aside. Its divine beauty is generally not known where it is not used in worship. Nay, we fear that many who would shrink from pronouncing it lean or lifeless, or even from declaring it inferior to many a flaming effort of divines admired for their eloquence, have never deemed it otherwise. Practically it is often declared to be so, both by the neglect to use it, and by the use of others which are cast in an entirely different mold. The

diffuse extemporaneous dissertations upon God's character and man's affections, which are sometimes delivered from the pulpit in the room of prayers, are evidence that the divinely given prayer has never been studied as a model, and that the philosophizing or poetizing extemporizer has never been impressed with its power or beauty. It will generally be found that where such unedifying prayers are in vogue, the Lord's Prayer will be seldom or never heard; for the false taste which loves these, will find but little to please it in the simplicity and beauty of the model: it looks upon prayer, seemingly at least, in the light of a lecture or speech, which must instruct the audience, and which necessarily becomes stale by repetition. True piety, which would daily ask the Lord for the same blessings, can not grow weary in asking them in the best possible form: but piety which has become sickly, desires soft sentimentalities, or proud pomp. If we once loved prayers which are modeled after the Lord's Prayer, we could not fail to love this also, and loving it of course use it. But where we love neither this form nor prayers in the same tone and of the same tenor, we surely are not complying with the words: "After this manner pray ye."

In the ancient Church the Lord's Prayer was loved and admired, and consequently used with great frequency. Tertullian calls it the legitimate prayer, taught of God, upon which all other prayers must be based, and with which they are to be sealed, the sum of the whole Gospel and a compend of Christ's words. Cyprian says:

"What prayer can with more propriety be called a spiritual prayer than that which was given us by Jesus, who also sent down the Holy Spirit? What may rather be called a true prayer in God's sight than that which the Son, who is the truth, spake with His own lips? To pray otherwise than He taught is not only ignorance, but culpability, insomuch as the Lord says rebukingly: 'ye reject the commandments of God with your traditions.' Let us therefore pray, my dear brethren, as our Teacher, who is God, instructed us."

In such high estimation was the prayer held in the Church that in the third century it was considered a duty to repeat it thrice each day. The catechumens were required to memorize it and repeat it in the presence of the congregation upon their admission to membership. In every solemn act, with which prayers were connected, it was used as the divine form. Thus, while it was considered as "the measure of all prayer," to use the words of St. Chrysostom, and as the best of all forms of prayer, it was also used as such upon every occasion, not exclusive of other prayers based upon it, but

as the seal upon the whole; and this use of it necessarily grew out of the due appreciation of its worth as the model prayer.

The same admiration for it and consequent frequent use of it we find in the earnest times of the Reformation, when the spirit of the early martyrs was once more poured out upon the Church. Luther frequently speaks of it as a treasure to be prized above all price. "There is on earth no nobler prayer," he says in speaking of it, "because it has the precious testimony that God is pleased to hear it; we should not accept all earth's riches in exchange for it." Again he says: "I still suckle at the Lord's Prayer, like a child, still drink and eat like an old man, and cannot satisfy my appetite: it is the best of prayers, superior even to the Psalms in my estimation, though I love these dearly. Experience shows that the best of Teachers has originated it." Speaking of it in another place—and he speaks of it with frequency—he says:

"I have heard it related how a devout person loved the Lord's Prayer so much that he prayed it with tears in the fervor of his devotion. The Bishop observing this, and being desirous of aiding his piety and increasing his ardor, took away the Lord's Prayer, and gave him many other prayers which glowed with fervor. But upon this he lost all his ardor and was constrained to lay aside his ardent prayers and return to the Lord's Prayer. I also think that those who have used the Psalms and 'Our Father' for a while in earnestness, will be glad to dismiss their 'ardent' prayers and say: 'O, there is not the unction, power and fire in them which I find in the Psalms and the Lord's Prayer.'"

The same views of it were entertained by the friends and coadjutors of the great reformer. They all agreed in thinking it the sum of all that should be done: as this is the best of laws, so that is the best of prayers. And just as the commands which are contained in the Decalogue are binding upon us, though presented in another form, and yet the original form in which God gave them is held in higher estimation than any other—in higher estimation even than those forms which fully express what the brief original only implies: so they considered other prayers, which are based upon the Lord's Prayer, as good and acceptable to God, and yet admired the very form which our Savior gave too much, not to prefer it to every other, no matter how comprehensive or beautiful; they knew that none could surpass the original. We see no reason why all good men should not agree with the Church in its best ages, and accordingly use the Lord's Prayer, as holy men did of old, with reverence and with frequency.

## Article Four.

The disuse of the Lord's Prayer by so many individuals and congregations is no doubt attributable, in many cases, to a dislike of previously prepared forms of prayer in general. So far as this dislike has for its object that sinful formality which thoughtlessly repeats the words furnished, being moved to this by the legal obligation, without any glow in the soul to correspond with the sounds, we sincerely respect it. Such praying is worse than useless: it is taking the name of the Lord our God in vain. But the dislike of formality does not imply the dislike of forms. It is a mere confusion of ideas where objections against the former are considered as lying against the latter, and a confusion which is dangerous, because it might lead us just as well to become disgusted with the Gospel because we have had reason to become so with this or that minister. The form used very thoughtlessly and thus very vainly by some, may be used very devoutly, and thus very profitably by others. The devotion, or the want of it, is in the mind. Where it is wanting, the prayer will be merely formal, whether it be extemporaneous, or previously prepared. Where it exists it only requires a channel into which to flow for utterance, and whether it makes this as it flows, or one already prepared into which it may pour itself, is immaterial. The advantage is really on the side of the prepared form, as here, provided the form be a good one, there will be no obstacle in the way of devotion's smooth and steady current, whilst the extemporizing of a form necessarily disturbs those who are not expert in the use of language. But whether the Lord's Prayer be a good form, by which true devotion can find a satisfactory utterance, is scarcely to be thought an open question among Christians of any description.

To this we must add that when prayers are considered not only as the expression of an individual's devotion, but of that of an assembled congregation, good forms are preferable on every account. It is by no means an easy thing to make a good prayer extemporaneously. It is felt even by those who are readiest in raising the cry of unspirituality against those who love beautiful forms, that our worship ought to be beautiful in its holiness, if this is possible. Careful disciples of Jesus will of course not easily confound the accident with the substance and lay equal stress on each. They do not think God's Word any the less such on account of the absence of all skill in the composition or delivery of a sermon, nor do they think man's prayers any

the less effectual on account of their inappropriate form and style. But they do think that sermons and prayers can exist without being shocking to good taste, and are the better for the absence of everything repulsive to ordinary feelings of propriety. "God does not need man's science, indeed; but much less does He need man's ignorance." The repulsive form prevents at least some persons from attending to the substance, whilst correct taste will shock and repel no one. The substance remains the same in either case; but it is mere selfishness or stupidity to carry on a crusade against beauty in worship merely because it is not absolutely essential. A naked man is as much a man as if he were clothed in purple and fine linen; yet it is surely not requisite, on this account, that he should walk up and down the earth in his nakedness to disturb his fellow-men. Just as little is it necessary that he should strut about in a dress so clownish or so filthy as to shock all whom he meets. A sermon may contain God's Word buried in a monstrous mass of absurdities piled up in a most ludicrous style: but who could or would find it in such circumstances? A psalm devoutly chanted by a hundred voices in a score of tunes on every key, is a chanting of God's praises still; but who could hear it or be induced to join it? All boasts of indifference to such things are nugatory. Even those who rail at the demand that all should be as tasty as possible, practically concede it. When they extemporize prayers they do the best they can; and sometimes, perhaps, when they are conscious of but modest gifts in the direction of extemporizing, they give themselves no little trouble at home to prepare at least a tolerable form. They know that the even flow of devotion is easily disturbed by any incongruity occurring in the public prayer. The advantage, in this respect, of using well-prepared forms of prayer, is quite obvious, and the best of all good forms is the Lord's Prayer.

But there is also an advantage in another respect, which is quite as evident. Our subjective condition, unless we are very vigilant, will influence us largely in our public prayers, if these are extemporized. The consequence of this will be that the whole tone of the prayer and much of its substance will not be adapted to the congregation—that to them it will be a form which does not express their devotions. Here there is very great danger of formality on the part of those who follow, if not on the part of him who leads. The prayer will be adapted to the latter only. Hence the unedifying character of many extemporaneous public prayers. The leader's feelings run away with him to regions to which his fellow-Christians cannot, at least not just then,

follow him, and often to regions whither they see no reason for following. Many things are then overlooked also, which of right belong to the prayers of God's people. The individuality becomes so prominent, that those wants of all which are not immediately felt, but which all acknowledge as soon as their attention is turned to them, do not occur to the leader; and on this account those very things for which we are expressly commanded to pray are often omitted, and many words are uttered respecting present emotions and feelings which are wholly unnecessary.

This omission will not be likely to occur where forms are used, in the preparation of which the requirements of Scripture and the known wants of Christian congregations are calmly and deliberately expressed. In addition to this there is the danger that strange fire will sometimes be brought upon the Lord's altar; and dreadful as unscriptural notions always are, they become doubly so when they are brought before the Lord in prayer. This will not be likely to occur where men are established in the truth; or no embarrassment, probably, would induce them to blaspheme rather than suffer shame. But still it has occurred especially where men have ignorantly professed inspiration, and will probably continue to occur so long as men are allowed to extemporize indiscriminately. All these evils could be effectually obviated by the general introduction of forms into public worship, as the most of Christians are accustomed to use them now.

## **Article Five.**

We can see no disadvantages connected with the use of forms. Even if we admitted that the reading or repetition from memory of a previously prepared form, is hostile to the existence of a devotional frame of mind—an admission which we cannot by any means make—this evil would not weigh a great deal in opposition to the manifest advantages connected with the use of forms. For the consequence would only be, that he who leads the prayer can not undisturbedly raise his soul to God. Those who pray with him would have an appropriate form in which to give vent to their devotions, and the leader's disturbance would not influence them. For, in the controversy about forms in public prayer, it ought never to have escaped men's attention, that whether the minister read, or rehearse from memory, or extemporize, to the congregation it is always equally a form in which they are to

express their hearts' desires. All join in one prayer; and to those who follow it must be a matter of indifference where the minister found these words used, provided only they be proper words. But the leader himself, if he be truly devout, will find it easy enough, if he only desires it, to express his wants in the words of another, provided only he really have the same wants as the other. And as regards the objection that repetition of the same form renders this disagreeable, we are quite sure that this is not the case, if the form is a good one and expresses what we really want and feel, whilst we are equally sure that the continual recurrence of certain pet phrases among those who extemporize, is disagreeable: not at all because they are the same, but because they are so while they pretend not to be, and are not very appropriate at any rate. And as we must continually pray for the same things, a certain degree of sameness is entirely unavoidable. The attempt to avoid it, will only cause further omissions of really necessary petitions. Let the congregations have forms expressing well what Christians should always pray for, and they will probably learn to love them more, the more familiar they become with them. That this is the case at least with the Lord's Prayer, the experience of thousands proves.

We therefore think the disuse of the Lord's Prayer on account of an antipathy to all previously prepared forms of prayer, to be unreasonable and unscriptural. We do not think of condemning extemporaneous public prayer as sinful: we would allow no man to interfere with our liberty in this respect: it therefore does not occur to us to maintain that written forms must be used; there is no law of the Lord on the subject, and no man has a right to compel where God has given liberty. But we do purpose to show that those who reject forms as sinful, err grievously; they err, by seeking to prohibit what is free, and endeavoring to brand those who exercise their liberty and use their forms in preference to all extemporaneous effusions, as mere formalists; they err also in this, that they reject that which is in reality most expedient. We should rather prefer forms, and on this account have an antecedent bias in favor of the Lord's Prayer and its frequent use. If we had any remaining doubts on this subject, the fact that our Savior did give us a form should decide the question. For, whether we hold it was intended to be used exclusively or not, this much is certain, at least, that the words: "After this manner pray ye," and: "When ye pray, say" do not mean that we should reject or neglect this form, and use none except those of our own composition. Our Lord's words cannot, with any semblance of reasonableness, be



understood as prohibiting the use of that which He Himself gave for our use. All objections to the use of the Lord's Prayer, derived from our antipathy to forms in general, we cannot but consider as objections to our Lord's precept and example; and the best answer to them the objectors could furnish themselves by learning to pray "Our Father."

Looking, then, upon the Lord's Prayer, not as a form to be used exclusive of all others, but as a model after which all our prayers should be molded, it remains for us yet to point out several features of its form, which are especially to be observed in using it as our model.

## **Article Six.**

The Lord's Prayer is a model of brevity. The wants of the soul are fully expressed, and nothing more. There is a perfect freedom from that heathenish battology [needless repetition], which our Savior so sharply rebukes in the words: "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking: be not ye therefore like unto them." Matt. 6:7. This "much speaking," which is Sometimes intended to show the auditor how much the head and heart contains, and which is sometimes mistaken for commendable importunity is profit-able for nothing: it obtains no blessings from heaven. and it gains but little credit among good men on earth: for it is not unfrequently manifest that it is but the product of the brain's labor when the heart is barren; these shams are always detestable, and some will always detect and detest them. The mouth of the true Christian speaks from the abundance of the heart. In this case there can be no purpose to make his prayer of what is considered a respectable length, because the purpose is to give utterance to the heart's desires, and to cease when these are uttered. When people flippantly speak about short prayers, such as "Our Father," in a tone of depreciation, if not of contempt, as being "scarcely worth the while to begin with," they merely show their ignorance of the true nature and object of prayer, and their want of experience in this regard. The Christian who is truly in earnest, and sincerely believes, will be content to tell his Father what he desires, without any prolix explication of the reason why he desires it, or diffuse description of the advantage accruing to him if his desire is granted. Some very long prayers would become very short if all the particulars about the importance

of the things desired, the means by which they could probably be best secured, the consequence of their bestowal and the precise condition of those who desire them, were omitted; and we presume that there are few worshippers who would not consider them improved by the omission. They might be less eloquent speeches, but they would undoubtedly be better prayers. And even in regard to many prayers whose faults are not so palpable, it might be asserted with truth, that the same in substance might have been expressed in less than half the words, and the prayer have gained in reverence and power by the abridgment. The Lord's Prayer contains not one word which could be omitted without curtailing the matter as well as the form. And although it is often desirable, as we have seen, to be more particular than the model prayer in the expression of our desires; yet, we must not confound such more particular specifications with lengthy illustrations, expositions and repetitions of what has already been specified. No matter with what degree of minuteness we may design to express our requests and thanksgivings, the Lord's Prayer will be a model for the expression, teaching us to say what the soul desires and not to say one word merely for the sake of speaking longer.

Circumstances may create the longing to dwell upon particulars; but respect for our model will teach us to express our wishes without those manifold appendages which might be necessary to illustrate and impress them upon man's mind, but which are utterly misplaced when addressed to Him, who knows what we have need of before we ask Him. He who uses the Lord's Prayer as his model will be brief, even though his prayer, on account of its specifications, should be lengthy when compared with the model. Care will always be taken, in public prayers, to guard against inordinate length; for too much minuteness, instead of edifying, becomes ridiculous; and where there are many persons, the differences existing amongst so many must admonish us not to be too specific, lest we depart from the common ground and adapt our prayers merely to a few individuals. The Lord's Prayer teaches brevity in our prayers as a whole, as well as in the expression of each part.

We have no doubt that many a prayer which wearies those for whom it was intended, would prove edifying if this feature of the Lord's Prayer were imitated, and never could a prayer otherwise than gain by such imitation.

## Article Seven.

The Lord's Prayer is a model in simplicity. The inordinate length of some prayers is attributable, no doubt, to the author's effort to make his thought intelligible to those who pray with him. But such efforts can be necessary only when the prayer is faulty in conception—when matter is introduced which should be excluded. For such confession and thanksgiving, and petitions, as are adapted to a Christian congregation, cannot be unintelligible and therefore cannot need explication, much less such complication as sometimes is intended for elucidation, and which only entangles the subject still more. Brevity depends upon simplicity. When rhetorical figures are used which are not clear, or distinctions made which require considerable subtlety of thought, it is not to be wondered at if many sentences are required to elucidate what should never have been introduced. How far removed from all such intricacies of thought and expression are the childlike petitions of the Lord's Prayer, whose meaning is obvious to the plainest mind! True, there would be room enough for development because the petitions involve so much; but such is the simplicity of all, that we can scarcely conceive how any person could be tempted to disturb the flow of devotional feeling by introducing his logical expositions by the way. The secret of the earnest simplicity undoubtedly is that there was something to say and it says it, plainly and directly, leaving explanation and ornament to those who are addressing persons that do not understand or that feel no interest in what we say, which is not the case with Him to whom we address our prayers. And if those who offer prayers in public were but mindful that God, not the audience is addressed, they would see the propriety of imitating the simplicity of the Lord's Prayer.—This is a prayer, not a speech. But those who offer prayers in public frequently arrange them as addresses to the audience rather than to the throne of grace; they seek to make them instructive; sometimes they even endeavor to give sly rebukes to some of the audience, whom they have not the manliness to meet face to face—The prayer thus loses its proper character as a prayer, and no wonder it loses all simplicity. The requisites of good taste are certainly different when the cases are different: a good speech may be a miserable prayer. While our wants can be simply and briefly expressed, and will be so in proportion to our earnestness, the impartation of knowledge to our fellow-men may require the frequent

repetition of the same thought in different words and its illustration in various forms. Precisely that which is the merit of an address for the latter object may be the great fault of a prayer. The truth is that the further we depart from the model of simplicity furnished in the Lord's Prayer, the further we depart from the true character of earnest, fervent prayer, whose object it is not to instruct our brethren, but to hold communion with God.

## Article Eight.

We notice but one other point. The Lord's Prayer is a model in structure. The corporeal is subordinated to the spiritual in the relative position assigned to it in the prayer.

The spiritual wants are not only expressed first, as being uppermost in the Christian Soul, but they also occupy the largest place as being of vastly more importance than the temporal. But the body in which we tabernacle here, and which shall become a glorious habitation for the glorified spirit hereafter, is not forgotten; for while the first three petitions refer to spiritual, the fourth evidently refers to corporeal wants. From this the mind turns to spiritual things in referring to the evils with which we are called to contend, and ends with a petition for deliverance from them all, including those of the body and of time. Thus our temporal wants are duly cared for, only in their proper place as subordinate to the higher interests of the soul.

This subordination we would do well to observe and imitate in all our supplications. The sufferings of life have their proper place as related to life itself. In the first three petitions such things are asked as are needful for life in Christ; in the fourth the necessities of our corporeal life are remembered; and the last three refer to sins under which we suffer now, or from which we have reason to entertain fear of suffering in the future. We would serve God until the evening come in spite of the dangers through which we must pass, confessing our willingness to brave these dangers in God's name. We have all the more need to mark this, because our natural tendency is to ask only for the enjoyments of life, spiritual and bodily, and to forget, or even shrink from, the good fight which must be fought before we can be crowned in heaven. There is in this order an implied rebuke for all those who would "be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease;" for first comes the spiritual life, and then comes the sin, temptation and evil to wrestle with until

the change come by which we are introduced into the enjoyment of our inheritance. The human is in proper subordination to the divine. The first three petitions refer to God: His glory, His kingdom, and His will. Man's interest is best promoted by the promotion of God's glory.

But as the first three have divine, the last four have human things for their object: our bread, our sin, our temptation, our evil. When we are mentioned it is not to exalt, but to humble ourselves; "our" and "us" comes in connection with want and sin and woe. The grand object of our prayer is—the glory of His great Name; the other petitions are subordinate to this as means to a glorious end. God's kingdom comes and His will is done for His great glory. We ask bread that we may live for His glory. We ask forgiveness of sin, strength against temptation and deliverance from evil, that we may remain in His kingdom of grace and not come short of His kingdom of glory, and that we may live forever to glorify Him forever. The prayer begins and ends with God's glory, and in this it is an appropriate model for sinful man who is still so proud. Finally there is in the petitions a regular progression from one to the other. God's name can be hallowed only on the condition that He reveal Himself, and we therefore pray for this in the first petition; ask Him to give the knowledge of His Name to those who know Him not, and increase the knowledge in those who do. This revelation is intended to draw men unto Himself and make them His willing happy subjects, and we pray that this may be accomplished, when we pray for the coming of His kingdom. And because the flesh still lusts against the spirit, so that even those who are willing subjects often err, we pray that our Father's will may be done in us and by us. But in order to do His will upon earth our lives must be sustained, and we must be free from the manifold cares of earth, which are so apt to engross the mind and leave us no room for other things; therefore we cast all care upon God in the request that daily bread may be supplied. But sin is always a hindrance; forgiveness is therefore needed and implored. And as, when sin is pardoned, temptation may lead us back again and cause us to dishonor God, we pray Him mercifully to guard us in all our ways and save us from every allurements. Evil, however, will not cease to surround us; it comes in various forms, and will beset us all our days upon earth; hence we pray for deliverance from this, which petition can be fully answered only by our removal thither where evils never come, and where we shall never grow weary of ascribing to God the kingdom and power and glory.

## 2. Exposition Of The Lord's Prayer.

### Our Father.

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#### Article One.

As soon as man becomes conscious of his true condition, as a fallen creature, he is fully aware that he deserves God's wrath rather than his favor. God is therefore a terror rather than a joy to the natural mind, which is inclined to bring propitiatory sacrifices, with fear and trembling, rather than cheerful thanksgiving, and confident petitions. If we were left in this natural condition the child-like spirit which is manifested in the word "Father" would never be ours; and unless God Himself assured us that we have access with confidence in the name of Jesus, it would be the highest presumption to apply that endearing name to Him. But. our blessed Lord has Himself instructed us to say "Our Father," and "would thus affectionately invite us to believe and to be assured, that He is truly our Father and that we are His children indeed, to the end that we might call upon Him with all cheerfulness and confidence, even as beloved children entreat a kind and affectionate parent." Through His unbounded grace we receive "the spirit of adoption whereby we cry: Abba, Father."

The term Father may be used in different significations and with different feelings. We must determine, in the first place, how it was intended to be used in this invocation, and consequently who is entitled to use it; for it is obvious that no one can justly claim the privilege of addressing God as Father, who lacks all the qualifications which the proper use of the term im-

plies; only the children of God have this privilege, and “we are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”

The word Father was not intended to express any relationship in which we stand to God by nature, but one in which we stand to Him by grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

There are some passages of Scripture which seem to imply that we are God’s children, and have a right to address Him as such, without any change of our natural relation. “We are the offspring of God,” says St. Paul to the Athenians, Acts 17:29; and inasmuch as this was addressed to them as an argument against their gross idolatry, they must have been included among God’s offspring, otherwise the argument would have been without force. The ground upon which they are thus designated cannot be merely their creation, for if this were the case all creatures, animate and inanimate, would be equally God’s offspring. Upon man were conferred endowments on account of which this high title was bestowed on him; endowments which remained after the fall, and which the idolatrous Athenians possessed when thus addressed by the Apostle. And yet man is not, in his natural condition, possessed of those powers which entitle him to call God his Father in the sense of the Lord’s Prayer. Let us endeavor to render this clearer.

The peculiar endowment with which man was blessed above all other creatures may be summed up in the expression “God’s image.” “God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him.” Gen. 1:27. Adam was called the “son of God” in virtue of his possessing this image. This consisted partly of essential and partly of accidental qualities. Man was gifted with an immortal soul, which possessed the powers of intelligence, sensibility and will. These were created after God’s image, for God is a spirit with perfect intelligence, affections and will, and infinitely wise, happy and holy. These remained in man after the fall, and so far as the image of God consisted in these this image remained after the fall. For though his faculties were weakened and perverted from right to wrong uses, yet they were not destroyed by sin. These are qualities essential to man; if these had been lost, not only the divine image, but humanity would have been lost. And that the divine image, so far as it consisted in these essential qualities, was not lost, is evident from the words of revelation: “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made He man.” Gen. 9:6; and “Therewith curse we man, which was made after the similitude of God.” James 3:9. In both these cases the

heinousness of the crime is shown by referring to the dignity of the object, which is the “image of God,” and this reference would be quite irrelevant if this image were wholly lost. As spiritual beings are the offspring of God, made in His likeness, who is a spirit, and who therefore should not be thought like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device.

But it is obvious that these essential endowments are not those which alone, or even chiefly, constitute the image of God in us. They do not render us children and heirs of God. On the contrary this likeness consists especially of those attributes of knowledge, holiness, and freedom, which belong to God absolutely, and which, in some degree, He was pleased to confer upon man. The latter did not lose his heart and mind; but those qualities of heart and mind which rendered him God-like and noble he did lose: he retained his intellect, but not his wisdom; his sensibilities, but not their holiness and happiness; his will, but not its liberty. These were not supernatural, but natural qualities which, had they not been lost, would have been transmitted to prosperity, just as the other natural powers were transmitted. For “Adam lived 130 years and begat a son in his own likeness, after his own image.” Gen. 5:3. And that these accidental, yet natural endowments are designated by the expression “image of God” in the Scriptures, is incontrovertible in the face of such passages as Col. 3:10: “Ye have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him,” and Eph. 4:24: “That ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” For it is manifest that if we were already in possession of God’s image, in the full sense, St. Paul would not urge upon us a renewal, after that image, in knowledge, holiness, and righteousness. And while we are, on account of sin, utterly unlike God, we have no claims upon the privilege of calling God our Father. Such claims we can have only when our lost powers are restored. Until then, although we still possess the human nature which has God-like capacities, we must rather say with the prodigal: “I have sinned against heaven and in Thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son.” Luke 15:21. For those very qualities of heart and mind which would render us like our Creator—qualities which our nature is capable of containing, but not of attaining—are wanting since sin has entered.

Our Savior does not then teach men, as they are by nature, to claim kindred with God and call Him Father. This would merely encourage them in their pride and presumption, which is already exorbitant, and in their depen-



dence upon their innate powers, which is already dangerously great. Instead of this the whole prayer breathes a spirit of meekness and dependence. We are told in Heb. 11:16, that God was not ashamed to be called the God of those who desired a better country, even a heavenly. Would this lead us to suppose that our Lord would indiscriminately embolden all to call God their Father, because He created all? The implication plainly is that He is ashamed to be called the God of those who degrade themselves to the service of sin: how much more would He be ashamed to be called their Father! The Savior rather teaches men, while they remain servants of sin, to consider themselves children of Satan, seeing they reject the spirit of adoption, by which alone we can cry Abba, Father; for He tells the Jews: “ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.” John 8:44. By sinful hearts and lives they were conformed to Satan, who also possesses great faculties, but whose faculties are all dark and intensely evil; and as all men are by nature sinful, all are naturally rather Satan’s than God’s children.

The word Father is therefore intended, as taught in the Lord’s Prayer to be applied by men to God, to express a relationship in which we stand to Him by grace. This is taught as plainly in Scripture as language is capable of teaching it; and all proud boasts of a universal brotherhood of men as sons of one God, without Christ, are thus exhibited as perfect vanity. It is a brotherhood of sin and death, bearing the impress of the father of lies, as long as Christ’s atoning blood is scorned or ignored. The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ “hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” 1 Pet. 1:3. Not by natural generation, but by spiritual regeneration do we become sons of God. We are begotten again by the Holy Spirit through grace. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father,” Rom. 8:14, 15. We are rendered sons by adoption, and made conscious of this, only by God’s grace. Thus it is affirmed that Christ came with the purpose of rendering us sons through faith in His name. “When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” Gal. 4:4, 5. It is only thus that the slavish fear which renders God a terror to us, and under which we lie by nature, is removed, and that the confidence of a child is bestowed upon us. For Christ

was partaker of our flesh and blood “that through death He might destroy him that bath the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Heb. 2:14, 15. This terror being removed we can “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and grace to help in time of need.” Heb. 4:16. For “we are no more servants, but sons; and if sons, then heirs of God through Christ.” Gal. 5:7. In this sense the word “Father” must be understood in the Lord’s Prayer, as it is the only sense allowed by Scripture. Through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, God is truly our Father and we are His children indeed. But this implies that we must share in that redemption before we are entitled to say Our Father, and this can only be through grace.

## **Article Two.**

The spirit in which we are to call God Father, is the spirit of sonship, which again we can have only by faith. To say “Our Father” aright, requires that we have actually become sons of God. “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying: Abba, Father!” Gal. 4:6. We are not only by Baptism in infancy adopted as God’s children, but we are also subsequently made conscious of our relation, and out of this consciousness grows the addressing of God as Father. “The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.” Rom. 8:16. As long as this is wanting, our souls must be full of fear: God will appear to us as the Avenger of our sin, and so far will we be from addressing Him in terms of affection, that we shall dread approaching Him and addressing Him at all. But when we have received the adoption of sons, we can come to Him cheerfully and confidently. For although we feel how utterly unworthy we are to appear before Him, yet we are assured that He is truly our Father, notwithstanding, and that we are His children indeed. The truth must be plain to us that He does not require the affection and piety of a child before He renders us children. He chooses and adopts us, not we Him. It is simply absurd to suppose that the birth has its origin in the child to be born. “Blessed be God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ which, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” 1 Peter 1:3. As He therefore mercifully adopted us as sons before we could have filial dispositions, our defects and

infirmities cannot prevent us from calling upon Him as our Father and cheerfully confiding in Him. For the mercy which called us when we were yet ungodly will surely now bear with us, though we show our gratitude but feebly and are slow in the acquisition and manifestation of filial affections. We are unworthy; but God did not in our adoption look upon our worth, and does not now. Hence the existence of the feeling of unworthiness cannot stand in the way of the continued consciousness and joy of sonship. God does not disown His child because he is yet imperfect, but gives His Spirit to assist us in our infirmities, and cheers by His merciful assurance that He is still our Father. Where this consciousness exists there will always be the cheerfulness and confidence to address Him by this endearing name, and where we have not the Spirit of adoption we have no right to use the name, by which that Spirit utters itself.

But because only the children have a right to say Father, and only those are children who believe, a more definite expression may be given to the truth before us by the statement that to say "Our Father" aright requires faith in the Lord Jesus, in whom we are adopted. "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Gal. 3:26. There is no other way of becoming a child. "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 1:12. If we say "Father" upon the supposition that we are sons without being born again of incorruptible seed, we merely deceive ourselves, either in regard to the meaning of that precious word as used in this invocation, or in regard to our natural condition, in which we are merely children of wrath. But in either case, we cannot say "Father" as our Lord taught us to say. This can be done only when we know God's wrath removed and ourselves graciously pardoned for Christ's sake, who bare all our burdens upon the cross, who rose again for our justification, and "in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him." Eph. 3:12. Without faith we have not the right and not the heart to call upon God with cheerfulness and confidence as our dear Father. For God has "predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved;" Eph. 1:5, 6. And "without faith it is impossible to please God." Heb. 11:6. Under no circumstances can we be said to have the high titles and claims belonging to the sons of God who cry "Father," unless we have faith. For it is a mere misconception when it is supposed that because

little children are regenerated by Baptism, being thus rendered God's children indeed, such little ones are pleasing to God and owned as His sons and daughters without faith. The Bible never says so; but does say we are children of God by faith, and that he that believeth not shall be damned. When babes are regenerated it is through faith which Baptism produces in their souls, thus rendering them children of God. And to those who doubt the possibility of infant faith we would merely recall the words of our Lord who, when He had called a little child to show His disciples an example of unassuming humility, said unto them: "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." Matt. 18:6. There is therefore no exception whatever to the rule that only believers have the blessed privilege conferred upon them of being God's children, and therefore of calling Him "Father."

And all who sincerely believe have this privilege, whether their faith be weak or strong. The weak will find much to encourage them in the assurance that God is truly their Father; and the strongest will have their energies sufficiently exerted to say "Father" cordially and confidently in the full extent of its meaning. A feeble child can stammer "Father," and feel that the word means much more than he can understand, and yet know and believe that God is truly his Father. A strong man, who has battled bravely in many a fierce contest with Satan's host, may say "Father" confidently, and yet feel the question arising in his breast: How can this great thing be? believing it and yet not acting upon half the truth which it involves. Indeed, the strongest faith as well as the weakest must be conscious of its weakness here; and those who feel their weakness most deeply, and are sometimes discouraged on this account, may be of good cheer when they reflect upon the confessions made by men whose strength they never doubted. The great Reformer was surely no weakling, but a stout, stalwart man of God, who defied the hosts of hell, and never quailed when the strife waxed hot; but he feels like a very child when he approaches God with this invocation upon his lips—a very child in weakness as well as in cheerfulness. "Who understands," he exclaims, "the first word of the Lord's Prayer?" If I understood and believed these words fully, that God, who created heaven and earth and all things, and holds them all in His hand and power, is my Father; I would conclude with certainty that I also am a lord of heaven and earth; that Christ is my Brother, and all things are mine; that Gabriel is my servant and

Raphael my coachman, and all angels are servants given me by my Father in my time of need." And again: "You will find by your own experience what a severe conflict it costs to believe this Word and rightly to pray the Lord's Prayer; not that the Word is not sufficiently certain and steadfast in itself, but that we are so feeble and such a wretched quicksilver that we cannot cling to it, although it is worthy to be held in the firm grasp of hands of iron and hearts of adamant." This should encourage those who deeply feel their misery and meanness still to believe what the Word involves, notwithstanding all—to hold fast still the precious Word with its blessed truth, as God may give them grace, appropriating the words of the same strong man, "Although I feel and experience that I cannot, alas! say 'Our Father' with all my heart—as no man on earth can perfectly say it, else he would be already in bliss—yet I will try, and set about it like a child in its first efforts to nurse at its mother's breast. If I cannot sufficiently believe it, it shall still not be a lie to me, and I will not say nay to it; but I will daily learn from the letter, until I can repeat it, and will do it as Well as I can. Whether it be lisped, or stammered, or stuttered, God grant that I may accomplish it in some way." This confidence we may always have, that however weak our faith God will not despise it, and that it will grow stronger by exercising it upon the Word that is sure.

### **Article Three.**

As the word "Father" requires that Sonship which we possess in faith, so the word "Our" requires that communion with our brethren which we enjoy in charity. We must pray in fellowship with all God's children, who have equally the privilege to call Him Father, but only with these. Here is a brotherhood in Jesus, who alone have the spirit of adoption whereby they cry Abba Father, and who say with one heart Our Father.

[1.] It is therefore easy to discover the reason Why we are induced to say "our" rather than "my" Father. For although each child of God can claim the Father as his own, yet

[A.] Charity must prompt the use of the plural form, because there is a band of brethren, who sympathize with each other, and toil and suffer and pray together. God has not, indeed, adopted the congregation as a whole, without adopting each individual as such. All believers are His children, not because they form parts of a whole which God leads and blesses with

parental care, but because each individual has become His child through faith in Christ Jesus. God is my Father: I would not for a moment be deprived of the comfortable assurance. He is the Father of all believers because He is the Father of each: He is ours because each of us calls Him mine. And there are times and circumstances when we are prompted to look more particularly at our individual relation to God, and thus converse with Him as “my” Father. When our own peculiar sins and sorrows are prominent in the soul, especially when in our closets we lie upon our faces wrestling with God, the singular is evidently the natural form of address. But the model prayer is one intended for all Christians and all times alike, and must therefore be adapted in its form, as it plainly is in its contents, to the spirit and wants of the many: it will satisfy our love as well as our faith, because both belong to the Christian character, for Whom the prayer was intended.

Whoever is void of the charity which is indicated by praying with a company for equal blessings upon all, is void of the faith also which is a condition of receiving blessings at all. To stand separate and alone is to manifest the Pharisaic spirit which thanks God that it is not like other men, and can therefore have no intercourse and communion with others. It is proudly looking down upon others from a supposititious eminence, while all that elevates and ennobles is wanting. It is selfishness in its most refined form: a selfishness that would not even share with others the privilege of worshiping at the Father’s throne. How could one who is conscious of this sonship go to his Father and rejoice, without even remembering that he is not the Father’s only child, but that he has many brothers and sisters who pray and rejoice with him? And embracing these all in love without dissimulation, he says, as he is taught to say, “*O ur*” Father.

[B.] And the Christian will ordinarily prefer to say “our” because of the comfort which its suggestion brings and is intended to bring to our hearts. The consciousness of the communion of saints—of having joys and sorrows, comforts and discomforts in common with others, who have the same faith and hope—is delightful beyond all description. I am not alone when I bring my praises and petitions before God: they are the praises and petitions of an innumerable company, who go to the Father with me, and who all address Him as their common Father. There is a blood-bought band whose hearts beat in perfect unison, whose joys and cares are one. With them, whether they are visibly present where I kneel, or are a thousand miles

away, I can, in the full consciousness that we are all members of one richly blest family, say "Our Father." Around the Father's throne they are all present, and although with my natural eye I can never see them all upon this earth, which our Savior's presence makes delightful, yet I am sure that they are very near, as they are very dear to my soul. Loneliness is misery: I would not be alone, all alone, not even if all that would otherwise please adorned my solitude. Communion is happiness: I would commune with God and know Him near, then, with kindred hearts who own the Father's love and trust the Father's care. A world of blessedness is expressed by this little word "our." When others share my burden it becomes lighter, when others share my joy it becomes sweeter. And the myriads who form the communion of saints in time will remain in fellowship forever: we are spared the gloomy thought of being alone even in glory: He who is "our" Father now, will not, be exclusively mine, but will remain ours in eternity. It is charitable and cheering, therefore, to address God in fellowship with the Church as "our" Father.

[2.] In the word "our" we embrace all the true children of God, who are privileged to call Him Father, and only these.

[A.] It embraces all those who are born again, and have thus received the spirit of adoption. The possession of this spirit is the only requisite to say Father, and therefore the only requisite to be embraced in the company of those who call Him ours. From this is excluded no age or sex, no color or condition. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Gal. 3:28. If this our requisite, being born of God, is found, all other circumstances, whatever their bearing may be on other questions, are of no importance here. That spirit which would give the preference to one sex over the other, or to one nation over the other, in spiritual matters, is surely not the spirit by which we cry Abba, Father; and those who look contemptuously upon a poor man, or a foreigner, or upon a slave, notwithstanding their hearing all the marks of being God's children, merely show how little they possess of that faith and {charity which the words "Our Father" are intended to express, and how much they are influenced by that Worldly-mindedness which, not receiving the things of God, has always respect to persons. Differences which are merely temporal and which must vanish when we appear in glory, or which, in any event, have no bearing upon our future welfare, must not be allowed to influence us-in our views of things eternal.

All the regenerate are really one in Christ, notwithstanding all their differences in regard to temporal circumstances, and have all one Father. Therefore the word “our” embraces all the regenerate, be their circumstances what they may. Our charity embraces them all, and cannot do otherwise. The poorest and most despised in the community is, when born of God, actually my brother as much as the wealthiest and most honored; and the poorest and most despised of these is actually wealthier and more honorable than the proudest of those who know not Christ. We are brothers when we are heirs of heaven by faith in Christ Jesus, and as brothers we all address the Father as ours.

[B.] But while this word is designed to include all the regenerate, it includes none but these. The Scriptures are far from inculcating, or in any manner countenancing, that false charity which would acknowledge all men as belonging to the brotherhood in Jesus whether they believe the truth or not; for it is certainly no charity to represent things as they are not, and thus practicing deception which is always dangerous and may prove destructive. It might, indeed, be pleasant to our natural feelings to embrace in the word “our” all those whom we have learned to esteem as our neighbors and citizens, whether they are Christians or infidels; it would be very gratifying to avoid the evil appearance of thinking ourselves better than others who have not the truth. But the question with Christians is certainly not, what is pleasant? Their concern is to let God’s will be done, whether to us it be pleasant or painful. And as regards the censure, to which fidelity to the truth may expose us, it is enough to have a conscience void of offense: God will care for all the rest, and make all things work together for our good. We should not overlook the truth that we are called to bear the cross—to follow the Lord in daily self-denial; that the world’s notion of truth and charity are not God’s; that necessity is laid upon us, to abide by God’s thoughts in opposition to the world’s and our own; and that therefore we dare not, when God and the world agree in praising charity, confound the thing praised by the former with the wholly different thing praised by the latter. To ruin a soul by avoiding the offense of rebuking its wrongs, may seem very kind in the world’s eye, but it is murderous cruelty in God’s. So it would seem very kind in us, to acknowledge all to be sons of God, and thus brethren, who say with us “Our Father,” though some deny the Son of God who bought them, others strive to accomplish by nature what can be accomplished only by grace, and thus set up brotherhoods pretendedly more liberal and less ex-



clusive than the brotherhood in Jesus, which is the Church, and others again, while professing to believe in Jesus, hold soul-destroying errors, or live in soul-destroying sins. This would seem kind in the world's eye, because it has no conception of the truth in Jesus: in reality it would be the grossest uncharitableness, because it would be using our influence to induce men to believe that they are heirs of heaven, when in reality they are children of wrath, who cannot be saved unless they repent. We pray for, but not with, the unregenerate. And just as "Father" is a name which not all are permitted to apply to God, though all might receive the right, if they would, so "our" embraces only those who have the right, though these would gladly include all men if they could. Therefore they make intercession for all men, that the number may continually increase of those who are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and who say with one heart "Our Father!"

#### **Article Four.**

Our Father is addressed as being "in heaven". It remains for us, in this article, to consider the import of this predicate.

[1.] It is not intended to assert that Our Father is not also present here upon earth. He may, indeed, be conceived to be present "in heaven" in a preeminent sense, although we cannot say precisely wherein this presence with the angels and saints in light differs from His presence here on earth. But as He is present with the good and the evil in this world, though the former enjoy and are blest in His presence, which the evil are not, on which account we speak of His being present with His people in a peculiar sense, so we can speak of His presence "in heaven" in an eminent sense, because there His nearness is eminently felt and enjoyed: the pure in heart shall see God. But He is none the less present here below. "Am I a, God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I can not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth"? saith the Lord." Jer. 23:23—4. The words of the invocation cannot be meant to conflict with this. Our heavenly Father is here among us, seeing us in all our ways, though the heavens are His throne and heavenly hosts adore Him there. God is with us in our worship and our work; in our prayers and our pastimes He is by our side; He is here on earth and sees us as being ever with us. This the Psalmist beautifully sets forth when he exclaims: "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I as-

cend up into heaven Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.” Ps. 189:7—10. He is in heaven, where is our Father’s house with its many mansions and whither our Savior has gone to prepare a place for us; but “the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Him.” 2 Chron. 2:6. The truth that God is everywhere present belongs to those which are too clear to be questioned.

And whilst the fact that God is in heaven is of great importance to us, the other fact that He is with us here on earth also is one that cannot fail to exert an influence for good likewise, where it is believingly embraced. It is intended to make us vigilant in our walk and conversation, because His watchful, but loving eye is on us everywhere, it gives us courage when dangers surround us, for God is our defense; it gives us resolution when weakness besets us, for God is our help; it gives us circumspection when our path lies along temptation, for God is our Judge. He is in heaven, but assures us still: “Lo, I am with you every day!”

[2.] The words “in heaven” suggest the important truth that our Father is no mere earthly parent, but one whose heavenly power to hear and answer us, and whose heavenly will to grant us every good gift, must inspire us with confidence. In our poor earthly weakness it is a great comfort to know that He is not afar off, but very near to us, even by our side. But if He were a mere earthly father, His nearness would fail to give us the needed support and encouragement in the great helplessness and danger which are ours. His love and power are unlimited like His being. “Our God is in the heavens, He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased.” Ps. 115:3. Our Father is in heaven, therefore He is “able to do. exceeding abundantly above all that we are able to ask or think.” Eph. 3,20. And He is as willing as He is able; for His is not the poor, scanty love and mercy of this world, but the boundless, unutterable love and mercy of heaven. “He that spared not His own Son, but freely gave Him for us all, how shall He not with Him also ’freely give us all things.” Rom. 8:32. If our thoughts of earthly fathers are affectionate, and the very name is therefore endeared to our hearts, with how much more affection should we not think of a Father who is in heaven!

And if we go with unhesitating confidence to earthly parents, with how much greater confidence should we not approach our heavenly Parent? High as the heavens are above the earth, so high is our heavenly Father’s

loving care above the loving care of our earthly parents! “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” Luke 11:13. Our Father reigns in heaven!

[3.] The words “in heaven” indicate the proper spirit of humility in which our prayers should be presented. Although we look up to a tender Parent, yet we look from the depth of sin up to the heights of holiness. “Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His Holiness.” Ps. 48:1. The thought of His greatness must guard us against the profane familiarity in approaching Jehovah, of which some persons are guilty, and in which they converse with God not as a loving child to a condescending Father, but rather as a proud man with his equal, if not his inferior. The remembrance of our meanness should keep our thoughts lowly before His excellent Majesty, and should drive away the irreverence which should speak to God as if He had ceased to be King over all since He has condescended to become our Father. “Be not rash with thy mouth and let not thy heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven and thou upon the earth.” Eccl. 5:2. The words “in heaven” remind us of the disparity between God the glorious Creator and man the miserable creature—rendered miserable by his sin—that we might never pass the invocation of the model prayer without a check upon our pride in presumption. The sinful thought that we poor worms are worthy to appear before God, must be kept distant, lest we finally lose even the privilege of calling Him Father by rejecting that Mediator through whom alone we enjoy this privilege—lest the words be applied to us: “When ye spread forth your hands I will hide my eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.” Is. 1:15.

Our God is in heaven: so should our conversation be in heaven, which is our own eternal home. Our minds should be lifted up above the tinsel trappings of this fleeting world—raised to that land of pure delight where love eternal reigns. And thus whilst we live, and labor, and suffer in our pilgrimage upon earth, we can draw daily comfort from the thought that our Father is in heaven, and there, when our course is finished we shall be also; and the words of the Psalmist will become clearer and dearer to us: “My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?” Ps. 42:3. God is our Father to guide and bless us in our journeyings here: He is our dear Father who will bring us to Himself at last “in heaven.”

# “Hallowed Be Thy Name.”

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## Article One.

The chief care of the child of God is for the honor of his Father who is in heaven. To give Him the glory due unto His name is not only his first and highest duty, but also his first and highest desire. This is a necessary consequence of his knowledge of God as the best of Beings, the source of all good. “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power, for Thou hast created all things and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” Rev. 4:11.

This is every child’s confession as soon as he knows the Father. For the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father, enables us to perceive that God is worthy to receive glory eternally, and renders us willing to glorify Him. And to the recognition of this worthiness we must needs come before we can attain the end of our creation; for “I have created him for my glory,” saith the Lord. Isa. 53:7. If our Father’s good pleasure is not our sincere wish and aim, it is manifest that we cannot be actuated by the Spirit, who never ceases to urge us to the performance of His holy will, which is that we should praise Him in word and work.—This praise endureth forever, because as the perfections of God are infinite, they can never be adequately honored by finite creatures, much less can their praise be exhausted —“Stand up and bless the Lord your God forever and ever; and blessed be Thy glorious name which is exalted above all blessing and praise.” Neh. 9:5.

Therefore the blest never grow weary in His praise, and the Seraphim “rest not day nor night, saying: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.” Rev. 4:8. And although a child of God cannot praise the Father with any degree of adequacy, yet being very jealous of his Father’s honor, he would fain do what he can with heart and tongue and life, toward attaining it. Therefore he prays and cannot do otherwise than pray: “Hallowed be Thy

Name.” This is his great aim, and therefore this is the first petition of his prayer.

The SENSE of this petition we can perhaps attain most satisfactorily by considering each word separately.

The *Name* of God, for the hallowing of which we pray, stands for God Himself. It is felt by all who use the petition believingly, that it asks for more than reverent use of the word by which the Supreme Being is designated; that it asks for the honoring of the Being as well as of the Name by which the Being is known. The “name of God” is “God,” and is used thus with such frequency in Holy Scripture, that this may be called the common acceptation of the word. For when His Name is spoken of in revelation, the reference is not to the sound of the word “God,” nor to the appearance of that word upon paper; not to the mere word in any particular; but to the exalted Being who bears that Name, to whom we apply that word. “I will praise the Lord according to His righteousness: and will sing praise to the name of the Lord most high.” Ps. 7:18. The praise is of course intended for the Lord most high, not to a mere sign by which He is designated. “The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble: the name of the God of Jacob defend thee.” It is the God of Jacob, not a mere sound by which He is represented to our minds, who is the defense of His people. “Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.” Ps. 124:8. No Christian reader would suppose that our help is in some magical power lying in the mere word “God”: our help is in Him who created all things.—“Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Acts 2:21. This is manifestly equivalent to saying that whosoever shall call upon the Lord shall be saved. These are but few examples among the many which every reader can find by consulting his Bible. A mere glance at such passages must render the identity of “God” and “His Name” perfectly clear; and from this usage it is also perfectly clear that the first petition is equivalent to “Hallowed be God!” The word “name” being used just as in Ps. 112:1: “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory.”

But when we hallow God we must of course hallow everything standing in an intimate relationship with Himself, especially those names by which we designate Him. Hence the commandment is given: “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.” So holy must God be to us, that it will pain us to hear the sign by which He is suggested to our minds used with any degree of irreverence, and of course so holy that we would not be

found guilty of taking His name in vain ourselves. To us it must always be associated with God and therefore treated and used with solemn awe. Holy and reverent is His name—is the very name by which we know Him, because He is holy Himself. Therefore we should not use the name of the Lord carelessly and flippantly, like a common word: it is hallowed—it is sacred, and must not be treated with levity. And as the name must not be used lightly, much less must it be used in cursing, swearing, conjuring, lying or deceiving, by which a holy thing is put to an unholy use. It should be hallowed by using it in prayer and thanksgiving, and using it then not thoughtlessly, but devoutly as a holy thing. We may therefore take the term name in this first petition both as a holy Being and a holy Word, and express our desire that it may be hallowed in both senses.

The word *hallow* is used synonymously with sanctify. “God’s name is indeed holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may also be sanctified by us.” But as the word is used in different senses, we must inquire in what sense it is to be understood here.

It sometimes means to render holy that which was before unholy. This is evidently its meaning in such passages as these; “Sanctify them through Thy truth,” John 17:17; “I am the Lord that doth sanctify you,” Ex. 31:13: “Both he which sanctifieth and they which are sanctified, are all of one.” Heb. 2:11. It here denotes the exercise of an influence upon the object, by which the latter is made holy. This is the natural sense, and the only one in which the word can be taken in such connection, for there is nothing to limit the meaning, since God is able to make, and man is capable of being made, holy. But this cannot be the meaning in our petition. For here the case is entirely different, inasmuch as God is the object to be sanctified. God’s name is holy in itself, and cannot be rendered so by our prayers. We cannot improve gold by gilding. “Holy and reverend is His Name.” Ps. 111:9. The meaning is therefore determined by the context to be a different one here. For only he who has no knowledge of the Holy One whatever could think for a moment, the meaning of a petition given by our Lord could be that God’s name should become holy in itself.

The word is also used frequently in the sense of treating as holy that which is indifferent in itself. Things which are incapable of essential holiness or unholiness are sometimes viewed as holy or unholy on account of their association with other things which are so in reality. Thus in the Scriptures such objects are often, by such association, spoken of as holy. “Lord,

who shall dwell in Thy holy hill?” Ps. 15:1. “Thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother.” Ex. 38:2. “The priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel.” Num. 5:17. In this sense we call the church, the altar, indeed everything associated with the Lord, who is holy, holy also; and we hallow an object by devoting it to a use in which it will always be associated with that which is essentially holy. The word evidently means something else here than in those passages which speak of making holy what is unholy in itself. The materials of which a church edifice is composed are really no holier in themselves than any others, but it is nevertheless an evidence of the profane mind ’to treat as common what has been devoted to a holy purpose. Now as far as we look upon the name of God merely as a word, it is to be hallowed in this sense. For the letters composing it or the breath pronouncing it are no holier than when used in other words; yet it is a holy name, and we pray in this petition that it may be hallowed by being always used as holy. If we are to reverence God’s sanctuary because it is associated with God, much more are we bound to reverence those names by which He is made present to our minds.

But the word has yet another meaning. It signifies also to confess the holiness of a person who is essentially holy—to acknowledge that He is so, in our own words and works. This is the sense in which it must be understood in this petition when we use the “name of God” as equivalent to “God.” This usage also occurs frequently in Scripture. “I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me.” Lev. 10:3. “Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.” 1 Pet. 3:15. “Sanctify the Lord of hosts Himself, and let Him be your fear and let Him be your dread.” Is. 8:13. We cannot suppose this to mean that we should endeavor, under the impression that God is not holy in Himself, to make Him so; nor that we are required to treat Him as holy on account of His association with some superior object that is so; both these meanings would be inconsistent with the Scripture teachings about God. We must therefore understand it as a command to confess God’s holiness in our whole conversation. So it must be understood in the petition, because the word is there also applied to God, to whom it is applicable only in this sense. “Hallowed be Thy Name” is thus a petition for grace to recognize God’s infinite holiness, and so to live as to show that we recognize it. The child of God knows his Father to be absolutely holy and his desire is that he may be enabled always to acknowledge this practically as he does theoretically; and because he knows the proneness of our hearts to detract from his

glory in order to glorify ourselves, he daily prays that God may be hallowed in our own hearts and lives and in the hearts and lives of others who call Him Our Father.

It is therefore further to be observed that the petition asks the hallowing of God's Name, not our own: "Hallowed be *Thy* Name."

"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory, for Thy mercy and for Thy truth's sake." Alas that we so often forget this, without which all our prayers are vanity. On the very threshold of the Lord's Prayer, we are taught to humble ourselves in the dust before our Maker and confess that our own glory is naught: that we must renounce self and live wholly unto Him for whose glory we are created. The very first petition shows that only the child of God can say this prayer aright, and that it was never meant for the natural man, and is therefore not adapted to him. It is not in nature to renounce self and give all glory to another. Nature prompts us to seek our own honor and labor for our own interests; only that love which we have by grace, through faith, can induce us to live for another. The child will care for the Father's honor, more than for his own; will find his own involved in the Father's; but how could we expect this in those who have not the Spirit of adoption? The prayer commences with that self-abnegation and consecration to God which is found only in believers. It is thus a daily rebuke to our lovelessness, to our self-seeking, to our cold indifference to our Father's honor. If we only laid to heart the petition as we daily offer it, if we only heartily prayed instead of saying it, how could we be so much concerned about ourselves and so little about our God! how could we be continually forgetting that all our quest of honor for ourselves must end in everlasting shame! "Hallowed be Thy Name" is the Christian prayer. "Christ died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him that died for us and rose again." 2 Cor. 5:15. "Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are His." 1 Cor. 6:20. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His Holy Name."

But this entire self-renunciation and devotion to God's glory is a desire and an inspiration, not yet, while we sojourn here, a consummation. It is characteristic of God's children that they deny themselves and follow Jesus, which the children of this world, whilst they remain such, cannot do. But the self-denial is imperfect and their consecration to God is imperfect, on which account, although their desire is to be holy, Without selfishness and



sin, they must ever confess that they have not yet attained the holiness at which they aim, and must ever pray for the remission of sin. But if the petition is a daily rebuke to our indifference in seeking God's glory, it does not drive us to despair. We are God's children, addressing Him as our dear Father; and being His children, we ask that His Name may be sanctified by us. This implies that all His children are imperfect in this, and have need to ask for divine grace to become better; and as it implies this, no one need suppose that he is not a child because he feels his weakness in this respect. The consciousness of our short-comings should only urge us to pray the more fervently that what we really wish may approximate nearer and nearer its realization, especially as we know that He who wrought in us the will to hallow His Name, not our own, will give grace to the humble, that our daily prayer and daily efforts to this end may be daily crowned with better success.

## **Article Two.**

The MEANS by which God's name is to be hallowed next requires our attention. The more anxious we are to hallow God's name, the more interest we must feel in the question: How is this to be done? " God's name is hallowed when the Word is taught pure and unadulterated, and we as the children of God lead holy lives conformably to its precepts. To this may the Lord, our heavenly Father, incline us! But he whose doctrine and life are contrary to the Word of God dishonors the name of God among us. From this preserve us, O Lord our heavenly Father!"

The purity of God's Word in preaching and teaching is requisite to hallow God's name; and just in proportion as this is adulterated by admixture with human error, does it dishonor God, by preventing souls from coming to Him, and by misrepresenting Him to men.

In the first place, it does not require an elaborate argument to prove that the truth may be so mixed with destructive error as to prevent those who hear from perceiving it. It is sometimes so effectually smothered by man's miserable imaginings as to be unable to exercise its saving efficacy, and those who might have been begotten again by the incorruptible seed of the Word, and thus been brought to glorify God as their Father, are left in their natural state, with no ability to hallow His name. When the Word of God is

taught pure, so that man may be brought to Jesus through its divine power, our Father's name will be hallowed. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Rom. 10:17. If the word preached is merely the word of man, or so far the word of man that the fragments of God's Word still remaining are not discerned, faith cannot be produced. For faith is a work of God, and cannot be effected by any human skill; and faith must have for its object a divine word, or it will be mere human belief, which never can arrive at certainty, because all human things are uncertain. Thus, if the fundamental truths of the Christian revelation are ignored in man's teaching of religion, the bearer cannot become a child of God, and of course cannot glorify God as he should. "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." Eph. 2:8. This is but too often overlooked. Men act frequently as though they supposed that the belief of human testimony is what the Scriptures mean by the word faith, which is the evidence of things not seen. If this were the case, any kind of preaching, whether it were God's or man's word, would produce faith, and then the hallowing of God's name would not require the possession of God's Word. But we cannot be said to have faith, saving faith, in anything that is not God's Word; we actually believe, in the scriptural sense of the word faith, only what we receive upon God's testimony, which is absolutely certain, therefore only what 'is certain to us, because God cannot lie. Neither can anything that is not God's Word originate faith, which man has not by nature and never can attain by his natural power. The Word of God is the cause and object, without which it is impossible to please God or honor Him. Now, although there may be errors taught which do not entirely overthrow faith, yet there are errors also which render it impossible to attain to faith where they prevail. Errors of this kind of course will not let God's name be hallowed where they prevail, as they necessarily prevent the bestowal of that grace by which alone man becomes able to hallow the Holy Name.

Secondly, even where error is not mixed with the divine Word to such an extent as to render the latter ineffectual as a means of grace, it may so weaken and conceal it as eventually to destroy some souls. It cannot be questioned that where false doctrine is preached portions of truth may remain unadulterated; and these truths may be central ones of Christianity which are sufficient to lead the souls to Christ. For it is not necessary to salvation that we be in possession of all truth, although the more we possess

the better are we armed against spiritual enemies, and the better are we supplied with the nourishment to support us on our journey to the other world. But whilst the possibility of salvation, in spite of some error which has insinuated itself into the heart cannot be denied, inasmuch as faith may remain, notwithstanding our mistakes, it can just as little be denied that every adulteration of the Word detracts from God's glory. For not only do we give Him less glory directly, when part of the truth is not embraced, because we do not meekly bow to His Word: not only do we give Him less glory indirectly because our errors, though we do not see them, may be an offense to others and lead them to honor Him less: but we are also in danger of losing entirely the ability to glorify Him, which danger is of course increased in proportion as our errors lie nearer the center and threaten to destroy the foundation of revealed truth. The error might not just at present render the truth powerless in the soul; but this is no guaranty that it will not in the future if it is uneradicated. We are not warned against errors in vain; these ultimate consequences are pernicious. It may at first sight seem a little thing to be in error on some not very essential point; but if we treat it lightly as a mere triviality, it will not be long before it makes fearful inroads upon acknowledged essentials, and renders us indifferent to the truth. It is the nature of error to eat around it. And as truth is one, every error has its influence upon the whole, even though we do not see how it affects the foundation. The tendency of error to spread and exert a corrupting influence all around it, is directly pointed out in the Word of God, and the warning is so important that it occurs twice in the same words, once with regard to practice and again with regard to doctrine. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." 1 Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9. The same warning with regard to the contagious character of error is repeated by the Apostle when he says:

"Shun profane and vain babblings, for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymeneus and Philetus, who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is passed already, and overthrow the faith of some." 2 Tim. 2:16-18.

How many who were once living to God's glory have thus made shipwreck of their faith and ceased to hallow His name is known only in heaven; but when we trace the consequences from age to age, when we look at its growth in the individual mind and its cankerous effect upon the minds of others coming in contact with it, when we observe its stupendous strides as

it moves in communities from generation to generation with ever increasing force, we have reason to think that thousands are thus turned away from God by what was called an unessential thing. Thus the name of God is dishonored among us!

Thirdly, all false doctrine leads men, in proportion to the magnitude of the error entertained, into unworthy conceptions of God and thus also prevents the hallowing of His Name. That our conception of God is just as our knowledge of Him, need only be mentioned as a self-evident truth. But as our knowledge of Him is, in its completeness, derivable only from the Holy Scriptures, every truth denied, and every error received, will of course have its effect upon our conception of Him, and render it defective and false. We cannot think of the Omnipotent as being limited in power, or of the Holy One as being capable of wickedness, without utterly dishonoring Him in our heart, in which we are exhorted by St. Peter to sanctify Him. Now, that which is palpable in the glaring instances mentioned takes place also, though in a less degree, when the error is not so plain and so glaring. Our view of God and His will and work must necessarily be false in proportion as we impute to Him designs and deeds and words, which He never entertained and spake and never could have entertained or done or spoken, because they stand in contradiction to His revelation of Himself. But they are not only necessarily false, but also necessarily degrading; because if our thoughts about God and His will are opposed to the truth as revealed in the divine Word, they must be merely human; and as man's thoughts are infinitely lower than God's thoughts, the former must dishonor Him. When we profess to teach God's Word we must either have divine or human thoughts. If we have the latter, we dishonor Him, because in our minds He will not be exalted much above man, it being very evident that man can invent nothing which rises above humanity, much as he may strive to personate Deity. And this false conception of God cannot fail to influence our action and render this dishonoring: for when man's word is put upon a level with God's, and God is thus degraded to mere man, we cannot have that profound fear and love and trust in God, which we would have if we believed what the Holy Scriptures represent Him as saying, without blending with it our dishonoring notions—It dishonors God to make Him responsible for human cogitations, which are so far beneath Him, and it dishonors Him to act upon the low conception entertained by those Who know Him only by such preaching of human notions. For if it dishonors God to represent Him as less than

He really is to ourselves, it dishonors Him doubly to teach others our unworthy conception of Him. If they believe our notions as God's Word, they will desecrate God's name in their hearts as we do ourselves; if on the other hand, they see the absurdity of imputing such evil thoughts to the perfect Being, they will either be scandalized or they will treat with contempt such a revelation. But if they presume this to be really the divine revelation found in the Holy Scriptures, as teachers of false doctrine always profess their teachings to be, they will scorn the Scriptures and never hallow the Holy Name. Indeed many persons who never take the trouble to examine for themselves what God's Word really teaches, but take the preaching of some text as a fair representation of its contents, may be presumed to have despised that Word, not because they found anything despicable in the Bible itself, but because that which was taught as God's revelation was found to be wholly unworthy of Him. And whatever is contrary to His Word must be unworthy of Him, and can often be discerned by human reason to be so; so that to teach His Word pure is a necessary means to hallow His Name. For it surely cannot tend to the sanctification of His Name to conceive Him as little as the least of errorists may conceive Him to be, and to represent His truth as trifling as some of the false teachers represent it to be. It is very painful to hear persons sometimes promulgate the wildest vagaries and grossest absurdities in the name of God, dishonoring God's name by the low notions of Him which they convey and by the mockery which they occasion.

## **Article Three.**

In order to hallow God's Name we must not only have the Word of God pure, but also live holy lives conformably to its precepts. For he whose life as well as he whose doctrine, is contrary to the Word of God, dishonors the name of God among us. If we should confess God to be holy, to the honor of His Name, we must do so in deed as well as in word, otherwise our words will be considered as insincere. To hallow God's name a holy life is necessary: directly, because all obedience to His Word honors and all disobedience dishonors Him in itself; indirectly, because holiness leads others to honor, and unholiness to dishonor His great Name.

In the first place, a life ordered in conformity with the Word of God praises Him directly. For every act by which we show our reverence for the Lord of all, is equivalent to the verbal proclamation that God is holy and greatly to be feared. Christians are a “chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that we should show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.” 1 Pet. 2:9. He who denies himself and consecrates himself, with all his powers and possessions, to God, declares that God is worthy to receive all honor and glory; he sanctifies God in his heart and in his life; he gives unto God all the praise, not only in word, but in deed.—The name of God is not sanctified as it should be when we only speak of His holiness, even though we do it reverently; but we do not permit that holiness to affect our thoughts and lives. Something is indeed done towards hallowing God’s Name when the truth is declared and maintained: we hallow His name ourselves to some extent thus, and we teach others to hallow it. The confession" of the truth is by far the most important in glorifying God. But to the full extent to which we are called to sanctify His name and pray in our petition for its sanctification, we hallow the divine name only when holiness of life is added to purity of doctrine. The fulfillment of the petition therefore requires a life of piety such as the Word of the Lord prescribes.

Thus the renunciation of every work of the flesh is demanded. For as long as we obey the evil promptings of our old man, we are giving this the preference over the Lord our God and thus dishonoring Him. We practically declare that to be best which we prefer to follow. “Know ye not that he to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obediences unto righteousness?” Rom. 6:16. Choosing sin as our master in preference to the Lord that bought us, is of course confessing the superiority of the former and thus grossly dishonoring God. To hallow God’s name we must therefore not be servants of sin. “They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” Gal. 5:24. This we should ever bear in mind when we pray, lest we should fail to pray in sincerity. It requires us to renounce all our worldliness and selfishness, which still continue to cleave to us though we rejoice in the love wherewith God has loved us in our Redeemer. We all admit that God’s name is rather to be honored than any other. And yet in the conflict between the flesh and the spirit, which all Christians experience, how frequently does it seem as if the former were preferred! It is dreadful to think

of giving Satan and his malicious counsels the preference over God and His righteous precepts. Let us pray sincerely that God's name may be hallowed, that we may not, while God beseeches us by the blood which has purchased us, treat with slighting scorn or open contempt His gracious will, put Him to an open shame: that we may not, by resistance to His Holy Spirit and careless persistence in evil, bring dishonor on His Name.

And not only should we not bring dishonor upon it, but we should hallow it with all our powers. Even if we should yield ourselves wholly to His service, without a single act of selfishness or worldliness, our actual praise of His name would be wholly inadequate; His boundless mercies and blessings are feebly praised by the best that our hearts can bring. But we are far from being even what we might be, from bringing such praises in life as lie within our limited powers. Compared with, His great worth it is a mere nothing that we can do, and of that which is possible we leave the most undone. The hallowing of His name demands therefore our incessant striving to approach nearer the mark of what may be done. Not only do we not serve the devil; this, too, were too little; but we serve the Lord as best we can—recognizing His name as very holy, and treating it as such by the endeavor to be holy in all manner of conversation, because the Lord commands: “Be ye holy, for; I am holy,” nothing short of holiness must satisfy us. Whether we eat or drink or whatsoever we do, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus and to the glory of His name, must be our aim; to hallow His name not only in some things and at some times, but absolutely to hallow His name. This is our petition. This we are to strive to perform. All that we do, whether in our temporal or spiritual calling, must tend to this great end, which is the end of our lives. We praise Him by fidelity in all our work; in performing duties referring to time, and in discharging those immediately pertaining to eternity. But as soon as worldly things become an end in themselves, the great end is thrust aside and we dishonor God. So our petition cannot be accomplished whilst we live in careless idleness and indifference; to live and to labor, and to do all for the glory of God, is what it implies, and what, in it, we ask for grace to perform.

But, secondly, our works must be in conformity with the Word of God, because of their influence in inducing others to hallow the holy Name. We thus hallow it indirectly also. And we never fulfill the petition unless we do all we can to hallow God's name and have it hallowed. Professing to be the children of God, we must expect that our lives will be looked upon as an

exhibition of our thoughts about God. Our lives are a confession of faith; not so plain, not so full as our verbal confession, because our weakness prevents our deeds from being adequate to our designs, but still a confession. Strict integrity, tender conscientiousness in the maintenance of right and the resistance of wrong will show that we walk before God as the Holy One; carelessness and recklessness will tell the world that we do not deem our Father to be of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Hence the apostle says: “Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonorest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you.” Rom. 2:23, 24. As God’s name is dishonored by us when we profess to be His children and obey not His Word, so it is honored when we order our conversation aright according to His holy will. The same principle which is expressed by the apostle is found also in the words of our Savior: “Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light to all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Matt. 5:15, 16. This not only asserts that those who may immediately be benefited by the Christian’s labors of love will bless God to whom all praise is given for the ability and means of doing good; but also that spectators of such works will learn to know and praise the Father, whose goodness and mercy is manifested in the meekness and mercy of his children. For if the child’s disinterested deeds win men’s admiration, the Father’s name who taught the child to labor thus, must be honored also. And that our lives will either honor or dishonor God, we may be assured. For if we profess not to be His children, we are withholding from Him that honor which is justly due—we are robbing God of praises which we ought to bring. But if we do profess to be born of Him, we will bring this further dishonor upon Him, when we live unholy lives, that He will be judged, by those who know Him not, from the deportment of His children, and thus He will not seem worthy of glory and honor.

But to render our good deeds effectual in drawing men to God by directing their attention to Him as He has revealed Himself in His Word, they must necessarily be performed in His name. Good deeds done in our own name may induce people who see them to praise us, but cannot lead them to praise our God—Whatever we do in the strength of fallen nature, or profess in the name of humanity, reflects credit upon this and upon nothing else.



To do good deeds in man's own name, is mere hypocrisy when God's grace is rejected, because the heart remaining evil the deed cannot be good. Therefore the apostle says: "Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." Col. 3:17. This implies that we should not stand in the world as isolated individuals doing all the good that we can, but that we should confess Christ in the Christian congregation, that all our deeds may be known to be performed by us as Christians, that is, in the name of Jesus. Standing aloof from the confessors of Christ, that is, from the Church, we do not fairly profess to do all in the name of our Savior, even though we should not wish to be thought of as doing aught by our own strength. It implies also, that we should not, as we love God's glory and hallow His name, labor in the cause of virtue and holiness in the name of any association, which does not professedly do all in the name of Jesus—which is not His association. To be striving to do good on earth in such a way as to have the honor of the good performed accrue to human nature, inasmuch as the good is not done in the character of Christians, is one of the most grievous of all sins, as it seems like a systematic scheme to rob God of His glory. How sad that Christian men do not see this, and seeing it renounce those plans of Satan by which he would honor human nature and disparage grace, renounce all humanitarian schemes as mere rottenness, and cling to the Church of the living God, which gives him all the glory for all the good performed on earth. Without this we never hallow God's name as we should.

Thus we perceive that our petition entreats our heavenly Father that all ministers and teachers of the Word may teach it pure and unadulterated, and that all who have the truth may believe and practice it; that the number of those who would glorify God may be increased, and that those who strive to honor Him may receive new vigor day by day to compass their end; that He may be revered by submission to His Word in faith and practice—this we ask when we humbly pray: Hallowed be Thy Name.

# “Thy Kingdom Come.”

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## Article One.

WE HAVE SEEN that the name of God cannot be hallowed by us unless our depraved nature, by which He is continually dishonored, is overcome, and a right spirit is renewed within us. By nature we are all children of wrath, because born in the bondage of sin, of which we remain servants until the Gospel sets us free.

“Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.” John 8:34.

“Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness?” Rom. 6:16.

To be delivered from the miserable dominion of Satan and brought under that of Him to whom we are created, is therefore a legitimate object of desire and prayer; and to acknowledge the Lord as King, and subject themselves more and more to His gracious will, must be the Christians’ earnest aim. Our Savior accordingly teaches us to express this desire in the words of the second petition “Thy kingdom come”—a desire that God and not Satan, may be King over us. To understand this aright we must consider the nature of this kingdom, in what sense we pray for its coming, and finally when it comes.

### I. The Nature of the Kingdom

The nature of the kingdom, for whose coming we pray, must first be determined. The Lord is King forever; but this royal power is exercised differently according to the different spheres and purposes in which and for which it is exercised. He rules over all; His kingdom is immensity. But the saints in heaven are ruled otherwise than those on earth, and those who are

followers of Jesus here in faith are again ruled differently from those who deny the Lord and reject His saving truth and grace. Those who cheerfully come and go as He bids them, because His mercy has brought their will into conformity with His own, are of course led by a different power and possessed of different gifts from those who renounce His loving sway and submit only where force compels them. And of those who do acknowledge His will to be their good and happiness, and who therefore always strive to conform to it, some are still in circumstances in which they cannot yet enjoy the full blessing to which they have become heirs, while others already have it in blissful possession; some are here, where “it doth not yet appear what they shall be,” and some on high, “where there is fulness of joy and pleasures forevermore.” Considering the two divisions of saints whose titles are the same, but who differ in the use which they are capable of making of their inheritance, as two branches of God’s kingdom, and those who deny Jesus as another and entirely distinct branch, this kingdom is threefold: it embraces 1) all creatures, who are necessarily under the King of all and are absolutely subject to His will; 2) those human beings, who, by submitting to His gracious will in those things respecting which they were left free to obey or disobey the King, have received the spirit of adoption through the merits of Christ and are journeying to their Father’s house; and 3) the departed souls who, having submitted to the Prince of peace while they sojourned here, are now enjoying the blessings of heaven. This threefold kingdom is usually described as the kingdom of power, the kingdom of grace, and the kingdom of glory. This distinction is by no means unimportant here, because we must determine in which of these aspects we pray for the advent of God’s kingdom. To assist us in doing this we will view it more closely.

[1.] The kingdom of power is so called because God, the “King of all earth,” rules over all by His almighty power, and has done so from the beginning. The will of His subjects is not consulted, that His laws may be conformed to their varied wishes: whether they are willing or unwilling affects not His government in the least. What He has unconditionally willed is done in spite of every opposition. That this unconditional will does not extend to all things is presupposed in the threefold division of His government; the fact that it does not is the fundamental one upon which the division is based. But it does extend over all the material creation, for which reason it is sometimes called the kingdom of nature. The sun and moon and stars obey His word; the earth and air and sea, and all that is in them, exist

and move at His command. Resistance is vain. The creatures' will may indeed rebel against the Creator's dispensations; they are not compelled to think and feel in accordance with His will; yet all their rebellion and all their care cannot make one hair white or black, or change the slightest event in His wise and wholesome government.

Even they who resist are governed as it seems good in His sight, notwithstanding their opposition: His power crushes every impediment in the way of His will. The creatures are strong and active when He wills it, and when it pleases Him they sicken and die. He exerts omnipotence to put to naught the counsels of His adversaries, because "the Word of the Lord is right, and all His works are done in truth." While He will not destroy men's personality by constraining their minds to submit to His merciful plans, He will not deny His holiness by permitting men's wickedness and meanness to divert Him from the fulfillment of His good pleasure. Let man fight against God if He will; God will use no compulsion to remove the enmity; but the fight must end in man's defeat, because God will use force to accomplish His purposes and prevent the accomplishment of those of His adversaries. "Our God is in heaven, He hath done whatsoever He pleased." Neither earth nor hell is able to resist.

"By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the hosts of them by the breath of His mouth. He gathereth the water of the sea together as a heap; He layeth up the depths in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke and it was done, He commanded and it stood fast. The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to naught; He maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations." Ps. 33:4—11.

"He ruleth by His power; His eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves." Ps. 66:7.

The Lord is absolute King over all.

It is but an evidence of our wholly inadequate conception of God as the absolute King when we consider Him bound to a certain order in the universe over which he has no control. From this false conception arises the objection which is frequently urged against prayer, so far as it refers to the kingdom of nature. Here God will do, it is said, as seemeth Him good, notwithstanding all our wishes, and no prayers can change His purposes or plans. And this is undoubtedly true. But it is inferred from this that all

prayers referring to this kingdom of nature must necessarily be utterly useless, because if they are in accordance with His will that which is asked will be done just as well without our petitions, but if they are against His will, no petitions will secure it. And this is undoubtedly false. It is perfectly correct to say that all our prayers will accomplish nothing against His will, who alone can answer prayer. But it is false to say that blessings which are not against His will are as certainly attained without petitions. Even if prayer were of no benefit to us in the way of securing those gifts for which we ask, it would still be of inestimable value as a thankful communion with Him who knows what we have need of before we ask Him; and it would be wholly unworthy of man to take these gifts, day after day, from His bountiful hands, without ever asking or thanking for them. It is possible for a child to live without ever saying a word to its loving parents; for these also know what their children need before they ask; but it is mere heartlessness to urge this as an argument against all intercourse between parents and their offspring. The intercourse is a benefit to the child, even though it procures nothing more than would have been possessed without it. And it is possible that a good man of abundant means would be willing to spend his wealth upon the poor in his neighborhood and give in rich supplies to all that come; but it is very meanness to urge this as a reason why they should never ask and never thank for aught, because they would receive it at all events without such petitions. Should we then never speak to God and never ask a single blessing because we know Him to be a cheerful Giver? The very heartlessness of the objection must expose it to every good man's scorn. But it is not true, either, that we will secure everything which is bestowed in answer to our prayers just as well without prayer.

For it may be the Father's good pleasure to give many a good gift to a thankful child, which His justice and His love will withhold from the "brutish man." Indeed, it is His good pleasure. "Ye have not because ye ask not." James 4:2. And this surely required no perpetual changing of the laws of nature, which is but another name for His uniform government in the kingdom of power. He fixed these laws, and fixed them according to His own pleasure. And this pleasure never changes. From eternity it was the same as now. But it always pleased Him to withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly. Ps. 84:11. It is just as much a law of His kingdom that all things should work together for good to them that love Him, as it is that the year shall be crowned with His goodness. The faith and prayers of

God's people are foreseen from eternity, and are embraced in the whole plan of His Providence from eternity. It therefore requires no change of His plan to answer them: it would require a change not to answer them. He controls all things, and rules them for His people's welfare, their prayers being always heard.

Thus the kingdom of power is controlled by an irresistible force which crushes all opposition. But the exercise of this force is governed by a divine will which does only right, which can endure no wrong. This holy will always has respect to the wishes of intelligent creatures so far as these are right. If all men loved the good and hated the evil, omnipotence would never be exerted against them. But many have pleasure in wickedness, and many strive to thwart God's plans. Their minds are not compelled to yield, but their counsels, which would impede or hinder the divine counsels, are put to naught. Men are allowed to make plans as wickedly as they will, but they can accomplish only what God's will permits. His dealings with His rational are therefore entirely different from His dealings with His irrational creatures. He uses irresistible force to compass His ends, but He leaves the mind unconstrained, using here the power of sweet persuasion only. Those who allow themselves to be drawn upward and led onward by such cords of love, form what is denominated the kingdom of grace.

## **Article Two.**

It is characteristic of the kingdom of grace, as distinguished from the kingdom of power, that it is governed not by constraint but by grace. Its subjects are thus voluntarily, not necessarily such: anyone can renounce the Prince of peace and refuse to have Him reign over him: none can be a subject unless he permit the Holy Spirit to take away his rebellious heart and give him one of meek submission. Here no almighty physical power is used to put man's will to confusion, and show him that against the arm of the Lord no human opposition can stand. Unless a man be born of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. The powers of grace, by which men are born into this happy kingdom, are not, indeed, merely logical; sinners are not saved simply by a series of arguments which they cannot refute, and to which they must therefore necessarily submit: myriads are convinced who never will submit. The power is regenerating; it renders the mind willing—

it makes it capable of being swayed by divine reason and holy motives. Our blessed Lord does not, by an act of His omnipotence, render the rebel, who is dead in sin, a believer, who is alive to righteousness. Such an almighty act would annihilate the sinful being and create another, which would have no identity with the former. He entreats us:

“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Matt. 11:28—30.

It is urged upon men that they may change that restless condition in which they are by nature, for one of perfect rest in Jesus. That here there is no irresistible force of any kind exerted is plain from our Savior’s words:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.” Matt. 23:37.

This is accordingly a kingdom of whose subjects not merely external obedience is required; it is one in which men become subjects only by faith in the Redeemer, whose grace is their hope. “God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16.

It is evident that this kingdom does not include all the subjects of the kingdom of power, though all the subjects of the former belong also to the latter. All men, yea all creatures, are subject to God’s government, and cannot be otherwise; but only those who will, that is, only those who believe in Jesus, are subject to His grace. That these subjects are not recognizable as such by the natural eye is manifest. For the marks of membership in this gracious kingdom are internal altogether, although there are external marks by which the presence of the kingdom is discernible. The means of grace are administered, and men are born again, becoming thus subjects of God’s infinite grace, according to the promise:

“As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please and it shall prosper in the things Whereto I sent it.” Is. 55:10, 11.

And those who have embraced the grace proffered in the appointed means, always manifest their faith unto God’s glory and man’s welfare, according to our Savior’s requirement:

“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.” Matt. 10:32, 33.

But whilst the duty of confession is very plain, it is also very plain that other motives besides those of sincere faith in Christ may induce persons to make such confession and secure those earthly advantages which are sometimes connected with the assumption of the Christian name. Fashion, or greed of gain, or habit, or honor, may prompt some to confess what they do not heartily believe. Hence our Lord declares: “Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Matt. 7:21. And it is just as obvious that mere natural powers, with mere natural motives, may suffice to restrain from gross outbreaks of iniquity, and even induce men to perform works which, as far as the external appearance is concerned, must be pronounced good. But with these professions and performances a person may yet be far from the kingdom of God, internally resisting all grace. Hence St. Paul says:

“Knowing that man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no man be justified.” Gal. 2:16.

Neither the confession nor the good works, though both of them are necessary products of faith, is an infallible Sign that men are subjects of the kingdom of grace, because both may proceed from some other motive than faith. In other words, there are hypocrites in the world, some consciously and obstinately so, some partially deceiving themselves and partially also others. Hence the kingdom of grace, which is the Church of Christ, is often



called invisible; that is, although we can ascertain its existence among us by the administration of the means of grace, which always have the desired effect upon some at least, yet we cannot tell upon which individuals, among those who profess to believe the truth unto salvation, this effect has actually been produced, inasmuch as the only infallible sign is internal; and although we see Christians as well as others, their bodies being Visible, yet we do not see them as Christians, there being no external mark rendering them different, and distinguishable, at sight, from other men. Hence the Scriptures declare:

“The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal—the Lord knoweth them that are His, and—Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” 2 Tim. 2:19.

The Lord, and no one else, can read the heart and tell who is really His. For the kingdom of grace is the company of confessors, who may not all actually belong to the kingdom, but among whom the true members are always found.

With reference to His kingdom of grace our Savior says: “My kingdom is not of this world.” John 18:36. The meaning of this is very apparent from what has already been said. It is no mere association for mutual improvement in man’s strength, nor a community governed by physical forces and human laws. Its object and means are wholly different from those of a civil government, not only in degree, but also in kind. The model of the state is the kingdom of power; it attains its end by compulsion, if it cannot attain them by persuasion. But just on this account it can have nothing to do with the heart and the intellect, which cannot be compelled. The state has no business with our opinions and motives, so long as our lives are quadrate with the law: it concerns the government not to know why we obey, if we only obey. And if sometimes the motive is carefully inquired into when a transgression has been committed, it is not that the motive, if evil, may be suitably punished, but it is that the act may be fairly measured and crime and accident properly distinguished. In the kingdom of grace not the act, but the motive, is the principal thing. It is not like the kingdoms of the world.

“When He was demanded of the Pharisees when the kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said: The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo here, or Lo there! for behold the kingdom of God is within you.” Luke 17:20, 21.

It is therefore ruled by the spirit, not by the sword, which can exert no power over the spirit. Hence it is plain, also, that the kingdom of grace is not and cannot be confined to any particular country, or within a particular boundary, like the kingdom of this world, but pertains to “all nations,” without in any way interfering with the “powers that be” among them. Hence, further, it spreads not by wars and conquests: for never did an artillery convince a soul of the truth: but comes in peace and diffuses peace through the powers of the Holy Spirit, moving the human spirit by the power of truth. Hence, finally, it acknowledges no differences of rank and title to gain acceptance with the King, for “we are all one in Christ Jesus.” It is that kingdom of our Lord by which He sets up His kingdom in human hearts, ruling within them, not by coercion, but by love, until every enemy is put in subjection under their feet, and they are prepared for our Father’s house. Neither the means nor the ends of this kingdom are of this world. The means are not physical or intellectual strength, nor anything devised by human wit or human skill, but the Word and the Sacraments, which are God’s appointments in which the Spirit is pleased to work. And although the law of love, to which the subjects of this kingdom cheerfully submit, requires to live as children of God here in time, for God’s glory and our neighbor’s good, yet the end of our faith is the salvation of the soul and God’s glory in eternity.

When the salvation, unto which we are called, is fully obtained above, we have reached the *Kingdom of Glory*, which is the object of our ardent hopes and fervent prayer in the kingdom of grace.

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in His throne.” Rev. 3:21.

That this must be a throne of glory we all know right well. Everlasting glory surrounds us, and in that glory we shall see Him and appear with Him, if we continue steadfast in the faith, as subjects in the kingdom of grace, until the evening come. “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.” Col. 3:4. Hence the Psalmist exults in the assurance: “Thou wilt guide me with Thy counsel and afterward receive me

to glory.” Ps. 73:24. There is then, manifestly, a kingdom whose subjects are with the King in glory, and which differs, therefore, from the kingdom of power and that of grace.

The subjects of this kingdom are angels and the spirits of just men made perfect. “Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and the innumerable company of angels.” Heb. 12:22. But there are sainted men and women also in this heavenly city, for the apostle proceeds: “To the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.” To be finally admitted into this glorious kingdom is the believer’s joyful hope. “The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” 2 Tim. 4:18. And the hope of that unspeakable glory always cheers the believer upon his way, as the only condition of its attainment is not some unattainable holiness and impossible merit, but simply earnest perseverance in faith until the end. “Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee the crown of life.” Rev. 2:10.

As also all the subjects of the kingdom of grace are also under the kingdom of power, so will they all, if they persevere unto death, be subjects in the kingdom of glory. The kingdom of grace is merely temporal; it is established, in the mercy of God, to prepare His intelligent creatures for future glory. When heaven is once attained the means of grace, by which the saints are governed on earth, will be no longer necessary, as they will there be made perfect. The kingdom of glory is the ocean into which the kingdom of grace is continually pouring its streams. Whenever a soul leaves Christ’s gracious kingdom upon earth for a better land, it enters Christ’s glorious kingdom in heaven. All are in the kingdom of power; according to God’s will all should be in the kingdom of grace; all those who submit to the guidance of His grace will be in the kingdom of glory. This is the kingdom of grace perfected, having, so far as human beings are concerned, the same subjects though not at the same time. The angels have no need to pass through any preparatory stages to make them meet for glory, and they need not, therefore, bear the cross upon earth before they can wear the crown in heaven. But for ruined man this is necessary. We are by nature only meet for hell and must be made meet for heaven. For this we are meet when we have received the grace of God by faith in the name of Jesus, and are thus admitted into the kingdom of grace to be preserved for the kingdom of

glory. The kingdom of grace and that of glory are in this respect one, that the former is merely the vestibule to the latter. Hence the words “kingdom of heaven” are used to designate both. It is the kingdom of heaven, whether its subjects are yet on earth or already in heaven. It is heaven’s power ruling in the heart even before the heart has attained its heavenly home. It is heaven’s power preparing the soul on earth for a place in heaven’s glory. It is the same power ruling us blissfully when we have been taken from this place of trial below to the place of rest above. But in heaven we are no longer exposed to conflicts for the trial of our faith, and have, therefore, no further need of those means which are given us to strengthen us for the trial here. The Church on earth militant and the Church in heaven triumphant, is one, though the circumstances of the members are very different; the kingdom of heaven here below, which is the kingdom of grace, and the kingdom of heaven above in bliss, which is the kingdom of glory, is one in substance, though different in the accident of time and place.

## **Article Three.**

We pray that the kingdom of God may come. In what sense we pray for this is next to be considered. The knowledge of the nature of this threefold kingdom will render us material assistance in the inquiry. We shall consider the question in its bearing upon each aspect of the kingdom.

With regard to the kingdom of power it is manifest that the kingdom of God has come and will remain without our prayers; nay more: it has come to us and will be over us without our prayers. There is, indeed, an important sense in which we may still pray with reference to the kingdom of power, but the petition is manifestly not intended to refer especially to this. Our object is not to ask God to assume the reins of government over the universe; for from everlasting He has been King over all, and shall be to everlasting. He who made all things has also governed them since their creation. Viewed, then, with reference to the kingdom of power our petition merely lays before God the humble request that He would make us contented with His government, and thankful for the manifold blessings which He confers upon us. In this respect the meaning of the petition might be expressed in these words: Let us recognize Thy government everywhere, submit with

resignation and gratitude to all Thy doings, and praise Thy might which is tempered with mercy evermore.

As regards the kingdom of grace, we pray for its coming in a double respect, namely, that it may be established where it is not, and that it may be confirmed and strengthened where it has been established. Both these points imply that such a kingdom exists.

The kingdom of God has indeed come already. The time to which the prophecies respecting a kingdom that shall never be destroyed refer, has long since come, and the everlasting kingdom has been set up. This is a truth which the Scriptures do not leave at all questionable. "The time is fulfilled," says our blessed Lord, "and the kingdom of God is at hand." Mark 1:15. This does not refer to the kingdom of glory, as though the meaning were that as the Christian dispensation, which is the last, has now been given, the time of God's appearing to judge the world is at hand. For other passages render the reference to the kingdom of grace indisputable. "Behold the kingdom of God is within you." "If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you." Luke 17:21; Matt. 12:25. Coincident with this is the uniform teaching of the apostles, who always speak of the kingdom of grace as having come. The Father "hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." Col. 1:13. Hence we do not pray that God would hasten the time, when His gracious kingdom should be set up by His Son. That time has already come, and that kingdom is already set up without our prayers. But the subjects of this kingdom are comparatively few, while it is intended to be universal, and those who are subjects are but partially pervaded by its holy influence, while its object is to permeate them thoroughly. The petition, therefore, requests its coming to people who are still under the dominion of Satan, and its more complete advent where it has already gained a foothold.

The kingdom of grace is intended to embrace the whole of our fallen race, wherefore the Church, which is this kingdom, is, in the Creed, called the universal or catholic Church.

"Because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them." 2 Cor. 5:14—15.

The salvation, by the introduction of which the kingdom is established, is as broad as the curse. And not only did Christ die for all, but it is still God's will that all should share the merits of His death. He "will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." 1 Tim. 2:4. And in accordance with this merciful will are the arrangements for evangelizing the world. "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Matt. 28:19. But there are millions yet who have not been brought into this heavenly kingdom. For these we pray in our petition, that the dominion of sin may cease among them, and the reign of grace commence within them. It is a missionary prayer, which entreats blessings upon all who are doing the work of an evangelist among the erring, which implores that the word of God proclaimed may have free course and be glorified, and that many subjects may be won for the Prince of peace. Then, although the kingdom of God is already among us, there are yet many blood-bought souls who are not brought into it, and we pray that to them the kingdom may come, as it has come to us. It is a prayer for the spread of the Gospel in all lands, for its extension into every heart in every land.

But there is work to be done in Christian as well as in heathen lands—Where the kingdom has already come, there is still room for a deeper foundation in the heart. The ruling power of the Holy Spirit, bringing our evil nature into subjection, may indeed have been acknowledged in our souls, and the dominion of grace thus begun. But there is still much which has not been brought into subjection. Many a rebellious thought and untamed passion, many an unlawful desire and unloving feeling, remains within us.

"Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more."

"Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." 2 Thess. 3:1; 2 Pet. 3:18.

We are evidently not yet perfect. It is a mark of spiritual pride and a gross self-delusion, to think that we are. Our sanctification is a gradual process, which is constantly going forward, but never completed in this world. The

flesh still remains in the best of believers, causing their life to be one of conflict with sin in them and around them.

“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary, the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” Gal. 5:17.

This is just what the Scriptures testify in various places. “To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not.” “So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.” “There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.” Rom. 7:18 and 25; 8:1. The consequence is not the yielding to the law in the members which war against the law of the mind, but walking after the spirit in spite of all the opposition on the part of the flesh, is the gradual destruction of the carnal forces. Hence the words of the apostle: “They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with all the affections and lusts.” Gal. 5:24. That this crucifixion is not completed in a moment, but requires our whole life, for its completion, is undeniable. For although Christians have crucified the flesh, they are constantly exhorted to crucify it again and again. Therefore regeneration, when taken in a wide sense, in which it includes sanctification, is also a gradual progress, extending through the whole course of life, and completed only when our course is finished. The new man, which is wrought in us when we believe, can only fully appear as such when the flesh, which dims its glory, shall be put entirely away in death. “It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but when He shall appear, we shall be like Him.” 1 Jn. 3:2.

Now, against the evil still remaining in us there is an abundance of room for the operation of grace. Every Christian is called upon to be a missionary against that which is heathenish. “Not as though I had already attained it, or were already perfect.” We pray that God’s kingdom of grace may come to make us more earnest in doing the work, and more patient in suffering the shame and pain of Christianity. We pray that its hallowing influences may be spread over all our business and enjoyments, over all our interests and institutions, until we do all things in the name of Jesus. They who see no propriety in our praying for the advent of God’s kingdom of grace, when the church is once established and flourishing among us, are surely very careless observers of the actual state of the Christianity here below, or very ignorant of the Scripture ideal placed before us. When there is any weak-

ness in faith, or coldness in charity, or dimness in hope, there is need for the petition that God's kingdom may come to make us more strong, more confident, more loving, more joyous, more active. And where Christianity has not yet, in the community, thoroughly pervaded science and art, business and amusement, politics and industry, State and school, our ardent desire, and consequently our fervent petition must be: "Thy kingdom come!"

With respect then to the kingdom of grace our petition asks that heathens at home and abroad may be brought under the blessed dominion of the Gospel, and that all that is unsanctified in Christian hearts and communities may be brought into the happy submission to the great King, that glory to God and good will to men may be the only motive of thought and action in all our relations. And of asking this the child of God can never grow weary: it is merely asking that the means of grace may accomplish that saving object for which they were sent, and thus the people may be prepared to receive the King of Glory at His second coming to judge the earth. And for the coming of this King, for the advent of the kingdom of glory we also pray in this petition. This is the end of all our labors and hopes, according to the promise of the Lord:

"In my Father's House are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am ye may be also." John 14:2, 3.

And to long for the kingdom of this glory is the characteristic of all profound piety. Not because Christians are unwilling to bear the heat and the burden of the day while it lasts, or because they murmur against tribulations, through which they must enter into the kingdom, but because they would evermore be with the Lord, which is far better. "Thy kingdom come" is the Christian's response to our Lord's words: "Surely, I come quickly." It is but another form of his: "Amen: even so, come, Lord Jesus." Rev. 22:20. Those who deem that the appearance of our King in His glory is rather to be deprecated than prayed for, manifest but little of that ardent love for Jesus, and that heavenly-mindedness, which belong to the sincere believers in the Lamb of God, and which prompts the soul to long for perpetual communion with Him in heaven. True disciples always "love His appearing" "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." Tit. 2:13. And for this they have abundant reason: for



“when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” 1 Pet. 5:4. In the same manner death is also an object of desire, because it introduces the Christian into glory: “I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.” Phil. 1:23. Therefore the Christian prays earnestly, with reference to the kingdom of glory: “Thy kingdom come.”

“The kingdom of God will come, indeed, without our prayers, but we pray in our petition, that it may also come unto us.” We should never grow weary of praying for its advent. For if we do not pray we shall be found rebels against His grace, and must therefore be excluded from His glory and crushed! by His power, because prayerlessness is disobedience to the Holy Spirit’s promptings. The Church will prosper though we oppose it, for some will submit to her blessed means; and the Lord will come in His glory even though we dread it: but we pray that this kingdom of grace may come unto us, that we may appear with Him when He manifests His glory.

## **Article Four.**

When does the kingdom of God come? In answering this question we will not find it necessary to refer particularly to the kingdom of power, inasmuch as this has fully come, and exists over all from everlasting to everlasting. Nor need we give special attention to the kingdom of glory, which comes only to those who are prepared for it by membership in the kingdom of grace. This latter, therefore, we will keep before our minds in considering the question proposed, which will then be equivalent to the question: When does the kingdom of grace come?

It comes when God gives us His Holy Spirit. By nature our hearts are rebellious, and will not have this king to reign over us.

“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” Rom. 8:7.

No series of arguments and inducements can overcome this hostility; no intellectual or moral training, based only upon man’s natural powers, can remove this enmity. For no education, independently of supernatural aids, can change our depraved nature: man cannot give what man does not possess.

“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” John 3:3. Our whole mind and heart must be changed, as the Psalmist prays: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me,” for “Behold I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me.” Ps. 51:10, 5. This can be done only by the Holy Spirit.

“As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry: Abba, Father.” Rom. 8:14, 15.

It is thus that our natural self-will is overcome, and we are rendered freely obedient to God’s grace.

“If the Spirit of Him that raised up Christ from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.” Rom. 8:11.

Thus the gift of the Spirit is declared to be the first and chief requisite for the coming of God’s gracious kingdom.

The bestowal of the Holy Spirit does not render us children of God apart from the redemption through our adorable Redeemer. It is thus that that which has been acquired for us is communicated to us. The Holy Spirit imparts salvation because Christ purchased salvation for us. The marriage supper is all ready in virtue of our Savior’s glorious person and work; the Holy Spirit leads us to it, conquering our opposition and giving us strength in our weakness, that we may eat and drink and never die. “This is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.” John 6:29. The Spirit’s work is entirely dependent upon Christ’s work. It is true that He influenced men unto salvation before God was manifest in the flesh. But the redemption through Jesus extends back to the beginning, as it reaches forward to the end of time. He is “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;” Rev. 13:8; “neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Acts 4:12. There could be no salvation without Him, for we are all “children of wrath by nature,” and can be delivered from this wrath only by “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.”

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” Gal. 3:14.

Therefore our Lord says of the Holy Spirit:

“He shall glorify me: for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I that He shall take of Mine and shall show it unto you.” John 16:14, 15.

The Holy Ghost wrought faith in human hearts long before the Redeemer, in whom we must believe unto salvation, appeared on earth in the flesh. But His light and life was spread further abroad when the fullness of time was come and God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law. Pentecost could not come with its marvels until our Savior’s merciful mission was finished and He was again seated at the right hand of God the Father, the Human Nature sharing the majesty which the Divine had from eternity. From His fullness we all receive, and grace for grace; and this reception is through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

The gift of the Spirit is again conditioned upon the use of the appointed means, which are called means of grace. Our petition implies the request that these may be given and preserved, because without them the Holy Spirit is not given and the kingdom of grace does not come. He comes by the Word of God and the holy Sacraments, and not otherwise, because these are the divinely appointed means through which alone, ordinarily, God has been pleased to bestow His gifts. True, He is not bound to these: He might work in other ways. But to them He has bound us: and we must not hope for, as we have no reason to believe in, the Spirit’s coming by any other means. He does not come to heathens whom the Word of God has never reached; nor does He come to men in Christian lands in some miraculous, unaccountable way, so that men who would enter into God’s kingdom must wait until it please God immediately to perform the miracle. It would want all analogy with God’s gracious dealings with His fallen creatures to maintain that there are no certain, reliable means, through which the Holy Spirit will uniformly be given to those that ask Him.

And more than this: it would be in direct conflict with the teachings of the Holy Scripture; it would be a virtual rejection of these Holy Scriptures as God’s Word and therefore the power of God unto salvation; and it would

deprive us of all certainty, and therefore of all comfort, in respect to the Spirit's influence upon our hearts. For if the Holy Spirit came and made us sons of God, and therefore heirs of heaven, without the Word, what need would there be for searching the Scriptures, or even preserving them and reading them at all? And if He came to us without the use of the appointed means, how would it be possible for us to be assured of His presence, and of our salvation? Our own feelings, which so often stand in conflict with the reality even in things of this world, are surely not to be trusted in a matter so momentous as the soul's eternal welfare. Imagination often deceives us sadly. And if inspiration is claimed, direct inspiration, assuring us of our adoption, where is the warrant for such a claim? It will not be pretended that Scriptures give it, and in the absence of scriptural assurance how can we be certain that our pretended inspiration is not imagination after all? History has proved how delusive are all such claims; for wild fanaticism has always manifested, when severe trials came, a want of quietness and confidence, a want of peace in believing, and this for the simple reason that the only foundation of true faith, namely the Word of God, is ignored and rejected.

But if we hold fast to the infallible Word, which is given by inspiration of God, and which is contained in the Bible, we are certain that the needful grace appointed is uniformly connected with the means, and that when we use these means in faith, the Holy Spirit with His saving gifts is ours, and we are in His gracious kingdom; and we also have the salutary warning not to harbor the false hope that God will bestow His spirit upon us in some extraordinary manner, though we obstinately neglect His appointed way, His ordinary means. He that will not be saved through the instrumentalities by which God is pleased to offer salvation, will never be saved at all. The way is very plain. We are "born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever." 1 Pet. 1:23. "Except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God." John 3:5. "He took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it: for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Matt. 26:27, 28. These means are infallibly sure in their operation, but besides these there are none other through which salvation is imparted, by these, and by these alone, God gives us His Holy Spirit that by His grace we believe in His holy Word, and live a godly life here and in heaven forever.

The chief end of the gift of the Spirit is to work faith in us. “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” Acts 16:31. This is the only way in which the salvation can be embraced; for “he that believeth not shall be damned.” Mark 16:16. The gift of the Holy Spirit and faith in Jesus are not two independent conditions of salvation. They form but one, the first being a means to the second. “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” The Holy Spirit regenerates us by the bestowal of faith. “For we cannot by our own reason and natural power believe in or come to Jesus Christ our Lord.” Hence St. Paul says: “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” Eph. 2:8. We are saved through faith, but we have faith by the Holy Spirit. The kingdom of God comes when His Holy Spirit comes and graciously enables us to believe. The faith is something far different from mere human convictions and opinions. It rests upon no evidence of sense, or consciousness, or reason. It clings to the pure Word of God which cannot err. It receives this Word, and receives it as it is. It does not apprehend human uncertainties, so as to be blown hither and thither by every wind of doctrine; it does not mingle human traditions with divine truth, so as to rest on a foundation as weak as water and as firm as rock at once. It holds only to the divine. When we doubt the Word, when we seek conviction through other light and evidence, we have no faith.

This [faith] is always sure, because it is built upon that Word which is sure, God’s Word. To speak of believing and yet of being in uncertainty, is to speak absurdity. Uncertain we cannot be when God’s Word has spoken; if God has not spoken we can have no faith. When the Bible speaks of faith, it means faith in God—in His mercies and promises— faith in the revealed truth. That there cannot possibly be any further question about that which has been decided by revelation, is so plain, that it is amazing how persons can speak of believing one thing, and yet admit that the opposite may be true. When God has declared the truth, its opposite must be a lie. So long as a question is undecided, so long as we are not positive, we have no faith as regards that question. The Holy Spirit makes us sure of that which is written, and teaches us to beware of making that an article of faith which is not written. “Thy Word is truth.” To the believer the whole work of Christ for man’s salvation is an undeniable certainty, and he can say with the full assurance of faith: “There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” Rom. 8:1. And persons have been taught to say this confidently and

apply it to themselves, the kingdom of God has come to them. But still we pray for its coming, and pray the more fervently, because we are certain that it has come. For they that have the strongest assurance of sins forgiven through Christ, are always most desirous in their thankfulness, to adorn the doctrine of God their Savior in all things.

Hence, further, the kingdom of God comes “when we as children of God live godly lives here and in heaven forever.” Not as though the godly life were a condition of the establishment of this kingdom, it is not a cause, but a consequence of the kingdom’s advent, and yet is a consequence which follows so uniformly wherever the kingdom comes, that it may be considered a sign of its presence. It is true that a godly life may be feigned by an ungodly person, and that therefore the external uprightness can never be an infallible mark of the Spirit’s residence and the kingdom’s establishment within. But ’still it is a mark. For an ungodly life cannot be feigned by a godly person. All the members of the heavenly kingdom depart from iniquity. And if, on account of hypocrites who mimic the Christian life externally, we cannot say that the kingdom of God has come to all whose life seems to be square, in general, with the divine precepts, we can at least say this, that where the Spirit works, good works ensue. “Ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is righteous.” 1 John 2:29. For whatever the appearance may be, there is no true righteousness except in those born of God, and there is true righteousness in all who are so born. He that loves unrighteousness deceives himself when he supposes himself to be in the kingdom of God. “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” 2 Tim. 2:19. To this the members of the kingdom are incessantly urged. “Ye know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory.” 1 Thess. 2:11, 12. The Holy Spirit works faith in the divine word, then sanctifies through and according to that word, so that subjection to the kingdom of Christ is introduced and continued, the kingdom having come and ever coming thus, until we shall be removed to glory on high, where the godly life commenced on earth will continue forever.

Reasons for continuing instant in the use of this petition crowd upon us from every side. How could we otherwise than wish to have Satan’s kingdom destroyed and the Savior’s enlarged? When we think of the millions of heathens still in the world—of the fact that barely one fourth of the earth’s

inhabitants are Christians even in name; when we reflect upon the conformity of the world, and the extensive predominance of Satan's laws even among nominally Christian communities; and when we observe in our own hearts so many indications of rebelliousness, showing that the carnal mind which is enmity against God is not yet wholly destroyed, and that all is not yet fully laid at the feet of the great King, how could we otherwise than cry fervently: "Thy kingdom come!" Our Lord's kingdom is not of this world, and yet how much are we of this world still! Thy kingdom come: give us Thy Holy Spirit, so that by Thy grace we may believe Thy holy word, and lead a godly life here and in heaven forever!

# “Thy Will Be Done.”

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## Article One.

FAITH IN OUR REDEEMER is always attended by an utter distrust of self, and a consequent implicit confidence in His will, whom it owns as King over all, and whose gracious dominion it would fain have acknowledged by all. His will is perceived to be alone good and holy and salutary, and the child of God is therefore desirous that it alone should be done. And because he knows that it is not done in all places, because he knows that it is not even done by himself as he wishes to do it and to have it done, he prays, “Thy will be done.”

Our great object, as children of the Highest, is the glory of our Father’s name, and this can never be effected unless His kingdom first come and make us true subjects, giving us the Spirit of adoption. But this kingdom is necessarily rejected unless we permit our wills to be conformed to His, that He may be King indeed. For such conformity we ask in this present petition, which is perhaps the most difficult of all to pray aright, inasmuch as it involves a stern self-abnegation and crucifixion of the flesh: for it is mere mockery to pray that God’s will may be done when we refuse to resign our own, which stands in the way of its accomplishment.

We ask that God’s will may be done. This admits of no limitation whatever. It is a prayer neither that God may accomplish His good pleasure only so far as it coincides with ours, which would in reality be praying that our own will might be done, nor that His will as revealed merely in the law, or exclusively as it is revealed in the Gospel may be done, but that it may be done in all respects. His holy will is one, and our subjection to it is one: we hold not the will of God when we embrace a part and renounce a part: we obey not when we comply with some precepts but disregard others, which are equally expressive of His will.

“Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one” point, he is guilty of all. For He that said: do not commit adultery, said also: do not kill.



Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law." Jam. 2:10, 11. What is said thus of the moral law manifestly applies to the whole divine will, which is opposed just as much by rebellion against it when indicated in Providence, as it is by scorning it when declared in the Decalogue—which is renounced just as fully if we reject the divinely appointed means of grace, as if we despise the moral order of the holy law. And if the will of God as revealed in the glorious plan of salvation by faith in a crucified and risen Redeemer, is made more prominent in all evangelical teaching than the same will so far as revealed in the moral law, it is not because the latter is not equally divine and worthy of reverence, but because the former alone shows us how we can be saved, now that we cannot keep the moral law, and how we can be brought into the way of obedience in all things. It is the divine will that we should be saved, and this salvation is offered us in the Gospel. If this will is not rejected through unbelief, we have remission of sins richly and daily. But contempt of His will as revealed in the law for the government of our lives, implies the rejection of His will as given in the Gospel for our salvation. Hence our petition asks for grace to believe, to do and to suffer God's will in all respects.

Thus it is a prayer for submission to His good pleasure, as revealed in the Gospel. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life." "And this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life." John 3:16; 6:40. If this saving will is not done all prayers and all labors are vain; for though we strain every nerve to fulfill all righteousness in our own strength, yet will God's will not be done in any particular, whilst we remain in unbelief. For without Christ we can do nothing, and he that believeth not shall be damned. John 15:5; Mark 16:16. God's will is that all men should be saved by coming to the knowledge of the truth, and our prayer in this regard consequently is that this salvation may be ours.

Hence it implies the request that God would incline us to use the appointed means of grace. In the second petition we pray that God would mercifully give us these; in this we pray that they may not be rendered of none effect to us by our unbelief when they are given. They have, of course, no effect upon us when we neglect to use them at all. We pray that Satan may not induce us to neglect them, as thousands do. There are some who seem very scrupulous in the practice of that general morality which the law pre-

scribes, but who are perfect indifferentists in regard to all those ordinances whose purpose it is to bestow upon us the strength by which alone we can do God's will. Some remain unbaptized until they think death is approaching; some absent themselves from the house of God for weeks and even months; some neglect the Holy Supper for months and even years—to say nothing of those who deem these means of grace useless—and never think that their neglect is a grievous sin, because it not only disobeys a divine command, but also disregards a gracious offer of blessings which cannot be otherwise received.

Such persons, in reply to remonstrances with them on account of their delinquencies in this respect, are ever ready with appeals to their moral deportment in proof of their Christian character. But they have not even acknowledged the obligation of the law, much less have they fled for refuge from its curse to the Gospel; for if they acknowledged the divine law they would at least use the means of grace as a legal work, if not as an evangelical privilege. But this would be far from using them in their true character as divinely appointed means to effect a blessed end, namely man's salvation. The Word of God represents them as gracious channels for the reception of blessing which we should learn to consider it mercy that we are permitted to receive, and the neglect of which is our own great loss. Against that negligence of these means which is so frequent among us, and which is an offspring of that self-righteousness which can see no need for any means of grace at all, since nature is regarded as all-sufficient to raise men up to heaven without grace, and which therefore treats the passages of Scripture extending to us that privilege and urging upon us the duty of using them, as mere recommendations of things indifferent in themselves, this petition is directed. And in this sense we are to pray it all the more earnestly, because temptations to set aside these means beset us on every hand. Our flesh, in its pride, deems them needless; the world, in its wisdom, deems them unavailing; the devil, in his malignity, deems them injurious. There are many who do not use these means whom we must admit to be good citizens, and the devil and the world and the flesh do not grow weary in referring to them as evidence that we can be good enough without using them, just as good as those who use them and even better. "Thy will be done" must mean, in opposition to all such delusions: "Save me, Lord, by Thy grace, according to Thy will, through the appointed means, and let me not be seduced into the

beliefs that my own efforts will save me without salvation which is in Jesus, and which is in Thy holy word and holy sacraments.

But our salvation through grace requires not only that we should use these means of grace, but that we use them aright. Hence the petition that God's saving will should be done does not only imply the entreaty that we may be willing to use the means, but also the request that God would enable us to appropriate the grace offered. To this end faith is requisite: "he that believeth shall be saved." It is as dangerous as it is unscriptural to suppose that the mere washing in Baptism, or the mere eating and drinking in the Holy Supper, or the mere hearing of the Divine Word will necessarily save us, apart from any appropriation to ourselves of the grace which these means are appointed to convey. The wealth offered does not make us rich if we reject it. It is true that grace must be brought us before we can receive it, and therefore the means of grace must bring it to us before we are capable of appropriating it. "For it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do His good pleasure." Phil. 8:13. Faith must itself be wrought in us before we are capable of apprehending any further gift by it. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is a gift of God." Eph. 2:8. The means of grace operate without any concurring activity on our part, otherwise the good work could not be begun. For "I cannot, by my own reason or natural power, believe in or come to Jesus Christ my Lord." The Holy Ghost will uniformly work faith where He is not obstinately rejected; and faith will uniformly be nourished and strengthened by exercise of the truth presented by the Holy Spirit. Many persons by the failure to use what they had for the acquisition of more, are deprived of the gifts already in their possession. Faith dies by inactivity. Hence our Lord says: "Unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken; away from him." Luke 19:26. When the gifts offered through the means are not, then, received in faith, these means have profited us nothing, just as much so as if we had not used them at all. Our petition is therefore an earnest entreaty that God would not only incline us to use His means of grace, but that He would give us faith always to appropriate the great blessings of which they are the appointed channels, that thus we may go on from strength to strength, and thus His will may be done in the salvation of our blood-bought souls.

## Article Two.

When God's saving will is done in us through grace, we cannot but reverence His will as it is revealed in the law.

“For not every one that sayeth unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” Matt. 7:21.

This will consists not merely in believing the truth of the Gospel, but also in that obedience to the law which faith enables us to render. We are not only to permit God's will to be done in us unto the saving of our souls, but are also to do it, in the power of His grace, unto the praise of His name. For although we are saved by faith alone, without the deeds of the law, yet this faith can never exist without a profound reverence for God's holy will as revealed for the regulation of our lives. “This is the will of God, even your sanctification.” 1 Thess. 4:3. We are indeed free from the law when grace is ours, but not from that holiness which the law inculcates. There is no change of the work, but only of the motive for working. Under the law holiness is sought from constraint, under the Gospel from choice; under the former men are impelled by fear, under the latter by love. Hence, though we are children of God through Christ Jesus, and thus no longer under the curse of the law, yet are we admonished to be “obedient children, not fashioning yourselves to your former lusts in your ignorance: but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.” 1 Pet. 1:14, 15. Thus will the doctrine which we profess truly be adorned, and our Father which is in heaven be glorified.

Our petition therefore implies the request that God would enable us to avoid all that He has forbidden. It is worse than useless to bring before the throne of grace insincere petitions: they are an abomination in the sight of God. But every petition is necessarily insincere with which the firm resolve is not connected to renounce all that stands in the way of obtaining our requests. He that prays that God's will may be done, and yet is not willing to resign the lusts of his own flesh, which he knows to stand in opposition to the divine will, may seem to pray, but he only mocks; his prayers are a mere pretense; for when we ardently desire a thing we are surely willing to do what we can towards accomplishing it. Hence, when we pray that God's

will may be done, the promise is implied in our petition that every known sin shall be renounced; and just because this is sincerely intended, because our aim is always to do the will of God, are we always penitent when evil is done, our will being against it, because God has brought our will into conformity with His own will. So far is the Christian from serving sin because he is sure of pardon, that it is his greatest grief to be guilty of slighting his heavenly Father's will: the assurance of pardon is the strongest motive for vigilance and prayer against sin.

Whenever a person has become a believer in Jesus his great desire is to do right, and his great regret is to do wrong. No one can possibly pray this petition aright so long as he is not willing to crucify his natural desires, in order to accomplish those which have been implanted by grace. And he that will pray it and still gratify his sinful passions and lusts, because it costs him some self-denial to do God's will, shows that in his soul he affixes such conditions to his prayer as must destroy its character entirely. He prays that God's will may be done provided it conflicts not with his own, which is tantamount to praying that his will should be done, not God's. The Christian must, whatever his frailties and failings are, at least be firm in his desire to do God's will; for this alone secures its fulfillment in any case, and repentance in those manifold cases in which it is not fulfilled. God hears our prayer; He puts us in circumstances in which sin has less power over us and increases our power of resistance; but all will be of no avail if we become indifferent as to whether His will is done or not. Our prayers will cease to be Christian prayers in faith, and therefore cease to be heard, if we prefer our own poor will to His. Our prayers, when they refer to our actions, must be answered in part by ourselves, i.e. God gives us the ability to do what we pray for, and we are to make use of this ability and do it.

Hence, just as this petition, as far as it refers to God's legal will, requires stern resistance to all sin, and thus asks for power to resist, so it implies the request that God would give us the willingness to persevere in holy life. Our natural tendencies are to aggrandize and glorify self: to acquire wealth or temporal honors is our delight, and all labor directed to this end is easy. To give the glory to God is our natural aversion. We pray in our petition that God would impart grace to us to make us able and willing to overcome this selfishness, and live and labor not for self, but for God. For

“Christ died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again.” 2 Cor. 5:15.

It is sad to think how large the number is of those who say this petition time and again, and yet in their efforts and labors continue to regard only their own will, and wholly neglect their Maker’s: as if it were all-sufficient to say: “Thy will be done,” and needless altogether to do it. Alas! that all of us are so weak and weary when we set about our Father’s work. We should be fully persuaded that God’s will must be left undone, at least in us and through us, unless we set earnestly about doing it.

We must not think that it will be done in any event: it is not so natural to us that it will be performed without our care and attention. For though the Holy Spirit is given to us to be our Guide and to make God’s will our delight, experience proves that many, by their coldness and carelessness, gradually return to the worship and obedience of self. Hence it is enjoined upon us not only “to watch and to pray lest we enter into temptation,” Matt. 26:41, but also, giving diligence to add to our faith virtue, and “not to be weary in well-doing.” 2 Pet. 1:5. Gal. 6:9. And this well-doing cannot consist in occasional labors of love: it requires a uniform service of God in’ all things. It requires a consecration of our whole self to Him, whose we are and whom we serve. Acts 27:23. When we spend all our precious time, with the exception of a few occasional unemployed moments and all the talents committed to us, with the exception of a few hurried thoughts, in the service of the devil, the world and the flesh, our petition that God’s will may be done, is surely a mere sound and nothing more. “Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.” The petition only then becomes “the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man, which availeth much,” James 5:16, when the service of God is the aim of one’s life: not only His service occasionally and in a few things, but always and in all things.

Not only give alms, clothe the naked, visit the sick, not only watch and pray, not only hear the Word and receive the Sacraments, but order your daily work and relaxation according to His will: serve Him in all your employments, as well in those having reference to time as those referring to eternity, as well in the workshop or field as in the Church or closet. When we once learn .to attend to the calling wherein we are called, in the spirit of the calling wherewith we are called, we shall no doubt find much more time and much more money to devote to the interests of God’s kingdom, and

cease serving self as a rule and giving only occasional spare moments to God's service. How heartless, how shameful to offer to God only the offal of our own dainty feasts, and give Him, in general, only that which cannot be used for self, or is at least not needed!

We must give ourselves to God, then we shall have no fears lest we give Him too much of time and money; then we shall pray in all sincerity, meaning what we say: "Thy will be done." As we desire to avoid evil, so is it also our desire to do all the good we can, and therefore never grow weary in doing the divine will.

## **Article Three.**

When our heart's desire is to please God we will not fail to reverence His will as revealed by Providence. This will accordingly be embraced in our petition also.

In this respect it implies the request that God would enable us to trust in His kind Providence. That faith which trusts in the saving will of God as revealed in the Gospel, and which is active in doing that will as revealed in the law, will also fully trust it as manifested in the daily direction of our lives. It is only thus that we can quietly "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," because it is only thus that we are sure of God's mercy, by which all other things will be added unto us as we have need of them. To the worldling it seems an impossible thing to comply with the Lord's words which tell us: "Take no thought, saying, what shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, wherewithal shall we be clothed?" Matt. 6:31. For our fallen nature this is indeed impossible; and under all circumstances it is difficult and our compliance is always imperfect. But mistaken notions about it grow out of that unbelief which cannot understand the subsequent words: "For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." The error lies deeply rooted in our depraved nature, that all external wants are at our own disposal and dependent altogether upon our own will; and this error we often seek to justify to our own consciences by the known fact that we have conditions to fulfill, without which the loving will of God is always and necessarily opposed. How prone are we to forget the good Giver of all good when prosperity smiles upon us! and yet how inconsistently disposed we are to murmur when adversity frowns!

We never pray “Thy will be done” as we ought until we are fully conscious that all things are under God’s gracious control, and that, in the kingdom of power, as well as in the kingdom of grace, He makes all things work together for good to them that love Him. For it is only when we implicitly trust that will as mercifully governing our whole lives and providing for us as is best, that we are free from those gnawing cares about worldly things which unfit men for true devotion. Whilst we think that the procuring of the necessaries and comforts of life depends solely upon our own wisdom and skill, we will of course be full of cares about our present wants and our unwearied endeavor will be to supply these, leaving the seeking of the kingdom of God and His righteousness for a more convenient season.

And as, when we have no higher dependence than self, we are encumbered not only by the care of today, but also by those of tomorrow, because the natural inclination is to secure ourselves for the future at every hazard; and as, moreover, we never feel at ease with regard to the future, whilst we have such feebleness for our dependence, no matter what amount of worldly goods we have laid up, the convenient season never comes. Our petitions, in this regard, may be paraphrased thus: Give us grace to cast all our cares upon Thee, who carest for us, that we may, without reserve, devote ourselves to Thy service, in the full confidence that it is Thy loving will to give us all we need.

But then, again, it necessarily implies the request that strength may be imparted to us to bear with resignation all the sufferings which Providence imposes. For there can assuredly be no true confidence in the paternal will of God when adversity is not deemed merciful and good as well as prosperity. “Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” Job 2:10. It must here again be observed that if we reverence God’s will only so long as it corresponds with ours, rebelling as soon as our own is crossed, the true reason of our content, in any case where the will of God is done, is not that His Will is accomplished, but that our own is done; for were it God’s will that causes our satisfaction, we would be content even in the midst of suffering, seeing that it is in accordance with His will that in the world we should have tribulation. Then those sufferings which God permits, although, as consequences of human sin they may be accounted actual evils, will, when borne in patient and meek resignation to God’s will, become actual blessings; “for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh



for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” 2 Cor. 4:17. In this sense the Psalmist says:

“Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept Thy word.” “It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes.” “I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.” Ps. 119:67, 71. 75.

He who sincerely prays that God’s will may be done, gratefully accepts whatever the accomplishment of that will brings, whether pleasure or pain, and is none the less convinced of the goodness of that will because it is often attended by pain, even though it should be pain, the purpose of which is not immediately understood. The meaning of the petition, in this respect, is well expressed in the following lines:

“Thy will be done! in devious way  
The hurrying stream of life may run;  
Yet still our grateful hearts shall say,  
Thy will be done!  
Thy will be done! Though shrouded o’er  
Our path with gloom, one comfort—one  
Is ours: To breathe, while we adore,  
Thy will be done!”

When our souls sit in the shadow of deep afflictions, when weights of woe bow down the heart, we can meekly look up to Him who ruleth all, and say with the spirit of little children who know their Father’s love: Thy will be done! and say this with all the more comfort, because our Father, we know, will make even this work for our good, we need but be still and wait; in due time we shall see how glory is reached through gloom.

## **Article Four.**

“The will of God is done, indeed, without our prayers, but we pray in this petition that it may also be done by us.”

The will of God is done without our prayers. For if the performance of His will were dependent upon our petitions, our will would be superior to His will and would be a limit to its exercise. Our pleasure in no way affects His

work in the kingdom of power; for He doeth whatsoever He pleases, and asks no counsel of His creatures. Indeed, if this were not the case we would place implicit confidence in none of His promises; the fear would be ever recurring that in some way the human will might baffle the accomplishment of the divine. Nor would it remove the difficulty to say that God Himself imposes this limit upon His own activity. The foundation of our confidence, which is the invariableness of God's promises and ways, would still be overthrown. For if we cannot be certain that He will exercise omnipotence for the destruction of all wicked counsels and intentions which oppose His will, we can never be certain that His will is done, and can therefore have no comfort in those sorrows in which the will of God is not always so palpable. But, in the sphere of nature, His will is done in spite of all opposition.

“For I know that the Lord is great and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and in all deep places.” Ps. 135:5—6.

“The Lord of hosts has purposed, and who shall disannul it? and His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?” Is. 14:27.

Examples of this are numerous in the history of God's people. We need but think of the mighty hand whereby He led His people out of the land of Egypt in spite of the obdurate opposition of Pharaoh. Every impediment placed in the way of the accomplishment of the divine will, in the domain of nature, is evidently but a “rolling thing before the whirlwind.” But also in the kingdom of grace and glory is God's will done without our prayers. The angel hosts in heaven do His will and adore Him, whether we desire it and pray for it or not. The spirits of the just made perfect hearken to the voice of His word and sing His praise forevermore, though thousands on earth desire it not. The kingdom of glory is ruled as completely by God's will as the kingdom of nature; the difference lies merely in this, that in glory all wish nothing but God's will, so that there is no resistance, while in nature God's will is enforced by almighty power and all resistance is vain. But even in the kingdom of grace the accomplishment of the divine will is not dependent upon our prayers. God sent His Son into the world without our prayers, when we were yet enemies. He sent the means of grace before we

could ask aright, to bring us to Jesus; and He always gives gratuitously His Holy Spirit whereby we cry Abba, Father! And even if now we should refuse to pray, the kingdom of God would come to some, and the will of God would be done. But by us His will would not be done, and if we remained thus it would have to be done upon us at last in our damnation.

Hence, although the divine will is done all around without our prayers, in our petition we pray that it may also be done by us. In saving our souls God will not use compulsion. Indeed, He could not save us by compulsion without annihilating our will. We are saved by the power of truth changing our will without destroying its identity. When the truth is embraced we are free from those chains which kept our souls bound in opposition to the Lord and His will.

We pray that this freedom may be ours, and that we may have grace to exercise it. For even when we have trusted that the Lord is gracious, and are convinced that His will is wisest, happiest, best, the temptations to oppose it are many and strong. We must be conformed to His will and constantly increase in this conformity through life. It is therefore by no means a contradiction to say that our will must be brought into harmony with God's before we can pray aright "Thy will be done," and yet that the end of the petition is to attain such harmony. For the inclination of our will to God's by no means implies a conformity of all our faculties and their acts to the divine will. It is needless to tell a true Christian, who is diligent to make his calling and election sure, that he does not always think, and feel, and act as he wishes: for to him it is a truth so manifest from his own experience that he must doubt the Christian character of those who pretend to have all their powers and acts under the absolute control of a sanctified will. The kingdom of God comes, and so far the divine will is done; but the heir of heaven desires that His will should be done always and everywhere, and therefore still prays, with reference to himself, that he may do the will of God more and more. But he does not pray for himself alone. He prays for all; and in this petition he therefore asks that God would let His will be done in reference to those who are yet aliens from the commonwealth of Israel by bringing them in; and entreats that those who are within the blessed fold, may all live holy lives according to the Father's holy will.

We pray that men may not reject the fellowship of the saints implied in the words "one" and "us," but that they may embrace the truth, and thus be of the brotherhood praying with us for an increase of holiness. To us the

kingdom has come, and ours must be the desire to do the will of God as it is done in heaven, and to this desire we give expression when we say “Thy will be done!”

## **Article Five.**

We ask that God’s will may be done here on earth, as it is done in heaven above. This is a confession that the divine will is done in heaven, and therefore of our consent to it, as we hope to be in heaven when our work on earth is ended. But it is at the same time a profession of willingness to do it here, whilst we are journeying to the place where it is done in perfection.

We desire that God’s will should be done on earth. The power of Christianity is to be exerted upon us now, and consequently our service of God is not to be postponed until we shall be among the blest in the realms of glory. It is to begin here and now. Those who would excuse themselves from doing the work of saints upon the ground of their being among sinners, and of their being such themselves notwithstanding their possession of the Spirit of holiness, mistake the design and character of the Holy Spirit’s work in the soul. He prompts us to God’s service wherever we are— here, while we sojourn here, in heaven when we shall arrive there. Our heart’s desire must be to do His will not only when all around us are doing it, not only when it shall cost us no sacrifice to perform it, but to perform it whatever may oppose and whatever sacrifice it may cost. If this subject to men’s scoffs and jeers, and involve a denial of our own carnal inclinations, all is well; for self must be denied, and the world’s ridicule and hatred must be met. The scriptural requirement for a Christian to bear the cross is a stern reality.

For as our own natural wills run counter to the will of God, and as, even when we have become children of God, our natural inclinations are not eradicated, though curbed and subjected to the power of grace, the performance of God’s will is naturally attended by sacrifices; many would be glad to escape these sacrifices upon the plea that it is too hard to do God’s will now, though they would be glad to do it if it were not so difficult, and are sure that it will be their delight to do it in heaven, where flesh will no longer oppose. Their mistake is manifest; and their want of earnestness, when they ask God’s will to be done, could not be shown more plainly than it is in the

fact that they are not willing to renounce their own will, and endure the pain of such renunciation, for the sake of having the divine will done.

Therefore we pray that God's holy will may be done by us while we are still here upon earth, even as it is done in heaven. For in heaven all the blest are forever-engaged in doing the divine will. All the angels who excel in strength do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word. Ps. 103:20. So is it our desire to serve Him and Him only. Of course we do not expect, in our actions, to accomplish God's will as perfectly as the angels and sainted ones in heaven accomplish it. We cannot do this. For we have impediments in our way and clogs upon us, from which the citizens of heaven are free. We hear the flesh about with us and our pathway lies through a wilderness of wickedness.

We are still exposed to temptations, and do still, even with the best intentions, and notwithstanding the utmost vigilance of which we are capable, offend our Maker in manifold ways. We must therefore use a petition daily which the angels need not use: "Forgive us our trespasses."

But in will we would vie with angels in doing God's will, all failures to accomplish it being attributable not to our want of will, but to our want of ability in this earthly weakness. If we often fail in the act, we would not fail in the sincere purpose and intention of doing the divine will always, as it is always done above. Even while we confess our faults and know that, because our frailty ever clips our wings and lames our feet, we shall not live pure as angels tomorrow, it must be our desire to live thus pure, and our regret when we fail. It is this desire to do God's will always which keeps us in that penitent mood, in which we are ever willing, humbly to confess that we deserve punishment, and which enables us to deplore our daily failings and sins.

They must be indifferent to holiness who are indifferent to the life led in heaven, which is holiness; and they who desire the performance of God's will, desire it as it is in heaven, never satisfied with what they have attained, but ever reaching forward to that which is still before. Because it is not attained we strive for it and pray for it, desiring. to live as the angels and spirits of just men made perfect live, approximating as nearly as may be here on earth, to that life, and hoping to share it hereafter. Thus is the unity of spirit in the kingdom of God manifested, it being one in grace here and in glory there. There is one heart and one mind in all, and that is to do God's will anywhere and always. And to those who have this in mind God's command-

ments, though requiring self-denial here, are not grievous, for His grace sustains and cheers them. It must be a blessed thing to do God's will, because the blest are so happy in it above.

It is counted a great reward, as it is in truth, to serve Him day and night in His temple on high. Rev. 7:15. So it must be our joy and therefore our earnest petition here, to do His holy will as it is done above, that we may be prepared for heaven, where all perform it, when we come to die.

## **Article Six.**

The will of God is done “when He prevents and destroys all evil counsels and intentions, the will of the devil, of the world, and of our own flesh, which tend to dishonor the name of God among us and hinder the coming of His kingdom to us, and when He strengthens and preserves us steadfast in His Word and faith unto our end. This is His good and gracious will.”

The performance of God's will involves the prevention and destruction of all evil counsels and intentions. These all arise from Satan, the great enemy of human souls and happiness. But Satan works upon men and draws them upon his side, so that the world and the flesh oppose God's will as well as the devil.

“You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince; of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom we also all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of the flesh.” Eph. 2:1—3.

That which stands in the way of the accomplishment of God's will is therefore the will of the devil—the evil which is above us and mightier than we. Satan's object always is to thwart God's holy plans, in order that he may bring his own wicked devices to pass. Especially is it his purpose to prevent God's saving will from being done, and therefore he never ceases his endeavors to induce men to resist and oppose the divine will. Thus we find him in Paradise seducing man from his blissful state of innocence to a wretched state of guilt and woe, and thus counteracting God's will. Gen. 3:1—15. And when his evil counsels were put to shame by the mission of our Savior to destroy his wicked work, he still did not rest from his work of malice, and does not rest now. He still labors earnestly to baffle God's de-

signs by turning men against Him. Thus, when God sends His quickening Word to turn us from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that we may be saved and sanctified through the truth, the devil seeks to make that Word of none effect by stirring up an obstinate resistance to it, that it may not sink into our hearts and accomplish that whereunto it was sent. Therefore our Lord tells us, respecting some into whose hearts the good seed of the Word was sown, "Then cometh the devil and taketh away the Word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved." Luke 8:12. And St. Paul asserts that even those who have believed the Word and rejoiced in its promises, must put on the whole armor of God, that they may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Eph. 6:11. Hence, also St. Peter exhorts all Christians, saying: "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour." 1 Pet. 5:8. As Satan is God's great adversary, so is he ours; and we pray in our petition that God would graciously destroy his wiles and snares, that none of those who seek the Lord and call upon His name may be ruined. It is vain for us to say that because no one willingly allows himself to be led by the devil, our petition is useless. Some do allow themselves to be thus led, and others are thus led who suppose themselves to be devoted disciples of Jesus, and others again who are such disciples are influenced often by Satan's arts. Why, Whenever we read the Word of God with wandering thoughts, whenever we hear the Word of God without attention and reverence, whenever we sit listlessly in the sanctuary while praises are sung to God's name, or petitions are laid at His feet, whenever we speak a word or move a limb in violation of God's known will, and therefore in opposition to the enlightened voice of conscience, we are following the counsels of Satan, in spite of the good seed of the Word which is sent to save us. We do not see Satan standing beside us in all his ugliness, nor do we bear, with our outward ear, his hellish voice, and yet he is surely whispering to us, and we, when we neglect or reject God's Word, are giving heed to his whispers. It is he that tells us, God will not notice such trifles as our seemingly little departures from His will, and that the divine Word is not so rigorously intended as it would appear to us. The argument used with Eve to seduce her from the truth: "Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the Garden?" i. e. it is not likely that He designed this, is an argument that is used successfully with thousands today. And the lying reply made to Eve's assertion that God had forbidden to touch the tree and had threatened death

as the penalty of disobedience, namely, “ye shall surely die,” is believed by thousands still rather than the divine Word which is contradicted. The devil is crafty, and takes care to make his intimations seem reasonable and right, and just on this account are we commanded to be sober and vigilant always. For this soberness and vigilance, and for God’s gracious deliverance from the wiles of the devil, against whom we watch, we pray when we say: “Thy will be done!”

But we pray also against the will of the world, not as though this were essentially evil. God pronounced good all creatures of His hand, and the whole complex of these creatures embraced in the term world could not therefore have been originally evil. But since the fall “the whole world lieth in wickedness.” 1 John 5:19. This is not intended to teach that all matter has been changed in its essence so as to become wicked. Now, as before the fall, “every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused it it be received with thanksgiving.” 1 Tim. 4:4. The wickedness is in the soul, not in matter; the world lieth in wickedness, because all men are wicked and use things wickedly. But the source of the evil is the devil. The whole world is sinful since he has subdued it and used it for his own wicked purposes: the seduction and ruin of our first parents in Paradise were his malicious work. Hence Satan is called “the prince of this world.” John 12:31. The world was good originally, but the wicked one has wrought effectually upon it. “If our Gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.” 2 Cor. 4:4. He has practiced his arts so successfully that all are by nature children of wrath: the world lieth in wickedness.

Christ has come to call men out of this wickedness, bringing them into the kingdom which is not of this world. If ye were of the world," He says to His disciples, “the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” John 15:19. But because the world is under the devil’s wicked influence and this to such an extent that he is called god and prince of the world, it necessarily opposes the will of God. Satan’s will is law in his realm. Hence the world must be overcome before God’s will is done. Our Lord overcame it and in His strength we are to overcome it also. “Be of good cheer,” He tells us, I have overcome the world." John 16:33. His conquest avails for us and the knowledge of this is strong consolation to our souls. He “gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us from this present



and evil world, according to the will of God our Father.” Gal. 1:4. Accordingly “what is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” 1 John 5:4. The will of the world is the will of the devil, and must therefore be trampled under foot ere the will of God, to which Satan is forever hostile, can be done. Hence the earnest exhortations given us in Scripture not to be conformed to this world, and hence also the world is one of those powers tempting us to evil against which our petition is directed. Here we ask God to prevent and destroy the evil counsels and intentions of this present evil world, because thus alone can His good and holy will be done.

Finally we pray against the will of the flesh. For as the world which lieth in wickedness is the corrupt human race, the wickedness must have its seat in each individual belonging to the world: the whole cannot be evil without affecting the parts of which it is composed. The wickedness clinging to us, the depravity pervading us, is in the Holy Scriptures denominated flesh. “That which is born of flesh is flesh,” and “they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” John 3:6; Rom. 8:8; in other words, that which is born of sinfulness is sinful and cannot please God. It is in the flesh that the will of the devil is done; and the flesh must therefore be overcome in us, as well as the world around us, ere God’s will be done. Such conquest of the flesh is therefore enjoined upon all Christ’s disciples, and the requisite strength for it is imparted in their regeneration through faith. “They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” Gal. 5:17. As long as we are ruled by the flesh we are in the same condition as the world which lieth in wickedness, and cannot otherwise than be conformed to it, because we are part of it, not yet having come out from it. And thus we are ruled by the prince of this world, who makes us carnal.

“In times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” Eph. 2:2.

We have essentially the same foe to resist in the devil, the world, and the flesh. For it must not be supposed that the word “flesh” as used in the Scriptures to designate one of the foes which we must face, if we would do the will of God, is synonymous with “body,” or even with “sensuality.” It is not the possession of a material body which renders us really children of wrath; we shall have bodies in the pure regions of bliss in heaven. Nor is it merely

any corruption of our senses, or any abuse of them merely which renders us obnoxious to God's displeasure. It is the corruption of the whole being, of soul as well as of body. We are sensual because the heart is carnal. The flesh is in our immortal as well as in our mortal part.

The works of the flesh are not only fornication and drunkenness, but idolatry and heresy as well. Gal 5:19—21. It is therefore far from being an absurdity to speak of a fleshly mind: it is strictly correct. The Apostle Paul does so speak when he says:

“To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace: because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be.” Rom. 8:6—7.

False doctrine as well as ungodly life, by both of which God's name is dishonored, originate in the flesh through Satan's influence. Now this carnality, which is at enmity against God, this flesh in which the devil rules, must be destroyed with all its wicked counsels and intentions. Then only can God's will be accomplished. For the devil's will must necessarily be done so long as the world and the flesh, in which he reigns, are not conquered and crucified. God's will is done when the wicked plans of these foes to happiness are prevented and destroyed; and for this prevention and destruction our petition accordingly prays.

## **Article Seven.**

The will of God is done “when He keeps us steadfast in His Word and faith unto our end. This is His good and gracious will.” His will is done when we steadfastly retain His Word:

“Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it.” Luke 11:28.

For it is the Word of God that makes us wise unto salvation. Without this the will of God cannot be done unto the saving of our souls. We remain in darkness and in wrath without it: it alone can call us to life.

“For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” Rom. 1:16.

God wills that all men should be saved, but not otherwise than by coming to the truth which He has been pleased to give by inspiration. He “will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” 1 Tim. 2:4. All human wisdom that dreams of ways to heaven and bliss otherwise than by the truth of God’s Word, is sheer folly.

“For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” 1 Cor. 1:21.

If the Word of the Lord were taken away we would therefore remain in our natural night and death; the great means of grace by which we are revived and nourished would be removed and we would remain forever unblessed.

The saving will of God would not be done, because we would be deprived of the means of salvation: for without the Word there would be no sacraments either. But not only is the divine Word necessary as God’s power unto the salvation which He designs for men; it is requisite also to guide those who have been called and endowed with peace in believing. It alone can make us sure as to what God’s will is in reference to our walk and conversation.

“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto, according to Thy Word.” Ps. 119:9.

It points out how men ought to walk and to please God, and guards us against the by-paths which lead to certain ruin. “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.” Ps. 119:105. If we would have God’s will be done, we must therefore adhere to His good Word always, for every departure from it is necessarily an obstacle in the way of the accomplishment of His will. Our petition asks that God would give us constant reverence for His holy Word, and make it sweeter to our taste than honey, or the honeycomb, that it may dwell in us richly in all wisdom, working in us the will of God and teaching us to do that will always.

But this word attains its end only through faith in our hearts. Therefore God’s will is done, when He keeps us steadfast in the faith. His word is His

power unto salvation, but only unto every one that believeth. The simple existence of the word without application to the soul, does not accomplish God's saving will of it. Neither does the mere theoretic knowledge, without an appropriation of it by faith. Hence we are told respecting some that "the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Heb. 4:2. To these the Gospel was given as well as to those who reaped its blessed fruits. It is by all means necessary for us to know the Gospel. The Scriptures enjoin it upon us to grow in the knowledge of Jesus as well as in grace. 2 Pet. 3:18. The first step to be taken in order to believe is to gain the knowledge of the truth; and when faith has first been wrought, the soul will seek for a more profound understanding of its object, the divine word. Hence holy men have made this holy word their meditation day and night. We should not disparage knowledge in any way; it is the ordinary method of reviving the heart. But there is a knowledge which puffeth up, because it is sundered from true faith which maketh humble. It is knowledge without light or life, a cold thing lodged in the brain, but without influence on the sensibilities and will. Such knowledge is useless, no matter how extensive it may be. It secures not the accomplishment of God's will in us unto our salvation, nor by us unto His glory. For faith is just as necessary for a life of conformity to God's will, as it is for salvation according to His will.

There is no power to overcome the evil that is in the world and our own flesh, except faith in the divine word. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." 1 Jn. 5:4. The saving will of God cannot be done upon us without faith, for only he that believeth shall be saved; the legal will of God cannot be done without it, for without Christ we can do nothing. Therefore the will of God can be done only when we remain steadfast in His faith, as well as in His word; and for such steadfastness we accordingly pray in our petition. And this steadfastness must needs continue unto our end, for faith in the word of God possessed once and afterwards lost, saves not the soul; and compliance with the divine will once, and neglect subsequently, is not doing the will of God. Hence it is said: "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life." Rev. 2:10.

Hence St. Paul, in enumerating the grounds of his confidence that he shall receive a crown of righteousness, mentions this as one: "I have kept the faith." Therefore are we admonished: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." 1 Cor. 10:12. Warnings are given us in the examples

of those who have made shipwreck of their faith and were given over to Satan. 1 Tim. 1:19, 20. And promises are given unto us that “He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ,” that He who is the Author is also the Finisher of our faith. If we let go the saving word or our saving faith in it, God’s saving will is not done, though we may have been sincere believers for years previously; and if we cease to live and labor in faith according to His word, His will has ceased to be done by us as well as in us. We therefore pray to be preserved in His word and faith until the end of our lives.

Let us therefore, seeing that so many enemies beset us and strive to dishonor God and hinder the coming of His kingdom, never grow weary of praying that God’s good and gracious will may be done in us, and by us, and around us; that we may be able to resist every onset of the evil one, fighting the good fight of faith, and remaining steadfast unto the end, and receiving the Victor’s crown beyond the grave, which is our Father’s will.

# **“Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread.”**

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## **Article One.**

IN THOSE PETITIONS of the Lord’s Prayer which have been considered, all is asked for that is necessary for the establishment of Christianity in our souls. When God’s name is hallowed, his kingdom comes, and His will is done, there remains nothing for which the heart need wish, except that it may, through God’s grace, remain in the blessed condition into which it was brought by the granting of these requests.

But the continuance in God’s kingdom of grace until we are made meet for the kingdom of glory is conditional upon our reception of daily pardon for our sins, our steadfast resistance of temptations, and our deliverance from evil. Hence, after we have entreated our Lord to grant us the divine life and, in the fourth petition, have asked for the necessaries of our earthly existence, we pray in the last three petitions for the preservation of grace in our souls and our final admission into the bliss of heaven. But the cares of this life would form an insurmountable obstacle to the attainment of that glorious end, if there were no means of relief from these cares. Therefore the petition for daily bread, while it is of the greatest moment for the present life, is by no means unimportant in its bearing upon our spiritual aims. We “cast our cares upon the Lord, who careth for us,” 1 Pet. 5:7, by laying our wants before Him.

### **We Ask For Bread**

This word is sometimes used to designate the needful food for the soul, that is, spiritual bread. But because our request for this bread is preferred in the preceding petitions, the reference to this is to nourishment needed for the body, the bread of earth as contradistinguished from the bread of heaven.

As long as we are in the body we are not, however heavenly-minded we may be, raised above the necessity of bodily nourishment. And as this is

one of the wants of humanity in this probationary state, it is proper for us to ask Him, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, to supply it. It is no indication of great spirituality to feel above petitioning for mere temporal things while the wants of the soul are so many. The soul does indeed need much, and we must not grow weary of presenting our requests to God for its needful food. But the wants of the soul, although they are of superior importance, do not destroy those of the body, nor make them contemptible; and he who trusts in God with all his heart will manifest it just as well by confessing this dependence upon Him for earthly as for heavenly food. Indeed, there is danger that the pretended spirituality which will not condescend to ask for the poor necessities of the body will be too proud to acknowledge any dependence upon God for them; and it is wholly an evil among us to imagine ourselves sufficiently strong to help ourselves in temporal matters. For undeniably certain it is: that we need bread, and if we think it unnecessary or unbecoming to ask it of God, it must be because we suppose ourselves able to attain it without His interference. Our petitions in this regard certainly need not conflict with our primary care for the soul. For a man can manifestly take care of his gold without being indifferent to his pennies; he may be regardful of his life without being careless about his property. So may he live for heaven without despising his life on earth; and whilst it pleases God to continue him here, it should please him gratefully to accept the boon and humbly to ask for needful gifts, without at all diminishing his earnest petitions for everlasting blessings.

And as the Christian can never be above asking God for his daily bread, so God is not above bestowing it. That mercy which stoops to raise us to glory, sinful as we are by nature, does not despise the poorest gift which helps to make us happy. When Jesus went about on earth doing good He not only fed poor souls with the bread of heaven, but also satisfied the multitudes, who followed Him, with loaves and fishes for temporal nourishment. Mercy magnifies itself by condescension: it is greater, because it is universal, embracing all things great and small, and it appears greater by coming more fully within our range of vision. Even man's mercy is great in proportion to its readiness to bless on every occasion. It is a proof of its absence when he will refuse a slice of bread to the famishing poor on the plea that his means must be appropriated to a higher end, namely the saving of their immortal souls. God's mercy is exhibited in its ineffable greatness by giv-

ing the largest and not withholding the smallest gift; He gave His only Son: how should He not with Him also freely give us all things?

But whilst we know that God is willing to give us bread, and that it is our duty and privilege to ask it as we have need, the order in which this petition occurs corresponds perfectly with the order presented by our Lord in another place, namely:

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” Matt. 6:33.

Before we pray for bread, we ask for those spiritual gifts which are of eternal and therefore of incomparable worth. Our Savior never taught us to pray for bread alone, nor for bread first. We should ask it only as a means to sustain our earthly life to the end that we may do His will in His kingdom and thus hallow His name.

Those who, in their greed for gain, are always prepared to offer this petition, to the neglect of those petitions which precede and those which follow it, can never pray it in the spirit and sense in which it was given. They never pray at all, as they want the essential requisite for true Christian prayer. Words alone do not constitute prayer, and those who grovel in the earth and never rise to spiritual desires and entreaties for spiritual gifts, do not stand in that relation to God out of which Christian prayer grows. We must pray for bread, but this petition must always be subordinate to those other petitions which ask for infinitely higher blessings: we must not despise the lesser, much less must we despise the greater.

The word bread, as used in our petition, means not only that special article of food which is usually designated by this term, but implies all the necessities and conveniences of life on earth. It is frequently so used in Scripture as well as in common speech. We speak of earning our bread, without limiting the meaning to any particular article of food. or even to food in general: we use the term as embracing all which belongs to a decent livelihood. In the small compass of this model prayer we can expect no minute specifications; and as this fourth petition is the only one which refers to the wants of the body, it was meant to embrace them all in one word. Hence it must manifestly be understood as comprehending everything necessary to the support and comfort of existence; as, food and raiment, house and land, money and goods; a kind spouse, good children, faithful servants, righteous



magistrates, good weather, peace, health, instruction, honor, true friends, good neighbors, and the like. For when we pray for our bread we include all those means by which to acquire and enjoy it: indeed, all those blessings which belong to the temporal life of which bread is the staff.

But if it were asked why the word bread should be used rather than any other, the answer would be obvious. Bread is the most common and most necessary of those things by which life is sustained, and it is therefore natural that it should stand as the representative of them all, as it does also in other places, e.g. Gen. 3:19: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread until thou return to the ground." But it is also entitled to stand as representative of all, because it cannot be easily misunderstood. It does not include in its meaning those manifold luxuries which are so frequently desired, but which, because they have not been promised, cannot be unconditionally asked. "Having food and raiment let us be therewith content." 1 Tim. 6:8.

All that is beyond this must be asked, if asked at all, upon the condition that it shall in no way conflict with the third petition. "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Heb. 13:5.

What is necessary to the support of existence He has promised and will supply, and this the word bread involves, to the exclusion of all that is unnecessary luxury; as for all the rest that God so often adds above all which we ask, we should have no further concern than that God's will may be done, whether our lot be poverty or wealth. According to God's plans all will not have precisely the same temporal blessings, nor the same to the same extent. One thing is a necessity in some circumstances which is not so in others.

The word is broad enough to cover the whole ground in all situations, and each one asks those gifts, and as many of them, as in his case are requisite. And these God always-gives, with His blessing on them to those who ask Him.

But bread can never be construed to mean pecuniary wealth, though it pleases God in many cases to give this also. It is characteristic of the trusting child to leave the quantity and quality to the Father, who knows what is best for each, and simply to ask for his support.

## **Article Two.**

We ask God to give us what we need. Our supplication to God for bread is a confession that from Him alone the necessaries and comforts of life must come. Without making this confession we never can be grateful recipients of His bounties. For all does come from Him. “The eyes of all wait upon Thee, O Lord, and Thou givest them their meat in due season.” Ps. 145:15. He keeps the testimony of His goodness before us always. “He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with feed and gladness.” Acts 14:17. And His Providence is over each individual, assigning to each his due portion of temporal goods according as it is best for him. “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall upon the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.” Matt. 10:29—31. Thus God, who made all things, is ever present to uphold and preserve the work of His hands, and not a leaf is stirred without His will. By whatever means He may choose to bestow His gifts, the gift is His. Although our labor be a condition without which it may not please God to command the fields to yield their corn and the trees their fruit, yet the difference between the condition upon which a gift is granted, and the gifts bestowed is very plain. What would all our labor and pains avail if God withheld the blessing of which He has made labor a condition?

“Except the Lord build the house they labor in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is in vain for you to rise up early and sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows; for so He giveth His beloved sleep.” Ps. 127:1—2.

The words of the apostle are as applicable to the natural as the spiritual harvest: “Neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.” 1 Cor. 3:7. Conscience, when once it grows severe in its accusations on account of our gross ingratitude, will not be so readily lulled to rest by the miserable pretense that we are providing for ourselves, and need therefore ask and give thanks for nothing; for the thought that this is but a wretched refuge of lies cannot be kept suppressed. We should therefore flee such vain resorts and lay the truth to heart, and be glad in the Lord our God, whom we would ever glorify.

“When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land He hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping His commandments and His judgments, and His statutes which I command you this day: lest, when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses and dwelt therein... then thy heart be lifted up and thou forget the Lord thy God... and thou say in thy heart, my power and might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth.” Deut. 8:10-17.

It is evident that such ingratitude is but a symptom of that self-righteousness which rejects all grace. We should therefore sternly resist every temptation to neglect our daily prayer for temporal gifts, or to eat and drink the bounties bestowed by God’s hand without returning cordial thanks to Him for His goodness. For the soil and the strength wherewith it is tilled, and the sunshine and the rain which make it fruitful, and the blessing which causes the increase are all God’s: of Him we should accordingly ask the gifts, and to Him give daily thanks.

God bestows, indeed, unasked the necessities and conveniences of life, even upon the wicked, and some seek in this fact an excuse for their unthankfulness and prayerlessness. Our Father “maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” Matt. 5:45. He is ever merciful, not only to the obedient, but also to the froward, and gives to the one as well as to the other. And His dealings in the realm of nature are not so much different from His dealings in the realm of grace as it would at first sight seem. He imparts the bread of life just as freely and just as impartially as the bread of earth. If spiritual food could be received and digested with a rebellious heart, as natural food can be, the ungodly would all be saved eternally as they are preserved temporally. But it is the very design of the spiritual meat and drink to overcome our natural ungodliness and make us children and heirs of God through Jesus, who is the bread which cometh down from heaven. The impenitent and unbelieving have it not, because they reject it, just as they would starve literally if they rejected earthly food.

God’s law of giving is alike in both cases: for He always imparts in mercy. But gifts are appropriated in different ways: some require the soul’s submission, some are apprehended in any spiritual state. Spiritual gifts must be embraced by the spirit, and are not possessed until they are so embraced. Hence an ungodly person will not have spiritual gifts, though God offers them in abundance, because he closes his heart against them, just as we would not have the gold extended to us if we refused to open our hand for

its reception. And although God might justly withhold the lesser bodily gifts when the greater spiritual have been rejected, yet He would show mercy as long as may be, giving men the goods of earth at least, though they voluntarily deprive themselves of the treasures of heaven. God is good even to “the men of the world, who have their portion in this life,” Ps. 17:14, while the crosses of those who have heaven for their everlasting portion are merely a merciful discipline to prevent that carelessness by which their portion might be lost. And the demands of justice in the case of the wicked, and of grace in that of the believer, are fully satisfied in the eternal rewards and punishments in store for men, as is shown in the reply of Abraham to the tortured Dives: “Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.” Luke 16:25. But not only does God communicate earthly goods to the wicked that they may at least have such share in the mercies of God as they are capable of receiving in their unbelieving condition, but also to the end that all possible inducements might be offered them to turn from their error to the living God.

“Despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” Rom. 2:4.

God bestows earthly gifts upon all, and would have all learn to acknowledge His mercy, that they may receive the gifts of eternal life.

Hence in this petition we pray that He would make us sensible of His mercies and enable us to receive them with thanksgiving. There are thousands who never seem to be aware that God is good to them, though they daily receive their bread from His hands: they perceive not His goodness, because they will not behold it. In this petition we pray that God would purge our sight and turn our eyes, that we may behold it. And not only do we ask for ability to acknowledge His love, but for grace that we may be fully sensible of it and realize it. For there can be no true gratitude where there is no such realization. Without it there may be a cold and careless expression of thanks, but no thankfulness in truth. We pray to be enabled to receive God’s gifts with thanksgiving—true cordial thanksgiving. For, though we can receive temporal gifts without this, as the swine feed and grow fat without it, yet our desire is; to use higher gifts with which we have been endowed for the appreciation of the divine mercy, and this rather be-

cause by ingratitude we cast away the divine blessing for the soul which is connected with all divine gifts, the goodness of God being designed to lead us to repentance. We despise the mendicant who takes from a generous friend's abundance all that he desires, without asking, or thanking the friend or regarding his wishes; and we despise him none the less, though we know that the friend cheerfully gives him all. All feel that such an ingrate wretch is heartless.

But such are all who live upon our Father's bounty, and never acknowledge their dependence, and never feel one grateful emotion. Our petition is a humble request to be delivered from such meanness; and our Savior taught us to offer it, that we might have a daily reminder of our obligations to God, and a daily warning against the ungenerous and ungodly sin of ingratitude. We are taught to pray thus, moreover, because the gift bestowed becomes an actual blessing to us only by receiving it gratefully.

“Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and with prayer.” 1 Tim. 4:4, 5.

It is only thus that we are sure of having our Father's blessing with it, and that it will and must be for our good; it is only thus that we know that we are content with what we have, because we know that this is what it seemed good to our heavenly Father to give in answer to our petition, and “better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith,” Prov. 15:10; and it is only thus that we have that confidence in His goodness which will cheer and gladden us in view of eternity: He who thus mercifully provides for the body, how should He not much more preserve the soul until that day! Thus we receive the blessing which is promised upon doing all things in the name of the Lord, a great spiritual blessing, at the same time that we have the divine blessing upon our basket and store.

“For the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked; but He blesseth the habitation of the just.” Prov. 3:33.

## **Article Three.**

We ask God to give us *our* bread. It is not a mere fancy which prompts us to lay stress upon the little word “our.” For according to the word of God each one is to eat his own, not another’s bread. This is not meant as though we could merit our temporal comforts of God and therefore claim them of Him as our due. Bread is ours, not over against God, whose are all things and from whom all proceeds, but over against our fellow-men, whose are only such things as God is willing to bestow. What we have procured in accordance with God’s will is ours. This we are to use and enjoy. But as God gives to each what is meet, He has forbidden us to take what He has been pleased to bestow upon another. How it is bestowed is of no importance as regards the present question: each is to take what God gives, and eat his own bread. Sometimes he gives it in extraordinary ways, as when He fed the children of Israel in the wilderness; or when the multitude were filled with a few loaves and fishes. Sometimes He bestows it by inheritance from relatives and presents from friends. But the ordinary law of acquisition is that of labor. This law of labor is expressly stated in various passages of Scripture.

It was announced immediately after the fall. “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, until thou return unto the ground.” Gen. 3:19. And this law was by no means repealed when Christ came; it is just as distinctly stated in the New as in the Old Testament.

“We beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more: and that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.” 1 Thess. 4:10—12.

In this is inculcated not only the Christian duty of labor, but it is also implied that idleness tends to dishonesty and want. The mind will be employed in mischief if no other employment is given; and penury, which usually follows idleness, prompts men to the application of dishonest means to obtain bread, which, being not fairly obtained, is not their own, but another’s bread. Hence "St. Paul says again:

“When we were with you this we commanded you, that if anyone should not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread.” 2 Thess. 3:10—12.

The law is thus plainly given together with the reason for it.

But whilst we are bound to this law, so that we sin by violating it, God is not so bound. He bestows the necessaries of life also upon idlers, as upon transgressors in other respects. Indeed, those who despise God's ways and word often seem to have all the earthly good that they could desire. And yet we can confidently expect what we need only when we have fulfilled the condition upon which God has promised it, and of course only then can we have the "patience of hope" when our faith is proved. Idlers, though they glitter with gold and fare most sumptuously today, have no security that starvation will not overtake them tomorrow, for the demands of justice are what the apostle says: "He that will not work shall not eat," and any moment it may please God to let justice have its course and idleness its due. And if God, in the plenitude of His long-suffering love, still bestows bread upon such, the law is not nullified or changed, and God's forbearance should not be despised, as though it were indifference. It is mere foolhardy presumption to trust in Providence when we utterly disregard the conditions which Providence has annexed to the promises. So it is mere presumption also to ask anything of God whilst we live in such disregard of His will.

For the soul can never be sincere in its appeal to the promises while it overlooks the duties which stand in close connection with them. While, then, God gives also to the unthankful and to busybodies who labor not at all, the promise is to those who labor, whether mentally or physically, so long as they are able to do this; and when persons have become disabled, without having enough in store from their labor, the promise is to them still, though their wants are supplied through another channel. As soon as the law of labor becomes inapplicable, the law of love is intended to be applied as the means of subsistence.

The labor applied directly to the tilling of the soil is rewarded, in the mercy of God, with the fruits of the field.

But all labor is intended to be remunerative. We can claim wages as a just one from our fellow-men for whom we labor. "The laborer is worthy of his hire." Luke 10:9. It is but right that time spent and toil applied for the benefit of another, should be remunerated, as it is God's order that it should. Time and strength are a competency, and where they are spent for another the necessaries of life should be given in return, and more where men are agreed that the powers put forth deserve more at men's hands. For that the reward cannot be equal in all cases is manifest. Nor was it intended to be.

The earth yields more largely, so that labor is better repaid, in some places than in others.

Some persons succeed better than others, having larger endowments by nature, or being surrounded by circumstances more favorable than others. In the same community we find some growing wealthy and some remaining poor whilst both may be equally honest and industrious. In all pursuits the rule is not that all laborers shall have the same pecuniary circumstances, so that none is richer or poorer than the other. Equality in these things is not at all the divine law, inasmuch as God bestows upon each as seems to Him best. Among His children here on earth there is equality only so far in bestowal of His gifts that all who trust in Him shall have food and raiment and contentment therewith and therefore the prayer intended equally for all extends no further than this. This God's blessing always supplies to them, and ordinarily through their labors, as the condition appointed by Him to secure bread of our own.

The kinds of labor must necessarily be manifold in the community, because the wants to be supplied are so manifold. Each one is also to have an honest calling, and labor faithfully in it, whatever it may be, looking to God for the blessing upon his labor. Of course this blessing could not be expected, and it would be blasphemous to ask it, if the business pursued were in itself unscriptural. The occupation must be one of usefulness to the community in some way, and one therefore which can be conscientiously practiced. Having such a vocation, we should follow it industriously, doing all in Jesus' name, and the divine blessing will not be wanting. What the vocation is should not seem to us so important, if only it be an honest and honorable one. We should not be ambitious for profession and employments that are more highly esteemed in the world than others; it is enough to have a fair field in which to exercise such talents as God has given us for the common good.

The craving for higher stations and more prominent places is of the flesh, and should be discountenanced. God's design is that we should be assistants to each other: "By love serve one another," Gal 5:13.; and no occupation in which we can do this in a way that is pleasing to God, should seem too mean for the best men. Even reason condemns the contemptuous sneers which persons in the so-called higher circles sometimes affect toward those said to belong to the lower; much more does the Word of the Lord condemn it, which designs to render us equals in grace, though in infe-



rior things there be the greatest inequality. As well might the eye and the ear despise the nose and the mouth, as the merchant or professional man look with contempt upon the farmer and mechanic. The highest honor which we can have in any station, is not to be wealthy or flattered by interested admirers, but to be faithful; and he is so who does all in the name of Jesus, whether he be rich or poor, a mechanic or an attorney. Honest labor is more honorable than wealth: and it only shows how little Christianity has pervaded our people when they sneer at labor and connive at the dubious means by which the sneerers amassed their wealth, or when they frown on poverty struggling honestly and industriously along, while they smile on the mere semblance of prosperity though coupled with dishonesty and idleness. "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called," 1 Cor. 7:20., whether he be a prince or a servant: in Christ Jesus we are all one, whether high or low: and in that calling let each be faithful; then God will supply his wants bountifully, and he will have the comfort of eating his own bread, and not what justly belongs to another.

They eat not their own bread who procure it by unlawful means, i.e. who procure it without giving for it an equivalent either in labor or in the rewards of labor, or receive it from charity of brethren when they are not dispensed from labor by disability. Of such unlawful means there are many, and they are practiced much. When a man breaks through and steals what God has given to another, all agree in pronouncing it an infraction of God's law and an attempt to live upon another's bread. But when one takes the advantage of another in trade, passes off a thing for more than it is worth, or by depreciation secures a thing for less than its value, there are many whom Satan has so blinded that they see no harm in it. And when a person acquires it by games of chance, whether by gambling or by lottery, or by any of those multifarious means which men have set up against the simple plan of God, many Christians even will pronounce it innocent, in some cases even laudable. As long as churches resort to such questionable means of raising money as fairs, and lotteries, and suppers, and balls, and thus manifest their want of trust in the Shepherd's care and plan, nothing else could be expected, but that godless ways will seem right in the eyes of many, and that human institutions should be fostered as substitutes for the divine.

But warnings must be uttered against such crying sins of our day: and those who know better must not cease to bear their testimony against the wrong, and call attention to the plain fact, that those who acquire their

livelihood otherwise-than in accordance with the lawful means, are eating bread which strictly is not their own. Our petition daily reminds us that we should eat “our” bread, receiving it of God as a mercy and from man as a right, praying and laboring faithfully, that thus we may always be sure of, content with, and. thankful for our daily bread.

## Article Four.

We ask God to give *us* bread. The true child of God, while he prays for the daily supply of his own wants, is not forgetful of those of his neighbors. He does not pray for himself alone, but also for his brethren: as faith prompts to the one, so charity to the other. As he wishes to be saved. himself and to have his temporal wants supplied until he shall obtain possession of his eternal inheritance, so in love to his brethren he wishes the same for them. Hence he says: give us our bread, embracing them in his petition also. Thus that carnal selfishness is excluded which is greedy only for its own gain, envious of others’ prosperity, and unwilling to fulfill that law of love, in accordance with which they are to be supported who have no means and are unable to labor.

Against the avarice which can never say “us”, in this petition, without mentally substituting “me”, nor “daily bread” without thinking of worldly wealth, there are so many and such plain warnings in the Scriptures, that it seems marvelous how many, notwithstanding their profession of Christianity and reading of the Bible, still fall into it. But many read the Bible and hear the preaching of the Word with so little reverence, treating it merely as though it were man’s word, that its force is entirely broken and its efficacy set aside. In others there is such a gross neglect of earnest vigilance and self-examination in the light of divine revelation, that the evil becomes gradually rooted without being observed; or, when it has become too palpable to escape observation entirely, its roots have taken such firm hold and its shadow has so darkened the mind, that it seems to the deluded victim a mere dutiful care for the future which cannot and need not be eradicated. The prevalence of the sin cannot be owing to a want of clearness in the Scriptures concerning it. It is clearly defined and utterly condemned. We can distinguish it from frugality if we will, and can know its soul-destroying character if we do not turn away from the light. And if the tendencies of our

age are such that custom does not denounce, but rather encourage the greed of gain, and deems wealth honorable however procured; if the love of money seems innocent, to say the least, in natural reason's eye; the more ought we, whose guide is God's Word, to heed the heavenly instructions and warnings given for our protection and profit, that we may know the destroyer notwithstanding his enticing form and winning ways. We should be careful not to place this rampant sin too low in the scale of vices to be condemned and shunned. Some will shrink with horror from the drunkard or profane swearer, Whilst engaged themselves, though with the struggle to preserve the appearance of worshiping God in the palpable idolatry of Mammon worship. The vices of intemperance and profanity are sad and bad enough: the curse of God is upon them: yet not these, but "the love of money is the root of all evil." 1 Tim. 6:10. Not money in itself: this is good, not an evil at all; good men will use it for good ends and make it redound to the praise of Him who gives it with other good gifts. But the lust for it is an unmitigated evil, the root of innumerable other evils.

"They that will be rich fall into temptation, .and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." 1 Tim. 6:9.

Hence our Savior's advice to the rich youth: "Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." Matt. 19:21. Not as though riches must necessarily be an obstacle in the way of obtaining heavenly treasures. Had the youth's heart been right his wealth would have been no impediment; he might have made friends of the unrighteous mammon; but his heart clung to his great possessions with an idolatrous attachment, and he could follow Jesus only by being delivered from his slavery to his idol, and this deliverance could be his only by breaking the idol and dashing it from him. But he would rather leave Jesus than his riches: he went away sorrowful. And is not this the case with many still? Let it be taken to heart what our Savior says, in connection with the case of the rich youth, and in reference to all such cases: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Matt. 19:24. As we wish to be saved, therefore, we must renounce that covetousness which deters us from praying for others as well as ourselves in the petition: Give us bread.

And thus we will of course renounce that shameful envy which grieves at others' prosperity. For this is an expression of the same selfishness, and it is an expression so mean and base that nature frowns upon it and is ashamed of it, as is evident from the fact that even the most selfish will seek to conceal it. But its concealment is not its cure; and that which the Scriptures demand of us is not to hide it, but to eradicate it, as selfishness in one of its forms. It is bad enough to grasp for everything within our reach for our own use or abuse: but it is worse still to grieve and grow bitter towards a neighbor because God has been pleased to give him his proper portion of temporal goods. It is avarice in its full development: a desire to have all for self, and a consequent discontent and dissatisfaction when any portion is bestowed upon another. Whenever this fourth petition is sincerely prayed such base passions are of course prayed against; it implies a petition for deliverance from them. Whilst we harbor them we quarrel with God for hearing this petition, which asks for the necessaries of life as well for the brethren as for ourselves.

Moreover, if our petition is sincere we will not forget that God's means of giving to those who are unable to earn their bread by labor, and who yet have not a sufficiency in store to support themselves, is by the charity of those whom He has blessed with abundance. It is manifestly sheer hypocrisy to ask God to give us bread, and yet refuse to impart of the abundance bestowed upon us—and bestowed with the express command to communicate of our superfluity to them that are in need—to the poor whom we have always with us.

*“If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body: what doth it profit?” James 2:15-16.*

What doth it profit if we ask God to give us bread, and He answers the prayer by giving enough for all, but, in order to give scope for the exercise of Christian graces, gives a surplus to one for distribution, as His steward, to those whose store is deficient, and the steward most basely retains all for himself? Does not such a person's prayer resolve itself into unmeaning sound not only, but miserable mockery? But this is really God's plan. He makes men His stewards; He gives to the needy, but His ordinary way is to give through these who have enough and to spare. Hence His command:

“To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” Heb. 13:16. Those who have received much have received it as a probation whether they will be faithful or not: of their stewardship they must give a strict account on that great day. Wealth should rather humble us than render us proud, as it is given us in trust only to disburse it according to our Master’s will, and should make us prayerful, that we may not prove unfaithful stewards of our Master’s treasures.

“This I say, he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give: not grudgingly or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.” 2 Cor. 9:6—7.

Man is blessed not by parsimonious saving, but by liberal giving. In this sense let us pray the Lord to give as bread and we shall, if we receive much, receive an additional blessing by communicating of our abundance to them that are in need, and at the same time be prepared, through faith in Jesus, to give an account of our stewardship when the Master shall call us to the reckoning. God gives as bread when He gives to one for the other.

## Article Five.

We ask God to give us *this day* our *daily* bread. That which is a legitimate object of Christian desire and prayer is our daily portion—as much as we need this day; whatever is beyond this we should have no concern about. For the Father knows best whether anything beyond the necessaries for to-day would be beneficial to us, and if it would, how much it is best to bestow; and as regards the wants of tomorrow we need not care for them to-day: our petition is daily repeated, and we know that our petitions are heard day by day. A competence today is all that we can confidently ask, although God may answer our prayer by giving us more than we ask or think; He may give us in one day enough for years; for to His loving kindness there is no limit. But we must ask only enough for today, and be content with this, if God bestows no more, taking no thought for the morrow. The child that has full confidence in its parents’ ability and willingness to provide, is never found grieving and lamenting about tomorrow’s food and raiment, when it has sufficient for today; and our heavenly Father, whose goodness and

power are infinite, can surely be confided in rather than feeble man. Having what is needful now, tomorrow is time enough to be concerned about tomorrow's wants, especially as the supply does not depend upon our, but our Father's care. We need but faithfully discharge the duties of our calling: this is all that is properly our care: the results are the care of God, who alone giveth the increase. It is the indication of a doubting spirit to be always troubled about God's part; as though the danger were that, even after we have done all, He might neglect us, or as though God had reserved nothing to Himself, and all, the increase and the blessing, as well as the labor, depended upon ourselves. Of such heathenish feeling there is a great deal in Christendom; and it should be our daily prayer to be delivered from it. We ask God, in this petition, to give us confiding hearts which, as they believe that not we, but God provides for us, while labor is imposed upon us as a duty, the faithful discharge of which He blesses, so they may always trust His providence and lay aside those needless, thankless doubts and fears which impeach His faithfulness and goodness. We ask for deliverance from the vile sin of proudly putting ourselves in God's place by imagining that all depends upon ourselves, whilst we have in reality nothing to do but to use the powers and accept the blessings which He confers, and which He confers unmeritedly. We are to cast all our cares upon Him, for He careth for us.

“Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek.” Matt. 6:81.

God, who never neglects the fowls of the air, nor the flowers of the field, but feeds them and clothes them richly day by day, will not leave nor forsake His children. “Ask and ye shall receive.” And if we do this daily and in faith, how can we be troubled about the future, of which God has promised to take care? The inconsistency is so palpable that none can fail to see it who do not voluntarily close their eyes against it.

“Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” Matt. 6:34.

And if poverty presents strong temptations to doubt our Father's care and providence, let it be remembered that in this world of probation all are nec-

essarily tried in some form. Temptations to unbelief encounter the rich as well as the poor. None is free from them: the devil must be resisted: there is no victory without a battle. And there is no lack of weapons wherewith to fell the foe. We have divine promise, which never can deceive us, that God will not forsake them that put their trust in Him, that whilst the Lord is our Shepherd we shall not want. Ps. 23.

And if we cannot see whence we are to receive tomorrow's bread, God can, and that must suffice for those who live by faith and not by sight. Though every channel through which provisions could be transmitted were closed to our eyes, and no deliverance from gaunt starvation possible within the range of our vision, yet would we be safe enough in His hands, whose vision is not limited like ours, and who has ways and means of which our poor philosophy never dreams. But such is the weakness of man that if he cannot see the garner, or if it seem not well filled, visions of hollow-eyed famine stare him grimly in the face, though he have enough and to spare for today: he acts as if God had no resources except those in our sight. And when the well-filled garners are in sight, his weak and wayward heart is inclined to put all confidence in these rather than in our heavenly Father, who kindly fills them, and who can supply our wants just as well as when they are empty, or refuse supplies when they are full. The heart is wrong that does not trust in God for daily bread, and does not humbly ask it at His hands, whether the circumstances be those of adversity or of prosperity. The Scripture rule is plain, to work and pray, and trust in God for every blessing, and in accordance with this we ask for so much of earthly provision as is needed today, because so much is promised, leaving all care to Him who is mercifully pleased to relieve us of its burden.

But in answer to our prayer God frequently bestows more than is needed today: and as we are not to murmur when we have merely enough, we are not to waste when we have to spare. As we have the general rule to work and pray, so we have the other rule, perhaps as general in its application, to give and save. We have already referred to the duty of liberality; and to refuse to give on the plea that we must lay up store for future years, when prosperity may forsake us, so that we must leave a decent estate to our children, is simply ungodly: it implies the ungrateful suspicion that God may forsake us when we are old and gray-headed, or refuse to be with our children and bless them. God often gives more than we need today, but He gives it that we may exercise also the blessed grace of giving. We should

give freely, then save, not be guilty of the heinous sin of trying to save only when God asks back a portion of His gifts. Let us not save by robbing God: save rather in food and raiment than in that which is to be devoted to charity.

Striving earnestly against the love of money, which is the root of all evil, we have means wherewith to do good even when we have none to lavish upon our worldly lusts and pleasures. Labor and pray, and ye shall have; give and save, and ye shall be blest in what ye have. Humbly ask for daily bread; be content with this when it is bestowed, and thankful for its bestowal; and when more is given use it according to God's will, and ye shall have godliness with contentment, which is great gain.



# Forgive Us Our Debts As We Forgive Our Debtors.

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## I. Our Need Of Forgiveness.

Whilst we are accomplishing the end of our creation when we live to God's glory, in His kingdom, by doing His will and suffering it, our souls being free to serve Him by being relieved from temporal anxieties, there is still much to be desired in our journey through this wilderness of probation to the promised land in heaven. There are evils to be averted and dangers from which to be delivered. We are saved by faith through grace; but this salvation may be forfeited at any stage of our pilgrimage; for it is absolutely certain as an everlasting possession only when we have entered that happy land, where sin can never come and the fall is no longer possible. Therefore we pray against all evil that endangers our salvation; we ask to be released from sin and its dreadful consequences. The word "give" in the preceding suggests the word "forgive" in the present petition. We ask for gifts, but our sin and iniquity renders us unworthy of them. Conscious of this we entreat God to forgive what stands in the way of His giving. Therefore this petition not only asks for an unspeakable gift in itself, but its being heard is the condition upon which alone we can hope for the granting of our other requests.

We pray that God would graciously forgive us our debts. This is an acknowledgment that we are sinful beings. "We pray in this petition that God would not regard our sins;" for "we very often and greatly offend and deserve severe chastisements." Those who refuse to make this confession deprive themselves of heavenly gifts through grace; for by their very pride and self-righteousness they reject that Savior in whom alone "we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Hence the first announcement of the Gospel to man was accompanied by a call to repentance; and after we have repented and believed, we still owe much that we can never pay, on which account we can always speak of our debts. These must be canceled in some way. The law has always claims upon us from which we cannot be released. It requires perfect holiness. "Ye shall be holy,

for I am holy, saith the Lord.” Lev. 11:44. This implies perfect love, which is the sum of the whole law.

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Matt. 22:37-9.

Our Maker thus demands a renunciation of all iniquity and the possession of all holiness. Every transgression of His righteous requirements is a debt unpaid which merits punishment.

A vain hope of escape is sometimes sought in the assertion, that if such perfection were required it would imply that God has given a law which His creatures can never fulfill. It is supposed that this would be unjust, and inferred that such a law is not given. But whatever inferences men may draw from the fact of such requirement, the fact itself cannot be disputed: it is written too plainly upon the sacred record. The inference, however, is utterly false. For it must be remembered that God made men good, and requires of them only what He enabled them to render. Would any reasonable person suppose that God would ask less of His creatures, because the latter, by their own fault, had lost the power with which they were originally endowed, for compliance with the divine commands? Must God give them an unholy law, must He allow it to be trampled upon with impunity by His creatures, because they have become unholy? God made man good, and surely it is right and just that thus He should command Him to live.

How much of this debt has been paid by us? Alas, nothing at all! And yet, although we have deserved nothing but punishment on account of our transgressions, God is still merciful, crowning us with daily blessings. Our meat and drink, our raiment and shelter, our health and strength, our comforts and enjoyments, are all monuments of His unmerited favor. Besides these He daily offers manifold spiritual gifts through the Gospel. We owe thousands of talents already, and yet, in the greatness of His mercy, He lends us daily more.

Hence this petition speaks of debts, in the plural, not only of a debt. We are “shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin.” Ps. 51:5. We deserve God’s wrath on this account, for inwardly we are not paying the debt which is due—the debt which our hearts owe. But our actual transgressions are manifold in addition: debt upon debt is incurred, by our failure to meet the law’s de-

mands. And this failure is by no means extenuated by the fact that we are naturally unable to meet them. This inability renders the sin more heinous and the requisite amendment hopeless. It only proves our spiritual bankruptcy, which is not only irremediable by our own powers, but which we have naturally not even the wish to remedy. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Phil. 2:13. Mere forgetfulness of duty, a mere accidental neglect now and then would be bad enough, for it would be breaking a law so holy that no circumstances could excuse the fault.

But our sin is not only occasional. We not only do evil, but we are evil, and therefore do evil continually. Our hearts are evil, and as a consequence of this our thoughts, words and deeds are evil also. Even those acts which we call virtuous have enough of our wicked nature mingled with them, being tainted in the purpose if not in the performance, to render our sinfulness evident. We sometimes strive to pay, but it is but a mill among the millions of talents due; and this mill is not unfrequently spurious. Some virtues God rewards, others He forgives. "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." 1 Jn. 1:8. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Rom. 3:23.

That there are those who deny their sin, who are pure in their own eyes, does of course not alter the case. The truth is not in them, otherwise they would see their debt. The Psalmist indeed exclaims: Who can understand his errors? cleanse Thou me from secret faults. Ps. 19:22. But this is far from saying that our sinfulness cannot be perceived. It only proves that our sins are innumerable. Many of them become known to us; but notwithstanding our self-examination, many of them remain hidden from our eyes, and these the Psalmist calls "secret faults." He that is disposed to pride himself upon his purity and deny his sin, need but look into the Scriptures and learn the nature of his sin, and then into his own heart, comparing his condition with the holy rule, and he cannot fail, if he is at all sincere, to perceive the magnitude of his unpaid debts.

Serious minds in all lands and ages have not only been conscious of human wickedness, but have also felt that something is required of man in payment of his enormous debt. Nature as well as revelation teaches the doctrine of future punishment. The thoughts of heathen hearts have often been troubled by the consciousness of wrong—of claims upon them remaining unsatisfied; and heathen sacrifices intended to propitiate their imaginary

deities, are an evidence of conscious guilt by reason of uncanceled debt, “their own conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing and excusing one another.” Rom. 2:15. The consequence of sin will surely come. God does not terrify us with delusive fears, as He does not comfort us with delusive hopes. What conscience whispers in our ears, the Word of God proclaims upon the housetops. “The soul that sinneth it shall die.” Ez. 18:4. “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.” Rom. 1:18. And this unrighteousness will be strictly judged and rewarded on that day “when God shall judge the secrets of men.” Rom. 2:16. No exception will be made in favor of any soul, nor will any appeal from that tribunal be possible: “that judgment is universal and final.”

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” 2 Cor. 5:10.

It is therefore beyond controversy that a settlement must take place, and that we shall be called, eventually, to a strict account for our debts.

When, therefore, persons flatter themselves that some way, of which indeed they know nothing at present, but of which they have various surmises, will probably be found, by which they may escape the damnation denounced, they practice a levity which is unbecoming in any serious business of this life, but which, in a matter pertaining to the soul’s eternal welfare, is unutterably foolish. The sober mind, reflecting upon our present condition and future prospects, can have no peace unless it finds some way by which the guilt incurred may be removed and the debt discharged. To deny sin is to cry peace, peace, when there is no peace: conceal and deny it as we may, it will sometimes stand before us in its terrible enormity. The way of peace must not be a mere surmise; it must be a certainty. So long as its existence is a mere supposition, the unrest must remain within us. For the soul cannot be at rest under doubtful hopes even when a temporal calamity is in prospect, much less can it be when its eternal happiness is involved in the impending doom. And all those surmises about the escape from the consequences of guilt, with which some succeed in lulling their awakening consciences to sleep again, are but self-deluding expedients to conceal the soul’s unbelief and misery from its own sight.

Perhaps the most common of these expedients, which Satan suggests, are these:

One. That a life of devotion to God will atone for past faults. But the law claims all and more than we can render. How should the performance of that which we owe today discharge yesterday's debt? We cannot even do what is demanded of us at the present, much less do so much more as to pay debts contracted in the past.

“When ye 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 17:10.

We cannot pay our daily dues; how then could we do works of supererogation to cancel past debts?

Two. That God will probably abate the rigor of His demands and not deal with us according to the letter of the law and to our deserts. But this would involve the falsehood that God can look with pleasure upon sin and suffer it to be committed with impunity. As He is holy, all unholiness must be banished from His presence. Besides, should God threaten punishment and then, imitating sinful man, break His word and become a liar? The thought is shocking, and the theory which involves it must be a miserable shift. If this were so all our hopes would be in vain. For God would cease to be God by becoming false to His word; and how should we trust His promise of glory, if we doubt the truth of His menaces? We may rest assured that all hopes resting upon the expectation that God's word will pass away, must be vain.

Three. That our final repentance will atone for all our sins and pay all our debts. A supposition so absurd would not be entertained for a moment by reasonable men in a question of dollars and cents. If a thief is sorry for his theft, or the murderer for his murder, or the bankrupt for his unsettled accounts, does this sorrow atone for all and make all right? No one can think so. We ask restitution as far as it is possible, or justice done by the punishment of the offender, unless the offence is freely forgiven. Eternal weeping and wailing cannot undo a wrong or make a single transgression good. Penitence, apart from the atonement made for our sins by our Savior, is of no more avail in paying our moral and spiritual, than in paying our pecuniary debts.

We must therefore seek some other way to escape the penalty of unpaid debts. And such a way—a way that is absolutely certain and which gives the soul true peace, is revealed to us in the precious Bible. It is the way to which our petition refers, and to which we resort in the use of the petition. Because we see the impossibility of paying our debts, we go to God and humbly, for Christ's sake, ask their forgiveness.

## **II. The Ground Of Forgiveness.**

We pray that our heavenly Father, “though we very often and greatly offend and deserve severe chastisement, would of His free grace pardon us.” This pardon was the comfort of God's people in all ages: they fled for refuge to no other hope; for they knew it to be their only means of escaping from the curse of the law which they had broken. It is the only comfort of wretched man now. For “if Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared.” Ps. 130:3—4. This forgiveness of sin is the substance of the Gospel, that which makes it glad tidings of great joy to our ruined race.

It is dependent upon God's grace in Christ. We ask “that He would of His free grace pardon us.” If He rewarded us according to our iniquities not one would escape the damnation of hell. But though we are sinful and rebellious He loves us still, and in His love would save us from the consequences of sin and rebellion. This love, shown to sinners for their happiness, is grace. It excludes every thought of merit; it is grace because it is unmerited love—mercy and goodness shown to the undeserving. “By grace ye are saved.” Eph. 2:5. That is, ye are saved by God's pure goodness, blessing you while you deserved cursing. “If by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace.” Rom. 11:6. While we lay dead in the wretchedness of sin, without the least ability to raise ourselves from our ruin, He against whom all our offenses were committed devised the precious plan to save us, having never ceased to love us. “God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were sinners Christ died for us.” Rom. 5:8. We can never appreciate the magnitude of that unspeakable love wherewith God loves us, until we contemplate it as exerted in behalf of His creatures who rebelled and became His enemies, and exerted too at a stupendous sacrifice. We learn the wondrous power and extent of divine love only when we contemplate it as

grace to the wicked and condemned: love so great that it induced our God not even to spare His own Son, but freely give Him up for us all. “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” John 3:16. “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” Rom. 5:6.

It is therefore base ingratitude to our crucified and risen Redeemer to think and speak of our salvation as in any way dependent upon our own deeds and deserts, to the disparagement if not total denial of divine grace. It is no mere strife of words when we zealously and earnestly resist that form of false doctrine which ascribes part if not all of the glory of salvation to man. It is a doctrine that encourages the soul to lean upon itself, though in spiritual things it is a mere broken reed and can do nothing and support nothing; that engenders pride, which stands in the way of the requisite repentance and faith in Jesus; and that detracts from the Savior’s glory, though this was purchased through suffering and woe, the parallel of which the earth has never beheld. O, may we always remember that when we ascribe any merits to ourselves, whether as inducing Christ to die for us, or as inducing God to forgive us now that Christ thus died, we are robbing the Lamb of God of the glory due unto His name. “He that glorieth let him glory in the Lord.” 1 Cor. 1:31. “For by grace ye are saved through faith: and not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.” Eph. 2:8—9.

But as forgiveness is thus plainly dependent upon God’s grace in Christ, it follows that it is dependent upon Christ’s mediation. We are pardoned of God’s free grace; but this grace is in Christ, not independent of Him and His glorious work. It is unbounded grace; and yet it is necessarily connected with the gracious plan of salvation through God’s dear Son, and cannot go beyond it. For the redemption through the merciful Savior is the condition upon which alone the love of God can save us. He cannot become unjust and false to His word for the sake of saving us. Salvation without the atonement is an impossibility. The love of God is shown in devising a plan and putting it into execution, by which all the demands of justice and truth can be satisfied and yet mercy bestowed upon the condemned. He gave His son as a ransom for us all, “that He might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” Rom. 3:26. Thus grace could be shown to sinful men; love could be exercised toward the rebels without impediment, the righteous law and its unsatisfied demands did not forbid a bestowal of blessings

upon those who were under the curse, since Jesus “loved us all and gave himself for us.” Gal. 2:20. Hence we read that “the word was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth,” that “the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,” and that “of His fulness have all we received and grace for grace.” Jn. 1:14—17. The grace which saves us is “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Hence we receive and can receive forgiveness only for Jesus’ sake.

“Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.” Acts 13:38.

We cannot rid ourselves of our manifold stains, no human power can purify us, but “the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.” 1 Jn. 1:7. For the debt of perfect obedience which we owed was canceled by the obedience of Christ, and the punishment due to us on account of our transgressions was borne by Him.

“For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” Rom. 5:19.

“Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Phil. 2:8.

Hence it was necessary that our Saviour, though himself the infinite Lawgiver, should be under the law through His whole life. “When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.” Gal. 4:4—5. He became our substitute and took our place, having first assumed our nature. Being subject to the law He vicariously rendered perfect obedience to its requirements, and still suffered the punishment which it denounces against the transgressor, because, although He perfectly obeyed, we had transgressed it, and continue to transgress, and were thus worthy of death. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” Gal. 3:13. Thus we escape the curse because He bore it, and receive the blessing because he merited it for us. Our debts must be paid and Christ has paid them; therefore there is forgiveness for His sake; but not otherwise. The law was not repealed nor forgotten, but was fulfilled in our stead by our Saviour,



whose righteousness is ours by imputation. Hence, St. Paul says: “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! yea, we establish the law.” Rom. 3:31. For God gave His Son to die rather than that the law be made void in our salvation. The penalty threatened by the law will surely be inflicted upon all transgressors who have not fled for refuge to the hope set before us in Him who was made a curse for us. He that would be free from debt must seek forgiveness, and seek it alone in Jesus, “in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.” Col. 1:4.

### **III. The Means Of Forgiveness.**

As forgiveness is seen to be wholly dependent upon the redemption through Christ, so it is ordinarily dependent upon the means of grace. Of course it does not depend upon these in the same way as upon the grace of God and the redemption through Christ. The means of grace are not motives inducing our Maker to forgive us, nor conditions without which such forgiveness would be impossible. They are the channels through which the grace of God is conveyed to us; the forgiveness is imparted through them as the ordinary means appointed of God to this end. They are given us in mercy that we may know whither to go in order to receive what God is willing to bestow. If we refuse to receive it in the appointed way we cannot receive it at all. In this sense forgiveness is dependent upon the means of grace; they bring to us the Holy Spirit with the healing power of Christ, which ordinarily cannot be obtained without them. God is, indeed, not bound to these means exclusively, as He has made them known to us; He may choose to work by other means in extraordinary cases. But whilst He is not bound to them, we certainly are; and although He may sometimes influence souls by His grace through other means, yet we are not to seek grace by any other, those revealed being all-sufficient, and the rejection of these implying the rejection of all grace. The bestowal of forgiveness is ordinarily dependent upon the use of the appointed means, with which the power of God is connected.

Of these appointed means there are three, namely: The word of God and the Sacrament of Baptism and the Holy Supper. These are pointed out as such means by the Holy Ghost speaking in the scriptures, and no others beside these.

“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.” Rom. 1:16.

The gospel must therefore be the divine power unto remission of sins, for without this there can be no salvation. “Hence it was ordained that”repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations.” It would be but little comfort to the world if this preaching did not bring what it announced—if the forgiveness preached were not really contained in the word. It is itself the channel by which the precious gift is communicated to us, that it may be made our actual possession. Hence it pleased God not only to teach men their duty, and by manifold motives and inducements urge them to do it; this would give mankind but little joy and peace, while the profound consciousness of sin and inability remained in the soul: but “after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” 1 Cor. 1:21. It should be well observed that preaching does not show us how to save ourselves by our own efforts and accomplishments, but saves us. The gospel is glad tidings, not because it asks to do what we cannot, which would render it merely a new law, but because it proclaims to us that a Saviour has come and offers the salvation to us without money and without price. The great fact of the redemption is proclaimed, and the word by which the proclamation is made contains the saving power. “The words that I speak unto you they are spirit, and they are life.” Jn. 6:69.

Such a means of grace the scriptures also represent Holy Baptism to be, it having pleased God to offer the purchased salvation to men in several ways.

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He has saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” Tit. 3:5.

It is here said of this blessed sacrament, that it is a means of salvation in God’s hand, and this assurance is repeated by another apostle, who declares: “The like figure whereunto Baptism doth also now save us.” 1 Pet. 3:21. The flood is a type of which Baptism is the antitype; and this antitype, according to the apostle, doth also now save us. As Noah and his family were saved by the water, which, while it washed away the wickedness of the earth, was the means of bearing up the ark in which eight souls were pre-

served, so Baptism cleanses, not the flesh, but the soul from sin, and saves them that believe.

This power it has by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, who, having conquered all sin and buried us by Baptism into His death, Rom. 6:4, makes us partakers also of his glorious resurrection; for “as many of us as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” Gal. 3:27. Hence remission of sins is expressly connected with this-sacrament. “Then Peter said unto them: Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.” Acts 2:38. Hence it was an article of the church’s creed from the beginning: “I believe in one Baptism for the remission of sins.”

Such a means, finally, is the Holy Supper of the Lord. We are commanded to eat the Lord’s Body and drink His Blood, which were given and shed for the remission of sins. As the branches receive nourishment from the vine, so we from the Saviour. “The cup of blessing which we bless is it not the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” 1 Cor. 10:16.

Of this there should, and it might seem that there could be no doubt on the part of those who receive the scriptures; for the words of the institution are plain enough for a child to understand them. “Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said: Take, eat this is my body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying: Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” Matt. 26:26—28. As the Savior gave His Body and shed His Blood for our sins, that they might for His sake be forgiven us, the sacraments which present these to our souls necessarily offer salvation also which was purchased by the sacrifice, so that he that believes has remission and salvation. We could not have the communion with Christ, of which the supper is the means, without having" share in the salvation which He acquired for us. Just as the word of God is quick and powerful when preached or read, so is it powerful in the sacraments; they being what the word declares, namely the forgiveness of sins—of the debts to which our petition refers.

Wherever these means of grace are, there is forgiveness of sins; and whoever prays for forgiveness and refuses to believe it and receive through these means, prays amiss and will not obtain his requests. Christ has lived and died for us; our debts are paid for us; it only remains that we be in-

formed of the joyful fact and that strength be imparted that we may acknowledge it; and this knowledge and strength are offered us together in the word and sacraments. Thither must we go to receive it, not to human traditions or human exercises, and going thither we have that certainty of remission which reliance upon our works and feelings can never bestow; for we have God's promise, and need only believe it—not see it or touch it, becoming certain by the use of our senses, but believe it first of all, and have peace in believing. Of course not every one who uses the means must on this account necessarily be saved, just as not every one for whom Christ died is saved.

Much of the prevailing unbelief with regard to the means of grace and their efficacy would fall away if persons took pains to understand the statements of scripture with regard to them, or rather if they would not add their own errors to the scripture truth, then reject all as erroneous. If we reject the gospel, and cast away as worthless the gift offered us in the sacraments, it requires but little intelligence to see that they will avail us nothing. But they avail nothing, not because there was no grace conveyed, but because we spurned it from us by unbelief. It would be no fault of ours to have nothing when nothing was offered us, but our guilt is great, if when God extends His aid and blessing we reject it, as all do who refuse to repent and believe the gospel. If we have the means of grace, and yet are without grace, the fault is alwas and wholly ours; the grace is always present and seriously offered wherever the means are. But because we can put it from us by unbelief, the proffered forgiveness is not actually possessed by all to whom it is brought by the means; these save all those who believe, but none others.

#### **IV. Forgiveness Embraced By Faith.**

After what has been said it is needless to state that faith is by no means the meriting cause of our forgiveness. But that our possession of salvation depends upon it is incontrovertibly the teaching of Scripture. Forgiveness is merited for us by our Savior; it is communicated to us by the means of grace; it is appropriated by faith. Although God is willing to give it, Jesus having removed every obstacle in the way of giving it, and actually offers it by the appointed means, yet it is never an actual possession unless we believe. Faith makes it ours.

“To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.” Acts 10:43.

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Mark 16:16.

“By Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” Acts 13:39.

“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” Rom. 3:28.

Forgiveness of sins is therefore not dependent upon any preparatory righteousness on our part: it gives us peace in view of our unrighteousness. God asks of us merely that we should accept what He offers gratuitously. When glad tidings of precious treasures designed for us reach our ears, it is surely not reasonable to run to and fro in quest of ways by which to merit and thus procure what is proclaimed to be ours and offered gratis. If we have confidence in Him who sets them apart for us and sends us the message that they are ours, we merely accept the word, not by laboring to please the donor and thus render Him inclined to grant the gift, but by believing the announcement and rejoicing in the prospect of possessing the promised treasure. Christ has kindly paid our enormous debt and secured for us a mansion in the skies. This is a glorious fact whether we believe it or not; for His mercy and work stand as blessed realities independently of our faith. He sends us tidings of this in the Gospel, and we are to rejoice in the grace or reject the message. What possible relation can we sustain to it but that of believing the glad tidings or disbelieving them, by the former having the full benefit of the proffered blessing, by the latter making it of none effect, because refusing to let it influence the soul? There can be no gladness in the tidings to those who will not believe them. But faith gives peace, because the word assuring us that the curse is removed and that the blessing is in store for us on high, though we cannot see it now, is trustingly received, and the joy of the Holy Ghost, giving the assurance, embraced. Nothing but faith can be of any avail here. The attempt to merit the treasure by virtuous deeds or holy dispositions, is a virtual denial of the fact of the redemption and of the reality or sincerity of the gracious offer made in the word. God’s gracious gifts are surely rejected when we yet strive to pay our own debts and purchase our own mansions above, notwithstanding the divine declara-

tion concerning the payment rendered by the Savior and the divine offer of a home in heaven through grace for the Redeemer's sake. Hence the apostle tells us:

“Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law: ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.” Gal. 5:4, 5.

“For if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” Gal. 2:21.

Solemn words, which our Pelagianizing age should lay seriously to heart!

This doctrine of justification by faith alone, without the deeds of the law, does not render good works indifferent. They have nothing to do with our salvation, which does not come from man and his performances and attainments. “Ye are saved by grace through faith.” Christ is the Savior alone, and faith is the only means of embracing Christ. But faith, as it presupposes contrition on account of past sin, implies vigilance and prayer in the pursuit of holiness in the future. It renders good works necessary, but it alone saves, without any reference to its necessary consequences. That is not faith which is without repentance and without holiness. It is mere notion, perhaps a mere name, held or spoken with indifference, not an earnest fleeing from the wrath to come and laying hold of the Savior as the only refuge. When we have true faith we have the longing for as well as the calling to holiness. For it is a divine power in the soul, not a mere human opinion. It is not the result of our reasoning upon the probable advantages connected with the reception of the Gospel, nor a mere whim to adopt something new, nor a mere impulse to follow the multitudes who profess Christianity and carelessly admit its doctrines and practices; it is not the product of our intellect, or our will or our feelings; but it is the gift of Him who alone can save us. If it were a thing of our own production, then could We properly be said to save ourselves when once the way of salvation is shown us. But this is not the truth. “For by grace are ye saved through faith, not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” Eph. 2:8.

We are, indeed, taught to “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling,” Phil. 2:12; but the reason given by the apostle why we are to do so explains the sense in which we are to do it: “for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” Phil. 2:13. Because

God has given us grace and faith unto salvation we must not regard these gifts lightly, but work whilst it is day, lest we fall from grace by our carelessness and lose our salvation at last by straying from Jesus. Faith works by love; and when we resist the Holy Ghost prompting us to add to our faith virtue, we are grieving the Spirit and endangering the existence of faith as well as virtue. The tree that will not bear fruit must at last be hewn down as a cumberer of the ground. There needs therefore be no fear that we shall cease to work when we once believe that forgiveness is imparted through faith, without money and without price paid by us, on account of the infinite price paid by our Lord. For while we must positively deny the necessity of work unto salvation, because we must be saved, i.e. have faith which saves, before we can work aright, we just as positively declare, according to the Scriptures, that the good tree bringeth forth good fruit, that faith without works is dead, and that its life will necessarily be shown in good works. But just as soon as we seek any merit in these works, to the disparagement of Christ's merit, we fall from grace.

Our peace therefore always depends upon the forgiveness for which we pray, not upon our sinlessness. This petition, like all the rest, is repeated daily. No act of ours renders us just in God's sight, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. God declares us just in view of the satisfaction rendered and holiness acquired for us by our Substitute; and this justification is our actual possession the moment we believe it and as long as we believe it. But sanctification, becoming personally holy, is a gradual process, and requires our constant labor and care to attain it in an ever higher degree. The good leaven must have time to leaven the whole lump. Notwithstanding all our endeavors to live righteously and be holy, we still have sin: we have not attained perfection, and it is perfect holiness which God requires. Therefore we continue to pray daily for forgiveness, knowing that we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, on whose account all our sins are daily and richly forgiven. This is our comfort and joy; this alone gives us abiding peace, the peace Which Jesus gives. For though we believe and love and hope, we still deceive ourselves if we say we have no sin; all is imperfect, and notwithstanding all our endeavors much is wrong in us. We have peace in believing, being justified by faith.

Then we have confidence, too, to ask for such other things as we need, because the curse is graciously removed. Thus "we pray in this petition that God would not regard our sins nor deny our requests on account of them;

but that, though we very often and greatly offend and deserve severe chastisement, He would of His free grace pardon us and bestow on us what we desire.”

## V. Our Promise.

“We promise also, on our part, heartily to forgive and willingly to do good to those by whom we have been offended.” If our hearts are not right we may be asking for a curse instead of a blessing, as many no doubt, by thoughtlessly and impenitently offering this prayer, actually do.

For if we have an unforgiving, unconciliatory disposition, bearing ill-will to those who may have done us an injury, and desiring their injury in return, we ask God to do the same to us: forgive as we forgive! If we forgive not, our request is that we may not be forgiven. But the Christian desires no man’s hurt, and cordially forgives injuries done to Him, moved by the mercy shown to us and the forgiveness bestowed.

Hence in the Christian character lies the necessity of the promise. Our forgiveness of others does not render us worthy of being forgiven. The necessity of it does not lie in the power which some may suppose it to have of moving God to forgive us. We have already seen that we receive forgiveness by grace, without any claims of merit or worthiness on our part. And yet we cannot have forgiveness without a willingness to give it. This is expressly told us in the word of God.

“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”  
Matt. 6:14, 15.

But the meaning of this clause cannot be that we must first grant forgiveness which we desire from God; for grace in its very nature excludes all payment of its gifts, whether before or after their reception. God is willing to forgive, though we refuse forgiveness: when we were yet enemies, without any will or power to forgive our debtors, Christ died for us. So when grace is first imparted it must be without any good emotions or deeds meriting it on our part; for we have none by nature, since without Christ we can do nothing. John 15:5. The work must be begun by God, before we can have any of those qualities which it is the purpose of that divine work’ to



create in us: He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. Heb. 12:2. So our forgiveness of others can not be a meritorious condition of forgiveness: we must first receive grace before we can exercise it. But it is certain that when we are once endowed with it we must exercise it or it will disappear. And only after we have it will the Lord's Prayer be constantly used, as only then it can be rightly used.

The Christian life begins with the remission of sins; but then comes the wilderness and Jordan to pass before the promised land is reached. In this journey we need frequent forgiveness, as others need it at our hands; and being forgiven we have grace to forgive others; and retaining the grace by which we are enabled to forgive others, we embrace the proffered forgiveness daily. The forgiveness of others is a fruit of the faith by which we embrace forgiveness ourselves; but this fruit must always be brought forth, otherwise we, who are forgiven, will not be in a condition to embrace the needed daily forgiveness, because as soon as it ceases to bring forth its proper fruit it ceases to live and therefore necessarily ceases to embrace forgiveness.

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.” Col. 3:12, 13.

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love.” Gal. 5:6.

The necessity of forgiving others therefore lies in the necessity of having a living faith in order to receive forgiveness.

To forgive those who offend us requires a conquest of our natural disposition and impulses, which are ever more ready to resent than to forgive an injury: requires a faith that really clings to Jesus, the Savior of the soul, and something more than a mere notion or feeling. There is great danger, especially in these times of carelessness in respect to a clear apprehension of the truth, of mistaking a mere sentimentality, which luxuriates in the prospect suggested by divine promises, or which rejoices in the mere feeling, no matter how produced, of sins forgiven, for a living saving faith. A strong healthy faith discards continual appeals to the feelings, as if these were the end of Christianity, rather than the glory of God and the presentation of the

soul blameless before God on that great day, and as if these were the test of truth rather than God's infallible word; that preference for and hankering after the joyous emotions, to the neglect of that toil and suffering which an earnest practice of Christian principles requires and to which it subjects us; and that incessant indulgence in sickly sentiment without a strict conscientiousness in daily life, which is so frequent in these days. It does not seek pleasure only in Christianity. The Bible offers us "peace which passeth understanding," but also calls to "labor while it is day" in the midst of tribulation; and they do not fully receive the truth, if they receive it at all, who delight to speak of the Christian's rights and hopes, and luxuriate in the pleasures of prayer and praise in communion with others, but who will not attend to the stern demands of the Christian life in its application to the daily walk; who can speak eloquently of the beauty of holiness, but who will not go out amid the sleet when duty calls: with whom holiness consists in doing nothing and saying much. True faith does not forget that the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering, and that we are "joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we also may be glorified together." Rom. 8:17. It therefore never thinks that toil and pain are inconsistent with Christian joy and peace. It seeks to serve the Lord, keeping the high aim of honoring God always in View, and struggling on through glory and gloom towards its goal. It serves the Lord, and therefore prompts us to constant self-denial. Only where such a faith exists can we expect to find mutual forbearance and forgiveness. Only such a faith imparts it, as only such a faith receives it. For our natural inclination indisputably is to take revenge upon the offender—to give eye for eye and tooth for tooth; and only the grace of God can enable us to deny ourselves and forgive the person wronging or injuring us. And when wrongs are oft repeated, does not the flesh prompt even the Christian sometimes to think it unreasonable to bear and forbear so long? Evil feelings sometimes will come upon us, and powerfully impel us to revenge rather than forgiveness. But they must be resisted, and true faith Will resist them, because they are unlike those which our Savior bears, who forgives again and again; true faith will resist them at any cost; it will cut off the right arm or pluck out the right eye, rather than suffer us to renounce the Savior and be cast into hell. No mere easy sentimentalism will do for this; it requires a vigorous, self-denying, living faith in God's word.

It is this that moves us to make the promise, and this is the requirement to fulfill it. Where this exists there will be no complaint of the hardness of our Savior's words in answer to Peter's question: "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? until seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee until seven times, but seventy times seven." Matt. 18:21, 22. There will be the cordial wish and the persevering effort to accomplish this.

That in this respect, as in every other, we fail in manifold ways, need scarcely be mentioned. In every respect it is needful for us to say: Forgive us! And that we may not fail in such a way as to deprive ourselves of forgiveness, we ask the Lord to aid us in the trial.

# “Lead Us Not Into Temptation”

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## I. Temptation As A Probation.

IN THE PETITION of the Lord's prayer which precedes these words we look back at the sins of which we are already guilty, and on account of which we are deserving of God's displeasure; in the present we look at our own weakness and sinfulness, and ask God to guard us against possible sins in the future. In answer to the preceding petition we receive forgiveness and the wish to sin no more, but are not rendered incapable of sinning again. Our guilt is washed away, so that there is no condemnation to us; but poor sinners we still remain, who are warned not to be high-minded, but to fear. Though pardoned, we may perish at last by receiving the grace of God in vain and relapsing into that wretched condition of unbelief, in which the consciousness of sin no longer awakens regret, or in which where the conscience is seared as with a hot iron, we are no longer conscious of needing daily remission. The fall of Peter is a solemn warning to watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation and also fall; and the fall of Judas is a solemn warning not to confide too much in the possibility of a subsequent repentance and pardon. The believer is always anxious to show his gratitude for pardon received by living in conformity to His will who graciously pardons. And the more earnest and vigorous his faith, the more earnestly and vigilantly he will guard against the evil things around him. Therefore our Savior taught us to pray: "Lead us not into temptation!" And the Holy Spirit in our hearts never ceases to prompt us to this petition; for as God alone can forgive, so He alone can guard us against sin.

To understand this petition properly we must distinguish between the probation which is divinely appointed, and whose end is our growth in grace, and that enticement to evil which is more generally termed temptation. Properly speaking God tempts no man to evil; and yet we are taught to ask Him not to lead us into temptation. He thus leads us into trials, and these trials may be to us temptations to sin: that which we are to overcome is what by nature we do not hate. We entreat Him not to let them become

temptations to evil, but to strengthen us against the alluring power of the evils through which we must pass, that “though we may be tempted by them, we may nevertheless conquer, and finally obtain the victory over them.”

That this distinction, so necessary for the correct interpretation for our petition, is taught in the Scriptures, a few passages will suffice to show. Thus St. James uses the word in the sense of a probation:

“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.” James 1:2.

But afterwards the same apostle uses it in the sense of an allurement to evil:

“Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man.” James 1:13.

The probation is meant for our good; but if we fall in the trial, we must not ascribe the fall to Him who meant that we should endure and become strong.

“As the fining pot trieth the silver and the furnace the gold, so the Lord trieth the hearts.”  
Prov. 14:3.

This process becomes a dangerous one to us only when we cease to be gold and become dross.

Let us look, in the first place, at the necessity of temptation viewed as a probation. We must pass through trials which may prove to us the occasion of sinning, but which, if endured, will be for our lasting welfare. They are temptations on account of the evil in us.

Trials must be endured. No matter how great our advancement in holiness, evils will surround us and sins will beset us while we sojourn in this earthly wilderness. “In the world ye shall have tribulation.” Jn. 16:33. This is because sin is in the world; not only in some men, but in all; the whole world lieth in wickedness. Therefore even believers, who are chosen out of the world, are exhorted:

“Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” Heb. 12:1.

This old leaven of sin is to be purged out of our hearts, and to this end we are chastised:

“If ye endure chastening God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?” Heb. 12:7.

And this probation will and must continue until our journey is ended and we have entered the land of rest. Hence God is repeatedly said to prove us and to try us. Even when he showers blessings on us He proves us, whether we will acknowledge His kindness.

“I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them whether they will walk in my law or not.” Ex. 16:3.

By every commandment which he gives us He proves our obedience.

“It came to pass after these things that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham; and he said, behold here I am. And He said, take now thy son... and offer him for a burnt offering.” Gen. 22:1—2.

When He offers us opportunities to do good He proves our devotedness.

“I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.” 2 Cor. 8:9.

When He visits us with affliction He proves our patience.

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.” 1 Pet. 4:12.

Indeed we can conceive of no situation in which we can be placed that is not in some sense a probation. Wherever we are called to act or to suffer our fidelity to God, whose will is always cheerfully to be done, is tried.

Trials must come; but these trials are not sent to tempt us to evil. The evils exist, but they need not bring about our fall. We are to choose between good and evil; to choose the former, and facing the latter, wherever we meet it, by God's grace to overcome it. If freedom of choice were not given us, the case would be otherwise: God's will could then determine whether we shall stand or fall. But God is not the author of evil though we may choose it. Compulsory virtue all perceive to be no virtue at all. God gives us glorious privileges, and bestows upon us unspeakable blessings, and imposes upon us solemn duties; but He does not give them that we may abuse the mercies and prove recreant to the duties. We may sin in reference to them all, but God designed, as He commanded, that we should be holy in all. The possibility of evil is necessarily connected with the bestowal of the good and the striving for it. Adversity will frown upon us here, but we need not murmur and rebel. The world calls to sinful pleasures and presents strong enticements, but we need not yield. The flesh urges to sensuality, but we need not consent. We cannot prevent the misfortunes to which the flesh is put, but we can, by the grace of God, prevent the discontent which arraigns the justice or the mercy of providence. We cannot prevent the world's alluring vanities, but we can, by the same grace, resist them when they would draw us into their giddy whirl. We cannot prevent the cravings of our depraved flesh, but we can refuse to be its slaves and conquer it, though we cannot kill. We cannot prevent the devil from going about like a roaring lion in quest of souls for prey, but we can prevent him from devouring us. The evil is within us and around us, but we need not submit to its ravages. We may be induced to exclaim: "O wretched man that I am: who shall deliver use from the body of this death?" but this need not be the exclamation of despair, however fierce the struggle and imminent the apparent danger, for we may say with the apostle:

"I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." Rom. 7:24—25.

God chastens us, and permits manifold evils, but he tempts no man. He only proves us.

And these trials are for our good.—"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." Jam. 1:2, 3. And this is an undoubted blessing. Patience

is the uncomplaining, even joyful endurance of present crosses and losses in the hope of future eternal bliss. It is the happy condition of the soul which fully realizes the apostolic words:

“I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Rom. 8:18.

Hence it is classed among the precious fruits of the Spirit, Gal. 5:22. It is inseparably connected with hope, as labor is with love. “If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.” Rom. 8:25. It is “the patience of hope:” a hope unclouded by temporal troubles, because

“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. 10:13.

If the trial works such patience instead of dispelling it, as we are assured it does, it is manifestly a blessing, not an evil.—And only thus does it promote our welfare. It also fosters that humble and prayerful vigilance without which we would be in danger of missing our heavenly goal at last. Our sin and frailty become manifest to us by the fiery trials of tribulation. Were there not frequent opportunities afforded us of feeling our frailty and folly, we might soon deem ourselves sinless and rush into those whirlpools of iniquity from which there is no escape. The feebleness which becomes manifest in encountering our spiritual foes is an inducement to renounce all reliance upon sinful self, and humbly to raise our eyes to the hills whence our help cometh. Spiritual pride is averted by the knowledge of ourselves which is thus revealed.

So the Scriptures represent the object of our trials.

“Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, lest I should be exalted above measure.” 2 Cor. 12:7.

For the more richly we are bleat with divine gifts, the more are we in danger of exalting self at the expense of that grace. by which all are conferred. The thorns in the flesh remind us that we have no reason to be high-minded, however large may be our endowments, but that we have every reason to



watch and pray. Hence the apostle's thorn was not removed, though he much desired it before perceiving that it was a great blessing.

“For this thing I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” 2 Cor, 12:9.

We must become weak consciously, as we are really. before we can be strong: “for when I am weak then am I strong.” 2. Cor. 12:12. So, by disclosing our weakness, trials impart strength.

Finally, they are means to cultivate that mercy to our fellow-men of which Christ is our great Example. When by the Spirit of adoption we have learned to say “Our Father,” we are not to withdraw from the world into some quiet retreat, and fold our hands in self-pampering ease. We are to remain upon the battle field of life, while life is spared us, and struggle with sin and suffering, and labor and bless according to the ability given us. But the labors of love and the works of mercy, to the performance of which we are called, require a tender sympathy with others in their woes and weaknesses, and this sympathy is attained only by a proper experience of them ourselves. We are to carry on our Redeemer's work on earth, and to do this effectually we must not only have the same Spirit which was in Him, but also follow Him in His works and suffering. “The sympathetic nerve which properly connects the Christian with the world and the unredeemed, as well as with his fellow-soldiers in the conflict, is the feeling of besetting sin and the struggle with it.” “As Christ must be tempted in order to become a High Priest that can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, (Heb. 4:15) so temptation is the discipline to exercise us in the imitation of Christ.” (Hartless.) Therefore the apostle says:

“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 be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” Gal. 6:1, 2.

## **II. Temptation As A Danger.**

The same objects and circumstances which prove us, for our growth in grace, may also lead us to destruction. The temptation to good is therefore

not to be understood by making a difference in the objects which produce the conflicts, as if those could be designated which are for our good, and again those which lead to evil, but by a reference to the heart and its subjection to or rebellion against the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and consequently to its attitude towards these objects.

### **1. The evil lies not in the objects themselves.**

This will be manifest if we but consider how many difficulties and seductions are encountered and overcome by the children of God who prove faithful to their calling and charge, and how many things which are in themselves good prove the ruin of those whose hearts are not rightly before God.

When our duty leads us by the way of sinners or of the seat of the scornful, their allurements will only, if we are faithful, render us more vigilant and prayerful, whilst the careless, wavering ones would be in imminent danger of being led astray. There are those who have gone to the haunts of wickedness and wretchedness to reclaim the fallen, pursuing their merciful path without faltering: they stooped to the depths of sin to raise up the degraded, but stood firmly upon their heights of grace, and refused to be dragged down into the ruin in which those lay whom they came to help. It is, indeed, not safe for the weak and unwary to meet the foe in his most formidable forms; it is exceedingly unsafe for any to leave the path of duty for the sake of glorifying themselves by heroic deeds in the war with wickedness. But there are those who by reason of woe have their senses exercised and who, having in the providence of God been led to face and overcome the foe in less dangerous fields, are prepared for the sharp conflict. The evil is thus seen not to be in the circumstances in which men are placed.

“Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.” Tit. 1:15.

Hence just as the pure can encounter impurity without contamination, the impure are tempted to evil even in their dealing with pure and lawful objects. Thus, it is undisputed that learning, honor, wealth are in themselves good things. The true Christian cannot, as some novices effect to do, despise them, or even be indifferent to them, because they are means for the accomplishment of good which cannot be done without them. Who would

be ignorant rather than learned, or suppose that a larger amount of good can be done by ignorance than by education? Who would be despised and dishonored, rather than loved or esteemed, or suppose that his influence for good would be greater when all despise him? Who would condemn the temporal possessions which our Lord is pleased to bestow, or suppose the man penniless could accomplish more than the good man wealthy? All these possessions are indeed contemptible when they are placed in opposition to the heavenly wisdom, and glory, and riches which divine grace bestows, and claim the heart in preference to them. All must be despised when they stand in the way of our allegiance to Him, for the coming of whose kingdom we pray, and to seek after these at the sacrifice of infinitely higher is consummate folly. But all of them are good when they come to us in the way of duty and are used again in the way of duty. We cannot serve God and Mammon, but we can serve God with the mammon which His mercy bestows. They are all really blessings as the bread which we eat, but which the glutton transforms into a curse, and yet the greed for fame and riches are the common highways to perdition; not the objects themselves, but the greed for them. The love of money is the root of all evil. They afford a daily probation to the believer, who therefore asks himself daily whether he uses his talents, his influence, his gold, according to the Master's will; but they are by no means evil.

“For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.” 1 Tim. 4:4—5.

## **2. The evil lies in the heart.**

The soul may withdraw itself from the Creator and cling to the creature. And as by nature we are all aliens from God, and as, even after the grace of God has been bestowed, our corrupt nature remains an enemy against which, in the strength of that grace, we must always contend, temptations necessarily beset us on every hand. Of these the most dangerous are those arising from objects which are good, but may be sinfully abused by perverting them from their divinely intended to our own selfish ends. And the evil has already made considerable progress when we find it necessary to justify our hearts' longings and inclinations before the bar of our own consciences, by pleading the goodness of the objects challenging our love. How often

does conscience, instructed by the Word of God, remonstrate against the thirst for honor or the greed for gold, for the gratification of which the plain path of duty is forsaken and the interests of the soul are bartered! And how often is its clear voice stifled by the equivocal excuse offered, that honor is a good thing and money is a necessary and beneficial gift of God! Hence the self-delusion which is so frequently practiced, and which would be inexplicable if the evil lay only in touching and tasting what is in itself evil. The temptation to evil is presented to the evil heart, and this succumbs—it may be by small gradations, but still succumbs—and the fall takes place, sometimes so gradually that, in the absence of those precautions which God has commanded, it is unconscious. The Christian obtains God’s good gifts and uses them according to God’s good will at first; but sometimes, by degrees, they become dear to him, apart from the uses for which it is our manifest duty to apply them, and, giving way to the temptation on account of the evil in his heart, which should have been conquered by the proffered grace, he lapses into ruin. He may still, notwithstanding this, continue to cry peace, peace, seeking to silence his conscience as well as his friend who gives him kindly warning, by referring to his honesty and uprightness of conduct. But there is no peace. The most contemptible miser may be honest, in the general sense of that term; that is, he may so deal with men that it cannot be said he defrauded them. But he surely is not honest, in the Christian sense of the term; for if he pays his debts to men, he does not pay the incomparably larger debt which he owes to his Maker; and if he steals not from man, he does that which is incomparably worse, he robs God.

“Christ died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again.” 2 Cor. 5:15.

“Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts and enticed.” And the progress of the temptation to its evil end, which is man’s ruin, is described by St. James, immediately after the words just quoted:

“Then when lust has conceived it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” Jas. 1:14—15.

Our lusts are evil: and giving way to them, instead of practicing self-mortification by restraining them, actual sin must ensue; and this must, if impeni-

tently persisted in, result in death, because the grace of God is resisted or received in vain. The lust is the evil in the heart, which is by no means produced by the objects around, but for the exercise of which these merely afford an occasion, and it is concerning this that the apostle says:

“That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.” Eph. 4:22.

If the evil in the heart is subdued by the grace of God, the temptation to evil will thus be merely a probation for good.

### **3. The evil lies not in the use, but in the abuse of the heart’s affections.**

When God made man, He pronounced him good; and although sin has entered into the world, and death by sin, and the heart has thus become desperately wicked, yet this wickedness has not become its substance. To guard against the evils which beset us does not break our selfishness and subdue our lusts, in order to introduce a heartless apathy. The soul still has its desires; God Himself is an object of them, and our activity for good is dependent upon them. We must give God our hearts. Then all our affections and desires, being purified by faith, will be fixed upon worthy objects and exercised according to His will. As out of the natural heart proceed evil thoughts, out of the renewed heart will proceed thanksgiving and praise.

“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” Luke 6:46.

All our desires and affections may have free course, provided only that we have God dwell in our hearts by faith, so that they be not abused. There is no evil in loving: we are commanded to love God with all our hearts: the evil lies only in loving the world and its vanities in the room of God. There is no sin in loving: but “He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me,” says our blessed Lord. Matt. 10:37. The heart’s affections may and should be exercised, but not otherwise than in subordination

to the will of God, which is our sanctification, even using this world, but not abusing it. 1 Cor. 7:31.

But because the heart is naturally wicked, and the devil prompts and the world allures, the temptation to evil which is natural, instead of letting the grace of God purge and purify it, so that its affections may be pure and its powers used, but not abused. “We pray in this petition that God would protect and preserve us from the devil, the I world, and our own deceitful hearts.” The devil is expressly called “the tempter;” Matt. 4:3; and we are told that “he walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” 1 Thess. 3:5. He incites the wicked to perseverance in sin, and the believer to stray from the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, and rush into sin. We are repeatedly warned against his craft and power, which he delights to exercise upon the children of God.

“Put on the Whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil... Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” Eph. 6:11—17.

This power he exerts not only by surrounding us with manifold allurements calculated to draw forth the corrupt affections, but also by stealing away the good seed from our souls, thus depriving us of our ability to resist, and suggesting falsehood instead of the truth.

“Those by the way-side are they which bear; then cometh the devil and taketh away the word out of their hearts lest they should believe and be saved.” Luke 8:12.

And he is too subtle to come in his proper character, as the prince of hell in all his ugliness, he exerts his tempting power most dangerously by coming as “an angel of light.” 2 Cor. 11:14. He often renders destructive error palatable by making it appear to the unwary as truth, and vice charming by arraying it in the beautiful garb of virtue. And he skilfully uses the world, which his lies and craft have ruined by the successful temptation of our first parents, as a means to seduce the Christian. “The whole world lieth in wickedness;” 1 John 5:20; though created good it is spoiled by Satan and used by him as an instrument to spoil those who, having believed in the second Adam, upon whom the tempter’s arts were unsuccessful, are no longer of the world. The child of God meets obstacles at every step in his heaven-

ward way, and pursues it amid continual difficulties, which no power but God's can overcome. The world threatens or allures, frowns or smiles upon us unceasingly, in order to terrify or court us away from the path of wisdom: it offers us present pleasures, it holds out to us laurel wreaths and glittering gold, it sneers upon us for choosing the cross when mirth and merriment surround us, it scouts us as pretending to be better than our fellow-men. All the devils are exercised to win us in some way for eternal misery in his dark kingdom. And this temptation is all the more dangerous because we are ourselves by nature part of the wicked world, and thus but too much inclined still to permit our crown to be taken by yielding to the evil. Love not the world, resist the devil and he will flee from thee: then will we by the grace of God, be able to exercise holy affections and say with the Psalmist:

“Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee.”  
Ps. 73:25.

### **III. The Evil End Of The Temptation.**

Satan's purpose is to destroy us, and this destruction is the end of the temptation, when we yield to the evil. This end he compasses by leading us into “unbelief, despair, and other great and shameful sins.”

#### **1. The tempter would lead us into unbelief.**

He does not stop at some minor error in doctrine, from which the Christian might escape unharmed. The glorious doctrine of justification by faith is the fortress against which he directs his assaults. He well knows this to be true and consoling, though thousands on earth deny it. If he succeeds in stealing this from our souls, his purpose is accomplished—the citadel is taken, at all our further efforts to resist him he merely laughs. Whilst he deludes us only into some unconscious sin or involuntary fault, that does not overthrow our faith in the great Redeemer; what has he gained? We go to Jesus with our petition for forgiveness, and we have it daily and richly. If the fall from grace consisted merely in some sinful thought or act, as many falsely teach, the tempter would have easy work to compose our destruction: for who is there among us that have no sin? Even though we are conscious of none, yet are we not thereby justified. 1 Cor. 4:4. But Satan knows right well that sin-

ful acts produce no condemnation so long as we remain in Christ Jesus by faith; not consenting to the sin which we suffer and earnestly resisting it.

“If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but the sin that dwelleth in me.” Rom. 7:16—17.

He has gained nothing until he has gained the heart; for while our heart is firm in its devotion to God by faith in His beloved Son, though we are worthless in ourselves, yet we are His, and the blood of Jesus cleanseth us from all sin. Not that the believer could say he has no sin, or that he could be indifferent to holiness of life; but because he believes he remains in that relation to the atoning Lamb which secures his daily remission. Satan would feign have us become unbelievers; to this his temptation is mainly directed; for thus he would gain all at one dreadful blow. If he succeeds in destroying our faith by the introduction of sufficient false doctrine to undermine it, or carelessness and worldliness to blight it, all is lost. For without faith no soul can be saved, whatever may be its apparent virtues, just as with true faith no soul can be lost, whatever may be its real faults. Therefore our vigilance must be directed, first of all, to the preservation of our faith. Nothing is more dangerous than the strong delusion, introduced by the father of lies, that it matters nothing what we believe, provided we strive to live virtuously. “He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned;” and that which is believed unto salvation is the truth, as this is revealed in God’s holy word. But when he fails at this point

## **2. The tempter would lead us into despair.**

The end intended to be accomplished by this is precisely the same as in the former case; for to compass our damnation Satan must lead us into unbelief as the only means of securing it. But when he brings us into despair he attacks us from another side: some he leads to destruction by persuading them that human sin is not so great, but that they have strength enough in themselves to get to heaven, and that consequently there is no danger; others by bringing about the conviction, not only that the sin is great and the danger imminent, but that the evil is irremediable, and that consequently there is no room for hope. The former are induced to refuse the light from heaven which would render them conscious of their ruined and helpless state; the



efficacy of the law, which would break the strong heart is prevented; and men continue thus in impenitence and under the curse, because, not feeling their condemnation and helplessness, they will not own the Savior. The latter seeing their misery are trembling beneath the wrath revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men, are induced to reject the grace which binds up the broken heart: the efficacy of the Gospel, which would bring peace to the soul, is prevented; and men continue thus in wretchedness and remain under the curse, because, seeing the need of a Savior, they refuse to flee for refuge to the hope set before them. The devil uses a logic whose sophistry is not so readily discovered, and thousands fall a prey to its speciousness. When men will not despise the law, he presses it upon the conscience with all his power and in all its severity, then, stealing the precious seed of the Gospel from the heart instills the lie that God must punish the sinner or become Himself a liar. Jesus, the Savior of souls, is hidden from view; and thus the souls that know their sin either perish in madness and misery; or, urged by their despair, recklessly cast off all restraint, and eat and drink as lust may dictate, in the prospect of dying tomorrow. Against the tempting power of Satan in this direction we must also be constantly on our guard, never allowing the truths to be removed from our hearts

“the law is a school-master to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a school-master. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” Gal. 3:24—26.

Unless we embrace the glad tidings, that our Savior fulfilled the law and suffered its curse for us, we must despair: it only renders us miserable to believe God’s fearful menaces and disbelieve His gracious promises. A principal means in Satan’s hand to bring about this despair is the mission of false teachers, who either cannot or will not rightly divide the word of truth, but preach only the law with its terrors, to the total neglect of the Gospel with its comforts. The law must by all means be preached; to withhold it would be to leave persons in their impenitence; but as it is not intended to lead us into the error that we are holy as the precepts require, so it is not intended to make us hopeless, as though we had no Redeemer from sin and death. He that will pay heed to the Gospel will never despair: peace Jesus leaves with

us; but Satan's arts will all be tried to induce us to neglect the righteousness which is of God by faith, that he may render us despairing. But

### **3. The tempter would also lead us into other great and shameful sins.**

The believers' soul is usually not led into ruin by one huge stride: this is generally accomplished only gradually. Satan leads the yielding heart from one sin to another; from those which are so common that they are not always distinguished from virtue, to those which are vile even in the eyes of natural reason. No believer will listen when Satan whispers to him that the Bible, which has been a lamp to his feet and a comfort to his heart, is a magnificent forgery; that Jesus, whom it has rejoiced to know as a mighty Savior, is a great impostor; and the apostles, the truth of whose doctrine made him free, were miserable dupes or base accomplices of a deceiver. He spurns the blasphemy as utterly satanic. But when Satan causes a pretended exposition of Scripture to be given which, although it does away with the plain literal meaning of the words, still seems very reasonable, the unwary may listen, perhaps doubtingly at first, but charmed at last, not perceiving that when one truth of the Lord is rejected, the truthfulness of the Lord or the authenticity of the Scriptures is impeached. And if Satan had accomplished nothing more by such a perversion of Scripture, he would at least have advanced a step towards the establishment of a system of reason as opposed to that of revelation. The doors are thrown wide open for the entrance of Rationalism and the subversion of the entire Gospel plan. The error adopted becomes a standard to which the passages must be conformed, a little leaven leavens the whole lump. The analogy of faith becomes rather the analogy of erroneous opinion: one error requires the other for the sake of consistency. Thus the Bible eventually becomes a mere shell into which reason puts the kernel; a vessel emptied of its divine contents and filled with human opinions. The victim of such temptation may still have respect for the book called the Bible; but the divine revelation which it contains is not his possession. Hence we often hear the cry of "Bible! Bible!" even where its heavenly truth is in no more esteem than fairy tales.

To the tempter it is of little consequence whether men perish in the delusion of still having the Bible, while, though they retain the words, they have really rejected it, because they have rejected the sense, or whether they go

forward to an open rejection of the book, whose contents they have cast aside; in either case his object is accomplished, because the great sin of indifference has been committed and continued in until it resulted in unbelief, which cuts off forgiveness. The same end is also sometimes attained by leading persons into sins against the second table of the law. Temptations are presented to perform deeds which conscience warns against as evil, but which have no evil appearance in the world's eye. Seeing no great harm in them, observing that no shame is connected with them, some yield to the temptation, and at least one step is taken towards the loss of that conscientiousness which is our safeguard against constant deviations from the path of righteousness. Every violation of conscience is not only sin in itself, but exerts an enfeebling influence, so that the next false step is resisted less. So conscience becomes seared by degrees, and the dividing line between right and wrong is well nigh erased. The result again is a loss of faith, because sin being treated with indifference, there is no more clinging to Jesus as the deliverer from its dreadful consequences. Hence, though a fault does not necessarily destroy the soul, because possible even in the strongest of believers, and because forgiveness is promised even to the weakest, yet we are warned against every sin, no matter how small in appearance, because it is a step, when committed willingly, towards that condition, in which we are no longer penitent and believing, and in which, consequently, we are no longer pardoned.

#### **IV. Our Prayer Against Temptation.**

It yet remains for us to determine in what sense we pray that God would not lead us into temptation.

##### **1. We do not ask that God would exempt us from every trial.**

We ask not to be so directed in our pathway through life that we may never be in circumstances in which we may be tempted to do wrong. For we have already seen that evil besets us in every situation. so that this is impossible whilst we remain in this evil world, and that the probation thus afforded is beneficial to us, so that it would not be desirable, even if it were possible, so long as man remains the needy creature which we find him to be. We would not shrink from the trial, knowing that God designs it not for our de-

struction, but for our welfare. It is His will that we should manifest our fidelity in all situations, and that our virtues should become strong by exercise; and we cannot pray that we may have no opportunity to choose between good and evil, or to contend against the latter. God always leads us by His providence, and desires always to lead us by His grace. To exempt us from probations would be to cease leading us entirely in this world: they are everywhere, and we are led into them no matter whither we are led.

But God has no pleasure in the death of the sinner, and does not therefore lead us into meshes in which we cannot avoid being entangled, and marshes in which we must necessarily sink. It would be blasphemy to pray that God would not make our ruin absolutely unavoidable, as this would presuppose that He sometimes ruins men, giving them no chance of escape. We ask that God's will may be done in our salvation, which is not by exempting us from the trial, but by strengthening us when the conflict is necessary, and weakening the foe against whom duty calls us to contend.

## **2. We ask that our strength may be sufficient for each trial.**

This is fully in accordance with His promise, that "He will with the temptation also make a way to escape." 1 Cor. 10:13. He imparts ability where our weakness exposes us to danger. For "the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and keep you from evil." 2 Thess. 3:3. This is done by the ordinary means of grace, to which we must continually resort, not expecting God to perform miracles in our behalf when His ordinary appointments, if faithfully used, will be all-sufficient. But the use of these means, and the firm faith that they will accomplish their end, does not preclude the use of prayer for that which these means are intended to confer. We pray God to make the appointed means efficacious in us, when we ask to be delivered from the power of the devil, and the world, and our own deceitful hearts. Faith is "the victory which overcomes the world," and whatever strengthens our faith gives us new energy for the conflict with evil. We ask for such strength in God's own way, that we may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. The prayer will not be heard, because it is not the prayer of faith, when we refuse to seek strength where the Scriptures assure us it can alone be found. But when we ask in Jesus' name, believing, we receive ability at which we will sometimes ourselves be induced to marvel. "I am able to do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Phil. 4:13. This we will

be able to say also, if we only firmly rely upon the grace which is sufficient for us; for God's strength is made perfect in weakness. In this comfortable assurance we offer up this sixth petition daily, trusting in divine power, because conscious of the insufficiency of our own, for any trial. But we also ask our Father to have respect to our spiritual condition in His guidance of our lives. Therefore

### **3. We ask that God may lead us into circumstances favorable to our improvement**

As God is ever the guide of His people, and as He is merciful and gracious, it must also be in perfect accord with His will that we should ask exemption from those dangerous circumstances in which the strongest may indeed stand, but the weak are most likely to fall. Men are indeed never led into situations in which ruin is absolutely inevitable; God always makes a way to escape. But it is not true that all can endure precisely the same hardships and remain equally unharmed: we ask to be so guided that our circumstances may always be such that we may endure the probation and come forth from its fires purified, and thus prepared for further and fiercer trials. This is just what we are told in Scripture when the apostle says: "God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able." 1 Cor. 10:13. When the soul is weak, God will prevent and destroy the devil's evil counsels and intentions by providential interference, provided we do not reject God's counsels and intentions by entering where God has forbidden us to tread. We are commanded to "watch and pray that we enter not into temptation." Matt. 26:41. Hence we must regard it as an evil suggestion of Satan when it is said that we must rush into any and every danger to show our firmness; for he that, with manifest fool-hardiness will depend upon his own firmness and rush headlong into dangers which cannot possibly be overcome except by an humble reliance upon divine grace and strength, must do so at his own peril. Such indiscretion can come only from a sinful self-dependence which forgets God, and the consequences therefore must be ruinous. And if persons tell us that the evil is within us in any event, and that therefore it cannot be perilous to go into situations in which it may come to the light, inasmuch as we are no worse by having our natural sinfulness become manifest, we answer by referring again to the truth, which has been so oft repeated, that we are not necessarily ruined by having

sin, now that the Savior has come, but that we are ruined by allowing sin to overcome us, so that this Savior is rejected. We should go where duty leads us, never fearing that the trial will be too hard for us, since God is a very present help and gives us the needful strength, but as we ask for this needful strength so we pray that God would so shape and so smooth our path of duty that we may be able to go forward. Praying thus in humbleness of heart and- firmness of faith. we shall not escape the ills and sufferings on earth which form the subject of the next petition; we shall not be exempted from the trial which is designed to result in our good by promoting our growth in grace; but we shall be enabled to endure the probation and stand fast in the faith; we shall, in the path of duty, meet the world and flesh and the devil, “though tempted and assaulted by them, we shall nevertheless conquer and finally obtain the victory over them.” For this we earnestly pray when we say: “Lead us not into temptation.”

# “Deliver Us From Evil.”

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## Article One.

OUR BLESSED LORD before He ascended into heaven, told His disciples that in the world they should have tribulation, and that through this they must enter into the kingdom of God. John 16:33; Acts 14:22. From this tribulation no one can be exempted so long as we live in this world which lieth in wickedness. Although our sins are forgiven and we are guarded against temptations, yet is there evil within us, and around us, from which it must always be our desire to be delivered. This desire the last petition of the Lord's Prayer expresses. We are indeed the sons of God and heirs of heaven; but it doth not yet appear What we shall be, and our heaven is not on earth. We must still endure the ills which necessarily exist where sin exists. Against all these ills, present and future, the petition is directed. Hence it includes a petition not only that we may be kept secure against evil which might endanger our souls, but also that we may, when it pleases God, be delivered from this world, where evil never ceases to be. “We pray in this petition, as in a summary, that God would deliver us from evil and suffering whether it affects the soul or body, property or character, and at last, when the hour of death shall arrive, graciously take us from the world of imperfection and sorrow to Himself in heaven.”

As the petition asks for a final perfect freedom from evil of every kind, it of course implies not only removal from this evil world by death, but also deliverance from evils of the future world. The evil against which we pray is therefore of two kinds, temporal and eternal.

The evil in the present world affects either the body or the soul, our property or our character.

The ills to which our bodies are exposed are many and various. From our feeblest infancy to infirm old age pain is our companion. Since sin has entered into the world “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.” Man enters into the world with little cries of pain and de-

parts from it with hollow groans; and between these extremes we all have heard and felt enough of sorrow to certify us that “man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.” Job 5:7. It is true that these sufferings, which are the necessary consequences of sin, cannot therefore be wholly removed until sin is entirely banished from our being, are by the mercy of God blessed to our good, when we as believers in Jesus hear them meekly and patiently. But these evils are not visited on all alike, though all are alike sinful.

Their distribution among the individuals of our sinful race is in the hand of Providence, who uses them as means for our amendment. And though He uses them for our welfare, yet are they in themselves sufferings by no means to be desired for their own sake, but rather, if it so please God, to be shunned. In connection with the third petition it is therefore right to pray for deliverance from them. God indeed brings good out of evil, according to His consoling promise that “all things work together for good to them that love Him;” and therefore “our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Rom. 8:28; 2 Cor. 4:17. Whilst therefore we do not pray to be absolutely delivered from every corporal suffering while we are journeying here below, we yet ask our merciful Father to deliver us from disease and disasters as far as it may be good for us now, and finally to deliver us from them all. Great and intense as may be our sufferings of body, those of our souls are incomparably greater. The gnawing cares and bitter disappointments, the baffled hopes and blighted prospects, the mistaken thoughts and wounded feelings which form part of our daily experience, are surely enough to make us certain of the presence of evil perpetually and to induce us to request deliverance from it. And yet the griefs and groans which result from mere temporal disappointments and losses are but slight compared with the infinite evil of sin which is the root of all. To walk the earth with the curse of Him upon us who made it and upholds it, and whose face we must meet hereafter, though we should turn away from it now, is the ineffable evil in comparison with which the other evils are mere trifles—light afflictions and but of a moment’s duration. And it is such whether we are conscious of it or not. For the magnitude of our evil cannot be measured by the immediate realization of its misery: it may rankle for years unperceived and burst at last upon the unsuspecting wretch’s head in the blackness of perpetual despair. And if by the grace of God we awake to righteousness, though we rejoice in the freedom from condemnation procured by our blessed Savior, yet we dread sin



as the greatest of evils, and pray to be delivered from its curse and from its power. It makes our lives an unceasing vigil and struggle, from which we would fain be delivered. And because it clips the wings of our devotion and contracts our charities, it is a constant source of sorrow to us, though we know that it cannot bring condemnation on us whilst we cling in faith to Jesus. From all these pains of mind, so far as it accords with the third petition, we ask for deliverance.

The evils affecting our property, although when measured by the proper rule they are comparatively slight, are everywhere felt to be real. The loss of our temporal possessions, and the consequent want of bread and clothing, although it is but for a moment compared with eternity, and light compared with the loss of eternal treasures, is yet sufficiently great« to prompt an earnest sigh for deliverance.

And many a person, who can endure with fortitude which prevents all complaints, the suffering to which he is exposed in his own body, is driven to madness when he hears his children's famishing cries for bread or the shivering shrieks for shelter from the cold, without ability to aid them. Sometimes, too, reason reels when those unforeseen stories of misfortune, which are so frequent in this world of trouble, burst upon men, and strip them of their wealth at one fierce blow and turn them penniless upon the world. True these are piercing and painful only in proportion as we are poor in the treasures of heaven. Deprive the child of God of all his earthly possessions and he will not despair, for his great wealth remains untouched; he is a child of the King and heir to the kingdom. It is only he who has no other treasure that despairs when his temporal riches take unto themselves wings and fly away. The child of God is still rich, and even in respect to his temporal wants is not disheartened, but looks up to his rich Father in heaven, who will not leave him nor forsake him. And yet disasters to property are evils in some sense to all, because though they do not deprive the Christian of all his wealth nor even of a great part, yet they take away much that he had learned to use with comfort, the removal of which is therefore painful.

He bears this additional burden meekly and contentedly, nay, even cheerfully, because his Father imposes it, but it is none the less a burden which is thus borne, from which he would gladly be delivered if it so pleased God. Therefore the child of God asks for deliverance from these evils also, so far as this accords with the third petition.

Finally we pray to be delivered from the evils affecting our character. It is not unchristian to be much concerned about our fair reputation. The loss of this is the greatest evil next to the loss of the soul. "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches." Prov. 22:1. Indeed, the Christian esteems it highly in proportion as he is conscious of his high calling. There is a thirst for fame, as there is greed for gold, which is sinful. The iniquity and the danger of sacrificing praise with God for the sake of securing the praise of men are plain. God's glory must always be sought first: and if we can do God's will and hallow His name only by suffering shame and reproach, then let us in God's name welcome reproach, loving the praise of God more than the praise of men, and with the apostles "rejoicing that we are counted worthy to suffer shame for His name." Acts 5:41. A good reputation is only to be sought so far as its possession does not interfere with our great vocation of glorifying God: we must not purchase it at the great price of jeopardizing the soul. But as far as we can have it consistently with our high calling, we should be concerned about it: to neglect it is a neglect of duty. For our character should exercise its silent influence for good all our days. To be made of no reputation by the tongue of slander is therefore an evil, not only because it gives us mental pain, but also because it detracts from our influence for good. And of this detraction by the envy and malice of men there is enough in the world, to induce the petition on this account also: "Deliver us from evil." And in accordance with this petition we should walk circumspectly, that we may give no occasion to those who seek it, that they may reproach us: and this all the more because the name of God might be blasphemed on our account.

## **Article Two.**

The evils from which we pray to be delivered are not all confined to this life; there are others and greater ones in the future world. As our final doom depends upon the use made of the means of grace while we are here upon earth, where our everlasting destiny is decided, we pray not only with reference to the evils to be encountered here, but also with regard to those which may come upon us hereafter. These are the punishment of sin, unending torments in outer darkness consisting in banishment of our God and His bliss, and consignment to everlasting suffering in hell.

The Almighty has made us unto Himself, and there is no rest for the soul, except in Him. To be without God is therefore extreme wretchedness, for our souls are orphaned and homeless. All our higher aspirations, whether under: stood or not, are really inward struggles upward to Him who is the source and end of our being. To be without God is to be without hope; and misery is complete when no bright spot appears in the future, upon which we can look and be cheered. Hope buoys up the spirit even in the midst of piercing pains and crushing troubles here on earth, for it points to joys beyond. But banishment from God leaves no room for hope; no light can be expected when the sun is removed from us. The beams of love would be no more for us; the blissful presence would be no longer ours—would nevermore be ours. The glories of heaven shall still endure—shall continue when all earthly things have passed away; the bliss shall be perpetual and perfect.

But this glory and this bliss cannot be for those who are banished from those celestial dominions. What an unspeakable evil is such banishment! when we think of the bliss in the presence of God; of the holy city with its myriads of angels, evermore giving glory to the Lamb; of the Lamb Himself, who is the light of that golden city, and who never ceases to impart perfect felicity to the angels and the Spirits of just men made perfect, by whom He is surrounded; of the unclouded joy in those celestial mansions where all the air is love and where the weary are forever at rest; of the perpetuity of that happiness ever perfect or ever new. It will seem enough of misery to be banished thence, even if the place to which we were banished were as tolerable as this present abode.

But we are not merely shut out from bliss, if we neglect the great salvation in Jesus; to the evil of such banishment from God is added the positive suffering of eternal torture. “Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” Matt. 25:41. Those who would not receive Him who came to save that which was lost, must remain under the curse from which He would deliver them. They are cursed under the law, and can never escape that curse if they reject Him who was made a curse for us. “Unto them which are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil.” Rom. 2:8—9. There is no possibility for escape if the proffered salvation is neglected or despised, while the day of grace continues. “These

shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.” Matt. 25:46. The punishment cannot cease, because all our suffering can never atone for sin, and without atonement there can be no salvation. The name of Jesus is the only name by which we can be saved.

“His Lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also with you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother his trespasses.” Matt. 18:34-35.

But the infinite debt we can never pay; if we are delivered to the tormentors it must be eternally. So the Scriptures answer us that “the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever, and they have no rest day or night.” Rev. 14:11.

Thus the lost are not only shut out from bliss; they are cast into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. From this final evil—this evil infinite and everlasting—O, Father, deliver us!

## **Article Three.**

The deliverance we must not seek in ourselves, but must ask it of God, who alone can deliver us. Our Savior teaches us to ask deliverance of a mightier than we, not to seek it by our own efforts; and all self-confident attempts to deliver ourselves can only result in miserable failure. Our prayers never can be sincere until we have resigned all trust in our own powers, and learned to confide in the Supreme Power. It will therefore be profitable for us, in the way of warning, to consider the efforts made by men to deliver themselves, both from the evils of the present and those of the future world. The ways devised to rid mankind of temporal ills have been manifold. But they may be summed up, in a general way, so far as they ignore and reject the way pointed out in our petition, in the two classes of a reckless swimming upon the tide without reason, or of a vain attempt to overcome every ill by the force of reason.

The aimless floater upon the stream has this seeming advantage, that he does not seriously lay to heart the good or evil fortune which betides him, and that he thus escapes many of the pangs of adversity. And yet he does

this only by steeping himself more deeply still into real misery. The brute has doubtless less suffering than the human being, because, though it be sensitive to bodily pain, yet much of mental anguish which our race endures is spared it; and yet no sane human being would prefer to be a brute in order to be exempt from all\*but physical pains. The reckless man escapes his pangs, so far as he escapes them at all, merely by his own degradation: he feels less because his soul, by being lowered towards the level of the brute, is incapable of feeling more. When, in the good providence of God, we are called to sustain losses of property or to suffer pain of body—when friends prove false, or those from whom we have reason to expect sacrifices for our comfort, contribute most largely to our wretchedness—we may escape the pain to some extent, no doubt, by casting ourselves away in sensual. lust and revelry, drowning all thought and feeling in the indulgence of our natural impulses and appetites. The anguish is smothered for a time, perhaps lost, in the flowing bowl or wanton waltz. Or, if we Would rather stupefy the soul in a more respectable way, we may do it by the mad, reckless pursuit of wealth or fame—blowing bubbles beautiful to look upon and indulging in the sweet day-dream that they will last and make us happy. Being wildly, thoughtlessly absorbed in some such folly we may not rise above, indeed, but may sink below those pains which might be ours if the head and heart were healthy.

But whilst men thus degrade themselves below the finer feelings of humanity in order to escape the pains which their possession implies, they win in exchange only the grosser pangs which belong to the degraded. They surrender the nobler joys of humanity because they would escape its sorrows, and in the surrender acquire other evils incomparably worse than those sorrows which if they had been borne aright, would only have exerted a hallowing influence.

Just as little can we deliver ourselves from the evils of the earth by opposing to them the force of unaided human reason. It is indeed very common to urge men to fortitude in bearing adversities by appeals to reason, and to accuse those who refuse to be comforted thus of unreasonableness. And yet the experience of those very persons must tell them, if they will heed it, that they are miserable comforters when they endeavor to solace with such suggestions. The only end that could be attained, even when the success of such efforts is greatest, would be the hardening of the sensibilities, so that men would be rendered unfeeling: and this is surely an end to

be earnestly shunned. Stoicism is just as bad as Epicureanism: the one crushes the feelings while the other drowns. It is perhaps no difficult matter to convince a man whose limb is being amputated, that it will be of no use to fret and groan: he will admit to it at once, and yet he will not cease to groan. It is easy to tell a mother when her darling child is laid in its little grave, that weeping will make her case no better: she does not expect to recall her dear one by her sighs: but still she sobs and sighs. People do not groan or weep in agony because they expect the pain to be removed in this way, but because this is the natural expression of the suffering which is felt. The agony would remain even if its external manifestation were suppressed, and nothing would be gained by such suppression: indeed, the case would generally be made worse, because there is often relief found in giving the sorrow vent in tears. Such appeals to reason for the removal of suffering therefore amount to nothing more than this, that there is no use in feeling pain, and therefore we should not feel it: an argument necessarily vain, because preposterously absurd. The soul wants something to rest upon, some firm support, and this it does not find in human reason. Fortitude is not insensibility to pain: it is the soul's strength that is able calmly and patiently to bear it. The best of Christians feels the pain, but it is not intolerable to him: compared with his great treasures, which remain untouched, his present losses and burdens are light: his soul rests upon the promises of God by faith, and in the glorious prospects opened up before him thus, he finds the joy which renders him cheerful even in the greatest of earthly adversities.

Besides, all earthly ills stand to him in some relation to the heavenly treasure, and by the grace of God contribute their share towards attaining it. But such comfort reason cannot give—it comes only by the revelation which God gives in His precious word. All attempts at deliverance by the use of mere reason are evidently as vain as they are sinful. And if we should not endeavor, without God, to escape the evils of the present, much more should we shun the mistaken efforts at deliverance from future evils. It is equally foolish and vain to attempt to deliver ourselves from the sin, which makes punishment our due, or from the punishment deserved, which is the great evil impending over unbelievers.

We cannot render ourselves undeserving of punishment. For we are born in sin, and are on account of this innate depravity children of wrath and heirs of hell, on which account our Savior tells us that “except a man be

born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” John 3:3. Thus the Psalmist confesses the necessity of regeneration by confessing the reality of inborn sin, when he says: “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me.” Ps. 51:5. This is the basis of the following petition, that God would create within him a clean heart and renew a right spirit within him. Therefore our blessed Lord tells us that “he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” John 3:36. The wrath of God is on him by nature, and remains on him unless he believes. But this depraved nature has manifested itself in actual sins in the lives of all, and on this account too we are worthy of condemnation. We deserve punishment both by nature and by practice. Therefore, even if we could from this time forth live wholly free from sin and be pure as the angels are in their lives, we would still deserve punishment on account of the sins of the past and must, according to God’s righteous law, receive that punishment, unless some one who is able bears it for us. The charities of today do not by any means render good the iniquities of yesterday, nor even in any degree excusable.

The sin committed must be atoned for. But even if perfect sinlessness in the future would remedy the sinfulness of the past, we would not attain it. Not even Christians, whom the grace of God daily assists, can attain to perfect holiness here on earth; for they are taught daily to pray: “Forgive us our trespasses.” So the apostle admonishes them to “lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset them, and run with patience the race set before them.” Heb. 12:1. So St. Peter tells us to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,” 2 Pet. 3:18, which could not be done if we had already reached perfection. And so St. Paul says: “Not as though I had already attained or were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended.” Phil. 3:12. And if those in whom Christ lives cannot attain to sinlessness here, how much less can they who have only their own feebleness to rely upon: nay, who are not only feeble, but concerning whom the Holy Ghost says that they are “dead in trespasses and sins,” and “by nature children of wrath!” Eph. 2:1-3. Surely, “if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,” 1 John 1:8, and it is therefore consummate folly to suppose ourselves able, by our own powers and efforts, to render ourselves sinless and thus undeserving of punishment.

But it is folly equally great to imagine that we can, by our own strength and endeavor, escape the punishment deserved. For we surely cannot hide ourselves so that God cannot find us on the dreadful day of account. The eye of God is on us everywhere and peers into the most secluded recesses.

“Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. If I say surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee.” Ps. 139:7—12.

It is ineffable folly to attempt concealment from the all-seeing, omnipresent eye, which proveth the heart and the reins, and before which our most secret thoughts are plain as the sun. And if we cannot escape the punishment due by concealing ourselves or our sins from the omni— present Judge, just as little can we escape it by resisting His power; for it is Omnipotence with which we have to deal.

“Be not afraid of them that” kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear Him, who, after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you fear Him.” Luke 12:4, 5.

The poor worm’s resistance to the Almighty Lord of all would be madness. His only hope of escape could be in the obtainment of pardon for his sins. But this, too, is a vain hope so long as we put any confidence in self. For if sin were pardoned without satisfaction rendered to the claims of justice, God would be both unjust and untrue. If we reject the ransom made for our sins, the merciful Substitute for us, on whom all our sins were laid, and who bare them all upon the tree, we cannot possibly have pardon. For God can be just and a justifier of men still, only when they believe in Jesus. But if we believe in Jesus, so as to share the redemption which is in Him, even the remission of sins, then there can be no further thought of delivering ourselves from the evil of sin and its punishment, but we will sincerely pray to God, trusting only in Him, “deliver us from evil!”

## **Article Four.**



In answer to our prayer God does deliver us from evil by His providence and His grace. This deliverance is vouchsafed to us partly in our earthly pilgrimage, partly by removing us to the promised land through death.

The deliverance in this life is not from every trouble and suffering which may be ours. These continue to all men, to God's children as well as to others: but He delivers us from evil, and renders them a blessing to us.

We still have sufferings, notwithstanding our petition to be delivered from them all. As long as we remain in the world, which lieth in wickedness, this cannot be otherwise. Immediately after the fall the Lord said to Adam:

“Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.” Gen. 3:17.

This doom has never been reversed or repealed, and never will be on this earth, where the sin which caused it still continues. Where sin is there must be death and all those sufferings which must be endured on the way to death. These sufferings are not, indeed, apportioned to each in the precise ratio of his sinfulness. The wicked do not always suffer more on earth than the godly, and the holiest are not always most exempt from suffering. It is therefore utterly false to infer the wickedness of a man from his misfortunes or the goodness of another from his great prosperity. The evils of body and property and character are sometimes experienced in the highest degree by those who are most faithful to their God, who designs to make them perfect through suffering; whilst, on the other hand, those who forget their Maker and reject His counsels are sometimes most prosperous in things of this world, as God designs by His goodness to lead them to repentance.

Indeed, so little is the apportionment of suffering to individuals graduated by their piety, that this want of correspondence in this world between the rewards and punishments and the virtue and vice of their subjects is sometimes used as an argument to prove the existence of rewards and punishments in the future, because it is only upon the presumption of such future recompense that the justice of God's dealings with men seems capable of being vindicated.

This is certain, at least, that sometimes the righteous fail and the ungodly flourish in the present life, though all is rectified in the end. But this does

not in the least conflict with the truth that suffering of every description is the result of sin, and must therefore remain as long as sin continues. For while it is maintained that all our woe came into the world by sin, it is not affirmed that all suffer alike on earth because of their inborn depravity, or that each, in addition to this, suffers in proportion to his actual sins. The introduction of suffering must be ascribed to sin, but the apportionment is made by God's providence. The evil, like all things else, must be subservient to His merciful purposes. He uses both adversity and prosperity to bless, the present evils being used to acquire future good.

The greatest sinner may receive the smallest share of those evils affecting the body and property, because God would woo him by His goodness; or, if he hardens his heart and despises the infinite love which manifests itself to him in the call of the Gospel as well as in this temporal prosperity, God would give him some blessings still, though they are incomparably less than the everlasting treasures of the Gospel, because the higher blessings are rejected, and in consequence of this all are rendered impossible in the future world. So, also, the most devoted Christian may lead a life of perpetual sorrow and suffering, not because he deserves it more than others and God would therefore punish him more, but because the real rewards and punishments being future and the sufferings of this life being but light and transient compared with those of the future, God would graciously root and ground His child in the truth, using affliction as one of the means to keep him in that meek and lowly condition, which is most favorable to growth in grace.

The evils and sufferings of the present life, although introduced by sin, are controlled and regulated by the God of the whole earth, and used by Him in subserviency to His own plans, which, if we will but permit Him to control all, they will assuredly promote. From all this it is obvious that the object of our petition is not, in the present world, to ask exemption from losses and crosses, inasmuch as these cannot be avoided while sin remains, and inasmuch as the Lord would refine us by the fires of affliction.

But still we pray for deliverance, even while we are sojourning here, and in this petition we pray that God would not let them be evils to our souls, but render them blessings to us. Losses in temporal goods, disease and disasters in body, nay, even the bitter sting of slander may, although they are never to be desired for their own sake, be made means by which blessings are brought to us. The deadliest poisons are sometimes used as medicines to

heal obstinate diseases and are made to preserve the life which their misapplication would certainly destroy. We ask God to administer the evils mercifully which must fall to our lot. This is done by removing that which gives us pain, or by increasing our strength to bear it. In answer to our petition many a pecuniary difficulty is removed by the direction of Providence, many a pain is alleviated or quite set aside, many a venomous shaft hurled by the hand of malice averted, although we do not see the gracious hand which interferes in our behalf. God never permits the burden to accumulate upon us beyond our ability to bear, and often we experience that the darkest hour is just that which precedes the dawn: the troubles gather thick around us and the pain increases in intensity, but deliverance comes to those who ask it and comes in good time, though it often seem to tarry long. "To the upright there ariseth a light in the darkness." Ps. 112:4. But sometimes it is not best for us that the cause of our sorrow and pain should be removed; "it is good for me that I have been afflicted," says one who experienced the loving kindness of the Lord in suffering also, stating as a reason for it:

"Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now I have kept thy word." Ps. 119:67—71.

The loss of property, poverty, sickness and suffering are sometimes the greatest blessings. Our prayer for deliverance from these can therefore never be absolute, but always conditional; if it pleases God we desire it. But our prayer is not meaningless when it is not in God's sight that the cause of our trouble should be removed. It is, as already observed, a request for an increase of strength to bear what it is for our welfare to bear. And God makes us strong, and thus delivers us. He increases our faith and with it the patience of hope. He renders the present burden light to us by opening up before our souls the blessed vision of peace. He gives us foretastes of heaven by hope, and thus cheers us and supports us. He thus renders us able to bear the pain cheerfully, since we have the strong consolation that every step along the glowing fires, on rugged roads, brings us nearer the great aim of our existence and the end of faith, which is the enjoyment of salvation in heaven. And thus our prayer is heard and we are delivered from evil; for what remains is only, under providence, a blessing, according to the inspired words:

“Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far-more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things that are not seen.” 2 Cor. 4:17—18.

But still our petition means more than this; it implies the request that we may, when it shall seem good in our Father’s sight, be utterly delivered from all by death. Hence we must not overlook the deliverance by removal to a better world. We pray God, that “at last, when the hour of death shall arrive, He would take us out of this world of imperfection and sorrow to Himself in heaven.”

We ask that God would eventually remove us from this sinful, sorrowful world, because this is the only possible means of delivering us from the evils which must necessarily be encountered in a world of imperfection. That there are those who consider death the greatest of evils and shrink from the very thought of it, does not interfere with the Christians’ use of the petition in this sense; and it is manifest that this model prayer is intended only for believers in Jesus, who are not startled at the word death, but rather rejoice to think that they must not live forever in this sin and suffering of earth. That the thoughts of dying strife, the physical pain and struggle of death, may be dreadful to believers, we would not dispute; but the life beyond, the judgment with all its revelations, cannot terrify the children of God: for they know that their Redeemer liveth and that there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. Desiring to be free from the evil of earth, like the apostle Paul, they rather have a desire to depart and be with Christ. Not that they would shrink from labors and pains of life while it pleases God to continue them on earth. They would endure the burden and heat of the toil in the Lord’s vineyard, as long as it pleases the good Lord to employ them there: for to serve Him and let His will be done is their joy. Therefore they never absolutely pray for death, but only ask it when the Father’s will is to release them from their post here below. They are content to wait; but still pray daily, that in God’s time they may be delivered from every evil and suffering by death. This of course implies also the humble petition for a preparation for our departure, that when God takes us from this world of imperfection it may be to give us eternal rest above.

Thus in this petition we also ask that God would take us to Himself in heaven. It is the assurance that He will, for the Savior’s sake, graciously do this, that makes the true believer wish not to live always here, but rather to be gathered to the saints in heaven., This implies a true faith, and therefore

the petition asks for this. Nothing else can give the soul firmness to think unterrified of death and the judgment which ensues. For if we stand upon our own merits, resting upon our own righteousness, we cannot avoid the fear that when we shall be weighed in the balance we shall be found wanting. And the better we are acquainted with God's Word the more we will fear this. For when we reflect that God promises blessings in His law only to those who never transgress it, and that He threatens condemnation to every one who disobeys it, no matter how apparently trifling may be the offense, how could any of us hope to escape the coming wrath without confidence in the Lord our righteousness? But when we believe the Gospel, those glad tidings that a Savior is born to us, and that in Him we are heirs of heaven, we cannot but rejoice with joy unspeakable, and our thought of death is always coupled with that of heaven; our deliverance from this world of imperfection and sorrow is connected with the entrance into paradise, where we shall awake in God's likeness and be satisfied.

“There shall I bathe my weary soul  
In seas of heavenly rest,  
And not a wave of trouble roll  
Across my peaceful breast.”

We pray God to deliver us from the evil of unbelief, and by His Holy Spirit to preserve us in the faith, that when our end arrives, we may not perish, but have everlasting life in the kingdom of glory.

Thus let us not grow weary to pray for deliverance from all evils and sufferings; and having asked the merciful and mighty One to abide with us and bless us, let us meekly bear the manifold sorrows and pains which be-tide us in this land of our pilgrimage, assured that our Father will overrule all for good and make each event of His providence a blessing to us. But let us also think of the change which is coming, and desire it for the deliverance which it brings, and in our petitions for deliverance rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, which we shall, free from all evils past, present and to come, enjoy everlastingly in heaven.

# The Conclusion Of The Lord's Prayer."

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## Article One.

THE SINCERE CHRISTIAN would not and should not for a moment forget that he receives all good gifts from above. However richly he may be blest, he is conscious all the While that God looks not at our desert, but only upon His Anointed, for whose sake each gift is bestowed. Therefore " he prays to his Father with confidence—therefore he gives thanks to his Father with gladness. The Lord's Prayer therefore ends as it begins, with confidence and cheerfulness, believing and praising. The first petition asks for the ability to glorify the great Name; the conclusion is an actual ascription of glory to Him. And this is sealed by the word Amen, the humble expression of confidence that it shall be so. The praise to God, who graciously hears our prayer, and the faith in His promises to hear, are implied in every part of the Lord's Prayer: and that which is everywhere implied is at the end expressed. We have thus two parts to consider in the conclusion, the doxology which expresses our gratitude, and the Amen which expresses our faith.

The Doxology contains both an ascription of praise to God and a reason for our confiding petitions, as both these are involved in the confession that the kingdom and the glory are only and wholly His.

It is an ascription of praise to Him upon whom we are entirely dependent, and who supplies all our wants.

The people of God ever delight to raise psalms and hymns and songs of praise to their Lord and King, who is also their Father and Friend. The Church ascribes praise to Him not only because it is an undeniable duty, but because it is a most precious privilege.

It is a manifest duty to praise the Lord. The Scriptures with frequency enjoin it, whilst they condemn the vain glory which withholds from God what is His due in order to give it to man.

“Know ye that the Lord He is God; it is He that hath made us and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endureth to all generations.” Ps. 100:3—5.

“Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the name of the Lord, praise Him, O ye servants of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God. Praise the Lord; for the Lord is good: sing praises unto His name; for it is pleasant.” Ps. 135:1—3.

“Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.” Ps. 150:6.

Of such calls to all creatures to praise the name of the Lord according to His excellent greatness, to make His praise glorious upon the earth as it is in the heavens, the songs of David are full. But the same admonitions are given us in the New Testament.

“By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.” Heb. 13:15.

“Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Eph. 5:18—20.

And this obligation so often and so plainly expressed, is founded upon so many reasons, that even those who boldly renounce allegiance cannot deny its reasonableness. God is great and good: His greatness is unsearchable and His goodness infinite. He made us; He sustains us: we are the sheep of His pasture, He gave us our nourishment and protection until this hour: He leads us and supports us still. But He has done more than this; He has done that in comparison with which all this, great as it is, pales and dwindles: He has sent His Son to save us from the punishment which is justly our due. Therefore “bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is Within me, bless His holy Name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.” He has done this without any claim or merit or worthiness in us, for all which, assuredly, we are in duty bound to thank, praise, serve and obey Him.

But to ascribe praise to God’s glorious name is not only a manifest duty. It is a precious privilege, and the duty can be performed aright only when we have learned to appreciate it as such privilege. The duty of praising God is upon us always, even though we reject the choicest blessings of heaven.

But the performance of that duty in our hearts is a consequence of the believing appropriation of the grace offered through the Gospel. It is not yet gratitude to be convinced that we ought to be grateful; to be assured that the praise belongs to God is not yet giving it to Him. It is very easy to give cogent reasons for ascribing all glory to God, but not all who have the reasons give Him the glory. And the law can force no one to obedience: even if external constraints were used, so that an external compliance were effected, this would be far from that obedience which is demanded. There must be an internal compliance; the heart must prompt us, so that we do it not because we must, but because we will. This willingness is produced by the appropriation of the Gospel gifts in faith, by which we know God and His unbounded mercy towards us, and by which we receive strength to praise Him for His excellent majesty and infinite goodness. Hence believers, who are led by the Spirit of God, cannot otherwise than praise God from whom all blessings flow. It is their joy. Praise is comely, it is pleasant. Their hearts prompt them. They would praise God just as well if it were not commanded. It is great mercy that we are permitted to offer our poor praises, which are always unworthy, even when they are best. It is mercy that He will incline to hear them, and owns them as grateful incense. It is mercy that the Majesty of heaven will heed the meanness of earth, and be pleased with the worm's praises. And such privilege those who know themselves and their Lord highly prize; and therefore the Church in all ages has delighted to praise and still delights to praise the Lord of hosts, and make a joyful noise to the God of their salvation.

This praise is given when we say: "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever." This is a confession that all good is from above, and thus an ascription of glory to Him implicitly, so far as mention is made of His kingdom and power, but also explicitly in the avowal that His is the glory as well.

Thine is the kingdom. This asserts that the government is exclusively God's, and that the wise and gracious disposal of all belongs to Him. In the kingdom of nature all things are ordered for the welfare of God's creatures, and He who orders them thus is God. When all things work together for good to them that love Him, it is not our wit or wisdom that thus overrules all for our welfare, but the infinite wisdom and loving kindness of God. When we receive the assurance of everlasting life, it is not in virtue of our



self-government, as though we could conquer the evil that is in us, but only on account of God's infinite grace.

When unspeakable bliss is promised us in the kingdom of glory, it is not because our own virtue and holiness has made us worthy of it, but because God so loves us that, for Christ's sake, He freely gives us what we never can deserve. In the kingdom of nature, and of grace, and of glory, it is God that reigns, and all the gifts imparted in all are wholly unmerited. It requires some self-denial to confess all this; but precisely because the confession divests us of all praise for ourselves, does it redound to the glory of God by giving all to Him. If we ruled ourselves and brought all blessings upon ourselves, the praise would be ours also; but we say: "Thine is the kingdom." This implies the promise on our part that we will not presume to be our own lords, but will live under Him in His kingdom, and not interfere with the benevolent purposes of His government. We own Him as our King, and thus we praise Him: praise Him in our heart's submission to His sceptre and our lips' confession of His Majesty.

Thine is the power. It is not sufficient that we ascribe praise to God for ruling all around us: we must give Him the praise also for enforcing His good will by His great power. Even when by His grace we have become subjects of His blessed kingdom, and according to the spirit cheerfully do His pleasure, it is by the power which He imparts.

He not only plans and superintends the performance of all that is good, but He alone bestows the ability by which it is accomplished: the power is His. By this He built the worlds and keeps them in their course. By this He regulates the universe and all that it contains. What we call the products of nature are the works of God; what we call the laws of nature are the regular manifestations of His will. His power is apparent everywhere; in the largest and in the smallest of His creatures it is displayed with equal plainness. To ascribe the power to ourselves in such sense that the honor would belong to us, would therefore be in opposition to our ascription of the power to God. And this is true in physical as well as in spiritual things. Our daily labor, indeed, is performed in some sense by an exercise of power; and it must not be permitted to enter the mind of a Christian that all is therefore due to himself. He prays and gives thanks as though he performed no labor and exercised no power. The reason of this is very plain. If we have power to move our limbs it is God who furnishes it; it is His power, though bestowed in the spheres of nature. And so it is in spiritual things. As in our birth He has en-

dowed us with some measure of physical strength, which is increased by those material gifts which are bestowed from day to day, so in our regeneration He has endowed us with some degree of spiritual strength, which is also increased from time to time by the spiritual gifts imparted. "It is God who worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure," Philippians 2:13; and therefore, in order that honor may be given to whom it is due, we confess: "Thine is the power!"

Thine is the glory. His must necessarily be the glory since the kingdom and the power are His, and as it is His, so should it be explicitly confessed to belong to Him. For we are prone, even when we are convinced that of ourselves we are nothing and can do nothing, still to receive honor from men as though we deserved it. It is pleasant to our corrupt nature to receive praises, even though this be taken from Him who alone merits them. To give God the glory expressly is therefore not superfluous here, nor anywhere when a fitting opportunity to express it occurs, nay, it is necessary. For even though we were far from claiming any praise for ourselves in spiritual beings, knowing that just as much as we receive must be taken from our Lord, whose name we desire to hallow, still there are many who are not pervaded by the life of Christianity, and who being actuated by the selfishness of their realm, take it for granted that the praise for all the good accomplished belongs to man when he is the instrument of the accomplishment. We must not only not willfully cause such mistakes, but we must do all in our power to avoid them. And we have certainly left the principal means of preventing them unused if we neglect to make the confession:

"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy and for Thy truths' sake," Ps. 115:1,

or, as it is given in this prayer: Thine is the glory. Let us never forget that not only all temporal comforts and blessings come from our Father in heaven, but that we were raised to the hope of eternal glory and are preserved in it only by the grace of God, that when we were yet enemies Christ died for us, and that if God even now, when by His power we believed in Jesus, dealt with us according to our deserts, He would send us into everlasting punishment, that we may not grow weary of the adoring confession: "Thine is the glory!"

And this forever. God shall rule to eternity as He does now, for His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; and by His power will all good be accomplished through endless ages as it is now. The angels and perfected just in heaven shall forevermore be subject to His dominion and own His power and give Him glory. We have no wish to be independent of our Father. We might harbor such a thought and find some comfort in the hope of being released from subjection to His will in the future world, if subjection to it were a grievous burden here. But it is not: His yoke is easy and His burdens light, so to the sincere Christian it is a joy to think that he shall be permitted to serve the same God in the kingdom of glory whom he has been serving in the kingdom of grace. We shall live under Him forever in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and happiness. We shall be recipients of His favor and shall therefore have reason and, if we attain to glory, the desire also to praise Him forever. Even if the inexhaustible and incomprehensible love which devised and executed the wonderful plan of our salvation, could be forgotten by the saved we would still have causes and inducements enough in heaven to praise Him to eternity. But that infinite grace can never be forgotten. Never can souls in heaven cease to be thankful to Him who washed them in His blood on earth and made them kings and priests unto God—never can they cease to sing Him, who is the kingdom and the power.

“Thine is the glory forever.”

## **Article Two.**

The doxology, in the conclusion of the prayer which Jesus taught us, is not only an ascription of praise to God, but also an expression of confidence. Whilst it gives glory to God, it also presents a reason why we presume to come before Him with our petitions, in which we ask so much: it gives the ground of our confidence to those who hear us, and strengthens our own souls in confidence by bringing this strong ground into frequent view.

Such ground is presented in the words: “Thine is the kingdom.” This is an acknowledgment that our Father is King and rules over all, and an acknowledgment which we know to be based upon eternal truth, because our Savior teaches us to make it. But as all things are at His disposal, and He wisely and graciously disposes of all, why should we not trust in His guid-

ance with child-like confidence, and ask of Him with unwavering trust whatsoever we need, in His kingdom? We are His subjects: surely we have reason to ask our King to rule us, and to rule us according to that mercy which He has been pleased to reveal to us in His word. This He has promised us, and it is not presumption to ask it of Him, when we ask in the name of Him, for whose sake the gracious promises are given and in whom they are all yea and amen, It. is not our kingdom, for whose success we are laboring and praying: it is His, to whom our requests are made known. And as we pray not because we are subjects of the kingdom of nature, in which character we never pray in Jesus' name and therefore never can pray effectually, but because we are subjects in the kingdom of grace, for the advent of which we pray in the second petition, and are thus children who ask good gifts of their Father, we cannot but pray for the peace and prosperity of the kingdom which is God's, and in accordance with the laws of that kingdom; and He who rules it will grant our requests and bless us as subjects, because the kingdom is His.

“Thine is the power.” We know from God's gracious revelation that His will is our good, and that our good is holiness through faith in Jesus. But this will, even when we know it, we have no power to perform. There is no health nor strength in us; we cannot rid ourselves of the evil or attain to the good. Without Christ we can do nothing. We therefore ask the aid and entreat the blessings of Him Whose power is infinite. We know that He is willing to give; for He who withheld not His own Son, but freely gave Him up for us all, how should He not with Him also freely give us all things! This willingness is a strong foundation for our confidence to rest upon. But it is not in itself sufficient to guard us against all doubts and fears. The benevolence of a man is no sufficient guarantee of his assistance in the time of need: much depends upon his ability. Our comfort in addressing ourselves to God is that He is as strong as He is good. His is the power. He is able to hear us and rule us, as subjects in His kingdom, to our everlasting welfare. This power we know that He will exert, because He loves us and has taught us to bring these petitions before Him. Surely He will grant what He has instructed us confidently to ask of Him, as His is the power. Therefore “unto Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end,” Eph. 3:20, 21.

“Thine is the glory.” This is a still further ground of our confidence. For if we asked the gifts embraced in our several petitions merely for selfish ends, we would have no promise of being heard. God requires of us the crucifixion, not the pampering of the flesh. But no one who has learned to say the Lord’s Prayer according to the design of Him who taught it, will even think of asking temporal gifts merely for self-aggrandizement. All such selfishness and vain glory are excluded in the very first petition, which entreats our Father to govern all for His own glory. The plea is therefore a powerful one, that we ask nothing for our own glory or for the accomplishment of selfish ends which are antagonistic to God’s, but ask everything for His own Name’s sake. Our prayers are for the promotion of His cause and the attainment of His ends. We ask for the blessings of His kingdom, and the power to labor and to suffer in it with all faithfulness, not because we would be great, but because we would make His praise glorious. Our prayer is that God may give us health and strength to use for Him. And how should God withhold from us that by which His own glory is promoted! This is our confidence. These petitions accord with His will as revealed for our welfare, and exalt His name. Would you ask us, therefore, how we know that our prayers are heard, we can answer confidently, and do thus answer whenever we say the Lord’s Prayer, His is the glory! Our own cause might perish, our own plans might fail, our own honor might be tarnished; but God’s can never fail; for He will arise and plead His own cause and rescue His own honor. When the glory is His, all is well; for Omnipotence will attain that glory in spite of every obstacle. “For ever.” His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, His power eternal, and His glory endureth forever. Therefore we have confidence not only when we ask for those things by which we may glorify Him here, but also for those gifts which are eternal. In His kingdom we would remain forever; in His power would we trust forever; to His name would we give glory forever. We would behold His glory above, as we have enjoyed His grace here below. And that we shall see His face in glory and praise Him in the heights above in never ending bliss, gives us joy and inspires us with still increasing confidence. Never will He cease to govern us graciously, and never will His arm be shortened or His power cease to be displayed, and therefore we have no reason ever to cease trusting in Him: for His is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Thus the doxology expresses our confidence as well as our praise; and this

confident assurance is increased, and its expression is repeated, when by our Savior's instruction we at the conclusion of our petitions say Amen.

## Article Three.

The word Amen expresses "the assurance that such petitions are acceptable to our Father in heaven and heard of Him; for He Himself has commanded us thus to pray, and has promised to hear our supplications. Amen, Amen, signifies yea, yea, it shall be so." As Jesus taught us to say it, it is, in the Lord's Prayer, a divine promise that we shall be heard; and as Christians, in compliance with these instructions, use it confidently, it is a human confession of confidence in the divine promise. In both these aspects, namely as God's and as our Amen, we will consider it.

As God's Amen it is equivalent to the express promise that our prayer shall be heard, although the answer comes, of course, in God's time and way.

That God will hear and answer our prayers is certain from Holy Scriptures: He has given us His yea, it shall be so, in various places and in various forms. For He has commanded us to pray, and surely did not command us to ask when He had no purpose to hear.

"When Thou saidst: Seek ye my face, my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." Ps. 27:8.

For the assurance of being heard is coupled with the command to ask: we are to ask because God desires and designs to give the blessings for which we are taught to pray.

"Call upon me in the day of trouble and I will deliver thee." Ps. 50:15.

"He shall call upon me and I will answer him." Ps. 91:15.

"It shall come to pass that before they ask, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking I will hear." Is. 65:24.

And these precepts and promises, which are so abundant in the Old Testament, are repeated with great frequency in the new, which speaks more clearly about Christ, in whose name and for whose sake our prayers are heard. The promises are unmistakably plain and afford strong consolation. Thus our Savior expands the Amen which he has added to the model prayer in these words:

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” Matt. 7:7—8.

And again in another place: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you.” John 16:23. For that in our prayers we will not ask anything which the Father cannot grant, is sufficiently certain if we use the Lord’s Prayer, and others after this manner. What the Lord has taught us to say and to seal with Amen, cannot oppose His will, but must be coincident with it.

“This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He heareth us; and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.” 1 John 5:14—15.

That God will answer us in His own time, not just when we think it best, Christians will take for granted. It is not always in accordance with His will to grant our requests immediately, and it is not proper for us to ask immediate answers to our prayers. We must have patience and wait. And this is often best for us: God delays His gifts in goodness and mercy. For our faith is to be proved thus also. We are to be tried whether we do really trust the Lord’s words, which give us the assurance, or whether we only believe what we see and experience. Blessed are they who believe without seeing! And this blessing the good Lord would put us in the way of receiving by calling our attention, sometimes, to the unbelief of our hearts, which induces us to doubt the promises if we do not see them fulfilled instantly. To this end He sometimes delays their fulfillment, increasing the blessing by the delay. But fulfilled they will be, in respect to prayer as in every other respect, at such time as the Lord shall please and as shall therefore be best for us.

“Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” 2 Peter 3:8-9.

The Lord would not have us doubt on account of the delay, but believe firmly and pray more fervently. He loves our importunity; it is a manifestation of faith in His promises, of undying trust in His goodness. “The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth.” Ps. 145:18. But only they call upon Him in truth who have confidence in His Word beyond their present experience: if we believe we shall see the salvation of God. Therefore our Lord spake a parable unto His disciples “to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint.” Luke 18:1. We must not grow weary; ask, and thou shalt receive, though it be after many days. And although our carnal ardor will be cooled by such a delay, this will be an advantage, not an evil. Such ardor profits nothing; let it cool, let it die; only let faith take its place— faith which continues confident until it shall please the Lord to crown it with the blessings sought.

That the prayers offered will be answered in God’s own way is also manifest. It is folly for us to ask and yet neglect, or even despise, those means which God ordinarily uses to grant the requests made. If we ask for our daily bread, we must not expect it to come in that miraculous way in which God was pleased to send manna to the children of Israel. And he who would lie down upon his knees day after day in importunate petitions for necessary food to preserve him from approaching starvation, and would, when growing feebleness began to foreshadow coming death, deny the truth of the promise that they who ask would receive, could hardly be considered sane by reasonable men. He that will not work shall not eat; for while God has given us His word that He will never forsake us, but always be our Shepherd and supply our wants, He has never promised to depart from His ordinary way without necessity. Let a man labor, and in the sweat of his brow he shall eat his bread. This is God’s way, and to this we must conform. Diligence in business, fidelity in our temporal calling, is the condition of temporal blessings; and it is only that presumptuous spirit which has not yet learned to live under Jesus in His kingdom, that would ask or expect our Father to conform to our way. So if we ask the salvation of our souls, we ask that which God is always pleased to give. But He has shown us the way in which this unspeakable gift is ordinarily conferred; and they who will not



receive the gift in this way cannot receive it at all. To ask forgiveness of sin and yet reject the Word of God is folly; to entreat God for a new heart and yet reject the means which God has instituted for its bestowal is mockery. He who would lie upon his knees continually and ask for the needful light and life to be saved, and never open the book which brings light and life to the benighted and dead in sin, would act the madman. That there are thousands who thus sit and wait for the blessings in extraordinary ways, is sadly evident; but that they do this with as little reason as they who seek for temporal gifts without the ordinary means is equally plain. The promise to answer our prayers is conditioned in two ways, First, that we do not ask what we have no reason for believing it to be God's will to grant. Thus we know that it is His will to grant life everlasting in Jesus, and therefore we can ask this with perfect confidence. We know, too, that it is His will to grant us the necessities of our earthly life, and therefore we do not hesitate to ask for our daily bread. But we cannot ask for wealth, or for continued prosperity in temporal things, without transcending the legitimate limits of prayer, seeing God has nowhere promised wealth, and adversity may sometimes be better for us than prosperity. But, secondly, the condition of receiving is also this, that we use the regular means by which those things, which we can ask for in accordance with God's will, are bestowed. If we observe this, and then continue instant in prayer, according to the divine command, we shall experience in good time, what we should always firmly believe, that it shall be so. God adds His Amen to our petitions and will fulfill the promise implied in it, if we can only wait His time and are willing to receive it in His way.

## **Article Four.**

The divine promise is to be met by our faith in that promise. Such faith we confess by appropriating the Amen of the Lord's Prayer and making it our own, notwithstanding all objections raised against prayer.

The children of God will trust their Father's word; and whatever difficulties may present themselves, the Father's word will be sufficient. Therefore we find strong confidence expressed in the Scriptures, and all sincere believers can adopt the expression as their own, and should do so. "Lord Thou hast heard the desire of the humble," says the Psalmist, "Thou wilt prepare their heart, Thou wilt cause Thine ear to hear." Ps. 10:17.

“Our fathers trusted in Thee; they trusted and Thou didst deliver them. They cried unto Thee and were delivered: they trusted in Thee and were not confounded.” Ps. 22:4—5.

When we pray aright, observing the conditions of Christian prayer, we can be certain that it shall be according to our prayer, and this certainly we should confess by saying Amen to them. Of course our hearts must fail us if we would confidently say it in conclusion of a prayer which our conscience tells us to be wrong. If we ask absolutely for things concerning which we do not know whether it pleases God to bestow them, or ask for gifts whilst we stand in habitual contempt and neglect of the means by which God is pleased to bestow them, we should not say Amen, because we have asked amiss and have no reason to flatter ourselves that it should be so. But the child of God will heed the instructions given, and will ask in Jesus’ name, according to the divine will, and then confidently add what the Lord has taught him to add, as a confession of his faith in the divine promise that whatsoever we ask we shall receive. Without such faith all prayers are vain: they cannot be acceptable to God.

“Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.” Mark 11:24.

While we are told that the fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much, we have no such promise respecting the unrighteous man. He that has righteousness of Christ by faith will be heard, and none other. Therefore we are told:

“Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering: for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.” Jam. 1:5, 7.

Where doubt exists the very essentials of acceptable prayer are wanting. In such cases we cannot be asking in Jesus’ name, because in Him we have positive promises which leave no room for doubt: the existence of the latter is an evidence of our approach in our own name, which fills us with misgivings. Never can we, in such case, be asking according to God’s will; because where confidence exists that the petition accords with the will of Him to whom we offer it, there can be no uncertainty whether His will will be

done. It is the children of God who are taught thus to pray—children who call God their Father: and we are all children of God only by faith in Christ Jesus. Therefore we have no right to pray at all if we cannot appropriate the word Amen as part of our prayer: we must believe that it shall be so if we are children at all. The prayer of doubt is no Christian prayer; and when persons sometimes speak of asking God for gifts, which are desired by the flesh, but which are unnecessary for the body and useless for the soul, on the plea that there is no harm in trying, they make a mockery of a solemn duty which is one of the most precious privileges. Let us see to it that our prayers are always so ordered that we can be assured of their acceptableness to God, and then let us express our cordial confidence of being heard by saying Amen to it.

With such faith in our hearts all the objections which are raised against the success and benefit of prayer will be harmless and powerless to us. For experience will bear testimony to the truth of the promises, so far as experiences have been ours, and the divine promise certifies us though experience should not. By these the Christian will abide, still believing where he does not see, until he shall be permitted to see. Those who doubt or deny the truth of our Lord's Amen may point us to the past, in which our prayers may oftentimes have seemed fruitless, and then to the difficulty as to how our poor requests should move the Majesty of heaven and mold the course of events on earth. All this is nothing to us when our hearts believe. For our experience never has denied the promise, although we may often have presumed to ask what He was pleased mercifully to withhold, in order to answer our prayer in general by the bestowment of a larger blessing. And He who is the King of kings, respecting whom it seems to some very absurd to think that He will condescend to notice us, is our Father, whom we are taught to approach with cheerfulness and confidence. Therefore we must not allow ourselves to be perplexed with doubts and difficulties suggested by cavilers, but always trusting our Father's promises, who is willing and able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think, conclude our petitions with a confident Amen.

To appreciate the Lord's Prayer we must possess the Spirit of prayer, and learn to comply with the admonition to pray without ceasing. Prayer is a necessity of the Christian. It is necessary not because of any coercion, physical or legal, but simply because the Holy Spirit prompts to it. We would not have it looked upon merely as a duty, although it is one of the most solemn

duties enjoined on man, but as a blessed privilege which God confers upon His dear children. As a child lays its wants before its parents and holds sweet counsel with them, not because it must do so, but because there is an inward impulse to do it, 'the gratification of which is a pleasure, so the Christian prays not because he must, but because it is pleasant and needful for his own sake. And yet it is undeniably a duty, the neglect of which is punishable and will, if impenitently persisted in, be punished like all other sins. But the duty can be fulfilled only when it has become something more to us. The mere external act does not fulfill the meaning of the words: "Pray ye!" with which the Lord's Prayer is introduced. When the precept has entered into our souls as a law of our being, and has ceased to stand against us as a law of God with which our whole being has no sympathy, we can in some degree comply with it, and only then; for it does not require individual acts only, but the individual's heart, from which the acts proceed. God wants not ours, but us. When we pray merely because we are legally bound to do so, our prayers must necessarily become mere legal ceremonies without edification because uttered without faith, and without profit because the prayer of unbelief has no promise. We must have the faith which says Amen.

But it is always fraught with evil consequences to sunder what God has joined together. To regard prayer as a mere external duty, or to regard it as a mere optional privilege, are equally mistaken and dangerous views. It is a duty which is a privilege and a privilege which is a duty. As we are in danger of performing it mechanically when we view it as a duty merely, so we are in danger of becoming indifferent when we view it as a privilege merely. "Ye have been called unto liberty," for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," Gal. 5:18; 2 Cor. 3:17. This implies freedom from all legal coercion so far as the Spirit rules, as well as from the curse of the violated law; for "if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law, Gal. 5:18. But thus the believer is free not in the sense that he can now transgress all commandments with impunity, but in the sense that now, since he has an inner impulse to live as the law requires, he does not need coercion of an external law, is not coerced. So far as he is yet under the influence of the flesh he is in danger of neglecting all duties and privileges belonging to the children of God, and when he would grow slack in the use and privilege he must therefore remind himself of the duty. Law and liberty thus ever live and work together in the Christian. So far as the Spirit of regeneration has

influenced us we need no law; but so far as the flesh still lusteth against the Spirit, we have need to mortify the flesh by enforcing the law and bringing that which is rebellious into subjection. The Christian thus prizes his precious privilege and exercises it; whilst he is willing at the same time, knowing his imperfections, to keep himself under the wholesome discipline of the law, which shows him that he is always sinful—sinful even in all his relation to the highest privileges, which he is prone to neglect, or to exercise but coldly.

Alas! that we should need so many inducements and incitements to urge us on to happiness! For the privilege of prayer is connected, in the mercy of God, with inestimable benefits, and yet we are so slow and sluggish. Our prayers are heard when we come in Jesus' name: God puts His Amen to them. And this is not the only blessing resulting from prayer. Our souls grow more heavenly as we converse more with Heaven. The holy dispositions which God's grace has already wrought within us are established by exercise upon their highest object. Our spiritual gifts are adapted to spiritual things and thrive by employment upon them. The Christian who is risen with Christ is therefore enjoined to "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God," Col. 3:1. The new life is exercised and therefore strengthened by prayer. And in the exercise of this privilege the child of God becomes gradually more conscious of his blessed condition and claims as an heir of heaven. It is therefore as delightful as it is profitable when believably practiced. For whilst we feel our unworthiness and sin, our meanness and our misery in ourselves, we still rejoice with joy unspeakable that, for our blessed Redeemer's sake, we are permitted to approach the Majesty on high, with the assurance of pardoned sin and the promise of everlasting blessedness in the future world, and call Him our Father, concluding all our petitions with a confident Amen, yea, yea, it shall be so.

# 3. The Practice of Prayer

## 1. The Duty And Privilege Of Prayer

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WE HAVE ALREADY SPOKEN of prayer as a necessity of the Christian—as something to which he is prompted not by any coercion, physical or legal, but simply by the Holy Spirit who is given him. The distinction is of great importance for the proper understanding of the subject of prayer. It is not merely a duty, but a blessed privilege which God confers upon His dear children. As a child lays its wants before its parents, not because it must do so, but because there is an inward impulse to do it, the gratification of which is a pleasure, and because the request is a condition of the supply of the want, so the Christian prays not because he must, but because it is pleasant and needful for his own sake. And yet it is undoubtedly a duty, the neglect of which is punishable, and will, if impenitently persisted in, be punished, like all other sins. But that Which is an evident duty can only be fulfilled by fallen man when it has become something more to us, when it has entered within us as a law of our own being, and ceased to stand against us as a law of God with which our whole being has no sympathy, in other words, when our own will enjoins it, then only can we really in any degree fulfill a law which does not only require individual acts, but which refers primarily to the person, and demands internal obedience. God wants not ours but us. When we pray, therefore, because we are legally bound to do so, our prayers must necessarily become mere legal ceremonies, without edification, because uttered without faith, and without profit, because the prayer of unbelief has no promise. It is in truth no prayer at all in the sense of the commandment. For this requires, first of all, a believing heart, which clings to the divine promises, without which Christian prayer has no existence.

It is always fraught with evil consequences, however, to sunder that which God hath joined together. To regard prayer merely external as a duty, or to regard it merely as an optional privilege, are both equally mistaken views. It is a duty which is a privilege, and a privilege which is a duty. As the consequence of viewing it in the light of a mere duty which must be externally performed, is legal formality which fulfills no law, so the consequence of viewing it in the light of a mere privilege, which we may use or not at our pleasure, is indifference and eventually the loss of the privilege. "We have been called unto liberty;" for "where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." Gal. 5:13; 2 Cor. 3:17. This implies freedom from all legal constraint, so far as the Spirit rules us, as well as the curse of violated law; for "if ye be led by the Spirit ye are under the law. Gal. 5:18. But the believer is free thus, not in the sense that he can now transgress all commandments with impunity, but in the sense that, having an inner impulse to live as the law requires, he does not any longer need the coercion of the external law, and is not coerced. So far as he is yet under the influence of the flesh, however, he is in danger of neglecting all duties and must therefore remind himself of the duty when he would grow slack in the exercise of the privilege. Law and liberty, duty and privilege, thus ever live and work together in the Christian, while in the unbeliever there can be no liberty and privilege. While and so far as the Spirit rules us we have and need no law; because

"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 3:9,

and

"walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." Gal. 5:16.

Though we are always sinful because the flesh never ceases to lust against the Spirit, and therefore have constant need to use the law and remind ourselves of duty, yet so far as we are born of God, that is, so far as the work of regeneration, by which we are to be presented at last before God without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, and which can of course be perfect only when we arrive at our Father's house, is already accomplished, we do not transgress and cannot, and therefore need no law to restrain or constrain us.

If we were perfect, prayer would therefore be for us a privilege only, no longer a legal requirement; but as we are imperfect and sinful, very prone to wander from Him who is our joy and our peace, and to neglect even the most delightful employments, because of the sin which so easily besets us, we must ever, when our flesh lusts against the Spirit, remember the duty, and force into subjection, and crush beneath the law, what rebels within us. And as we are never slack and never cold in prayer while the Spirit predominates, who ever prays fervently within us, we must use the law to show our sins when slackness and coldness sets in, and repent lest the flesh conquer at last and we lose the privilege by being deprived of the Spirit. Whilst the Christian thus ever holds the privilege, so long as he believes and possesses the Spirit, by which he prays incessantly, that is so long as he is indeed a Christian, he still, because his infirmities mingle with and render imperfect all he does, so that even his prayers are not what they ought to be, must ever acknowledge the duty and remain under the discipline of the law.

The privilege of prayer is connected, in the mercy of God, with unspeakable blessings. Its blessings are manifold. Not only are our prayers, when offered in faith, certainly answered; but other blessings are connected with it also. Our souls grow more heavenly as we converse more with heaven. The holy dispositions which God's grace has already wrought within us, are established by exercise upon their highest objects. Although prayer is not the means by which new powers are bestowed upon us, yet it strengthens those which we possess, and is the condition upon which new grace becomes ours. Our spiritual gifts are adapted to spiritual things and thrive by employment upon them, The Christian who is risen with Christ is therefore enjoined to

“seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.” Col. 3:1.

The new life is exercised and consequently developed by prayer. In the exercise of this privilege, the child of God becomes more and more conscious of his blessed condition and claims in Jesus as an heir of heaven. It is therefore as delightful as it is profitable when believingly and fervently practiced. But it is profitable also as a means of self-knowledge. The greatness of God, becoming clearer as we prayerfully meditate upon His greatness shows us our littleness and insignificance —our woe and weakness; and we are thus preserved in that humility, which is based upon a consciousness of



our nothingness, and which ever urges us to lay hold of the aid offered in the means of grace as our only hope. Prayer is therefore the faithful exercise of grace bestowed to the end that more may be obtained, which end will always be accomplished where faithfulness is found. “To him that hath shall be given.”

Fidelity in prayer is therefore a true index to our piety; not to others, indeed, who cannot see our prayerful state, nor be acquainted with the frequency of our acts of prayer, or with their sincerity, but to ourselves, each one being able to know the state of his own heart and life in this respect. They who love not prayer, though the Holy Spirit may still remain in them, so that they are not yet fallen from grace, are in imminent danger of dying. The flesh manifests its predominance in prayerlessness, the Holy Spirit always prompting to prayer. Where the spiritual life is at so low an ebb, it is all the more needful to resist the flesh by persistence in prayer, until that which is burdensome becomes a delight once more by the increase of years.

What we should pray for and how we should pray in order that we may receive, is taught us with sufficient clearness in the Word of God. This teaching is summed up in the beautiful prayer which our Lord gave to His disciples. It is the model for all times.

## **2. The Contents Of Prayer.**

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All prayer, whether private or public, should embrace thanksgivings and intercessions, whether expressed, or implied in the whole spirit and structure.

The felt want of a communion with God finds its appropriate utterance first in the form of earnest petition. It is a yearning toward a superior, upon Whom dependence is felt, not toward an equal; and therefore it is supplication while it is rejoicing. The condition of the soul which has learned to know itself in its meanness and misery, and its God in His might and His mercy, from whom it has wandered, is expressed in the words of the Psalmist:

“As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God!” Ps. 42:1.

The longing thus expressed cannot, on account of the relation which the suppliant sustains to the Fountain of goodness, fail to become a request; in reality it is one, and soon assumes the form of one. The panting soul, seeking a closer walk with God, cries out: "O send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to Thy holy hill and to Thy tabernacles." Ps. 40:3. The reason of this is very plain; for "in Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore." Ps. 16:11. The soul thirsts for God, because it has learned to know Him as the end of all its profound longings, which temporal things have ever failed and must ever fail to satisfy, though man in his blindness will not cease to seek satisfaction in them. The soul pants after God because it has believed Him to be the one altogether lovely, in whom alone it can find that rest for which all souls sigh. With this thirsting and panting after God must ever stand connected the petition for the removal of those barriers of sin which the soul, in the light of God's Word, perceives between itself and God and for the bestowal of that grace which alone will enable it to contend against its enemies and cling to its everlasting Friend. And as the soul, by communion with God becomes more and more like Him, whom it rejoices to call Father, and whom it Strives to imitate in the spirit of a true child, it will ask for more faith, and more love, and more patience in hope, that the Father may not be dishonored by the infirmities of the child. This same feeling of utter dependence upon God's will, moreover, necessarily induces the petition for every temporal blessing which the Christian's welfare demands. In short, because his one profoundest desire is to walk with God, here in time and in heaven forever, and because he knows that God alone can enable him to do this, he never ceases to lay his petitions before Him in Jesus' name.

And God, who is ever more willing to give than we are to ask or receive, hears the petitions, and sends blessings "trooping upon us," and makes them "hang in clusters around us." Thus He causes us to rejoice in the God of our salvation, and to be exceedingly glad in our good Shepherd who "maketh me to lie down in green pastures and leadeth me beside the still waters." Ps. 13:2. He affords our feeble souls the help they need, and gives our weary hearts the boon they wish. And the spirit which humbly lays the petition before God for help cannot receive it without lifting itself, unworthy of every blessing as it is conscious of being, in praise and thanksgiving to the merciful Father from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, and who "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think,—unto Him be

glory in the Church by Jesus Christ throughout all ages, world without end!” Eph. 3:20, 21. Therefore the hallelujah is sure to follow the petition in every believing heart.

“Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy and Thy truth’s sake.” Ps. 115:1.

Surely, “they shall praise the Lord who seek Him.” Ps. 22:26. “For praise is comely for the upright.” Therefore wherever people pray in sincerity, there is the voice of thanksgiving heard. Never did a soul send up to heaven an earnest petition without being able to remember some mercy of the past for which to praise the Lord; and never was there a soul sincere in its petitions for mercy that was not at the same time deeply grateful for God’s providence and grace as already shown in former years. Every true prayer is therefore as rich in thanksgiving as in petitions.

But in his petition as in thanksgiving the true child of God is far from that selfishness which has no thought for his brethren. Man never is and never can be utterly alone without utter misery. He longs for communion with kindred souls. And Christianity does not annihilate this longing. The Christian pants after God in whose image he is made, but would fain appear before Him in company with others endeavoring to walk worthy of Him. And he knows right well that those same aspirations which lie deep within his own breast are also deeply rooted in the breast of others, and that they have petitions and thanks to bring before God. like his own. There is a communion of saints, and every saint feels it. His sighings are those of humanity; his knowledge of the living water that stills them, and his joy upon drinking refreshing drafts, and his supplication to be permitted to enjoy it evermore, and his gratitude for the unmerited mercy shown in the permission to drink, these are not peculiar to himself alone—they belong to the whole blessed body of which he is a member. He believes and hopes, he feels and thinks, he works and suffers, he supplicates and praises with them all—with all that love the Lord Jesus in sincerity. Therefore he does not forget them when he prays; whether he is alone in his closet, or with brethren in the congregation, he does not forget them. Are not the brothers present to him when he lies upon his face at Jesus’ feet, even though no visible form be near? Therefore even in the closet he does not send curling clouds of in-

cense to the skies for himself alone; he prays with others and in behalf of others;

“praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” Eph. 5:18.

“I exhort therefore that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men.” 1 Tim. 2:1.

That which is an inward necessity with the loving heart is also God’s loving will.

### **3. Incessant Prayer.**

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Man was designed for communion with God, in whose image he was created. His true happiness depends upon this. When he wanders from his Maker he becomes wretched, and his wretchedness will continue, though he possesses every temporal good he craves, until he hears and heeds the blessed call:

“Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Matt. 11:28.

Nothing earthly can satisfy the wants of an immortal being.

“As for me I will behold Thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness.” Ps. 17:15,

Man has strayed from God by sin, and nothing can save him from the misery which is the consequence, but that saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ which brings him back to God, and enables him, by faith, to hold communion again with his merciful Maker, reconciled in Jesus.

The exercise of communion, on our part, is Prayer. This is communing with God. It is the state in which our own woe and weakness, our ruin and helplessness is felt, and God is trusted in for the supply of every want, the

deliverance of every danger. Prayer is not merely the expression of this trust in the form of a request; it is the incessant beating of a believing heart. The felt need of help, the faith that God alone can afford it as He is ever willing to do, and the desire to have Him do it, are not only occasional emotions in the breast, which sometimes takes the form of a petition, but are ever present—present in the inmost recesses of the soul even when the thoughts are actively employed about the concerns of this earthly life. As reason resides in man, even when he is unconscious of its presence, so faith resides in the believer, and as it ever abides and clings to Jesus, so it ever prays. Prayer is implied in faith, every movement of which, directed toward God, is prayer. We may thus affirm that Christians always pray; sometimes in words; sometimes in gestures; sometimes in sighs and aspirations; sometimes in half-formed thoughts and unutterable feelings, faith clinging to the mighty Savior with steadfast trust in that Savior's grace. The believing soul is always prayerful. The harp is a musical instrument even when no hands draws forth its tones; it is such in its very nature. So is the believing heart prayerful in its very nature. As we are believers when we are engaged in our temporal avocations, though faith may not then be consciously acting upon its proper object—believers as well asleep as awake—so the believer is prayerful in doing his daily work as well as in saying his daily prayers. God reads the heart: knows its state and its desires before these have assumed a legible form even to ourselves; and the expression of that which breathes within us is not an essential part of prayer. The true import of this is not to make special wants known to our heavenly Father in order that He may supply them; “for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him.” Matt. 6:8. The utterance of a petition is only a little rill becoming manifest from the great stream which incessantly flows within, and which, though concealed from man, is ever manifest to God. It flows out from a necessity lying in the overflowing fullness of the stream, not because God perceives not or refuses to recognize as prayer, the stream itself. Prayer is the state of the helpless, humble child, ever trusting in his mighty merciful Father; not only the utterances proceeding from this state. It is therefore the necessary condition in which the child of God lives; it is “the Christian's vital breath, the Christian's native air.” As such it is, of course, the work of the Holy Ghost, by whom alone we can be made children of God.

“God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts crying: Abba, Father.” Gal. 4:6.

This is the Spirit of Prayer, whose presence in our hearts is attended by prayer without ceasing, according to those words of the Scriptures: "He spake a parable to them that men ought always to pray and not to faint." Luke 18:1. "Pray without ceasing." 1 Thess. 5:17. The meaning of these and similar passages evidently cannot be that the Christian must, at least during his waking hours, be always engaged in praying, refusing to turn his attention to any temporal thing. For the neglect of our temporal calling is sinful as well as the neglect of our heavenly. Slothfulness in spirit is forbidden as well as negligence in prayer. Rom. 12:11. Entire devotion of our time to formal prayer, to the exclusion of all labor, and entire devotion of our time to temporal affairs, to the exclusion of all spiritual exercises, are both extremes which meet on the common ground of selfishness and sin; the sin of permitting the whole being, with its round of various duties, to be absorbed in one, and making this attention to the one the excuse for neglecting the others. It is like sanctifying the Lord's day with the most scrupulous abstinence from all manual labor, and permitting the most unscrupulous selfishness to control us, during the other days of the week. The true child of God, who really prays without ceasing, never finds his prayers interfering with his other privileges and duties. These all work harmoniously together. He gives expression to his gratitude and his desires, then proceeds to his business in the same prayerful mood, praying still within, whatever be his next employment; for still his faith gratefully leans on his Strength and Redeemer, and his abiding state is communion with God in his inmost life. Thus it is that everything he does becomes a service of God, being a regular discharge of duty in Jesus' name. The true Christian works as devoutly as he worships.

"Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." Col. 3:17.

Continuing instant in prayer is therefore so far from implying the neglect of any duties of our calling, that it alone qualifies us for fidelity in their discharge, because it is the preservation of the proper prayerful relation to God in faith. It keeps all activities of mind and body subordinate to His glory.

"Therefore, whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God." 1 Cor. 10:31.

Thus it is plain that those passages do not require constant employment in formal prayer, and that they mean something more than that we should not become discouraged when the answer to any expressed petition is delayed, though this is also implied. They mean that we should ever lean humbly on Jesus in a prayerful state, and in this spirit attend to all our duties. This view of prayer without ceasing is forcibly presented in the following passage of Luther:

“Wherever there is a Christian there is the Holy Spirit, he does nothing but pray incessantly. For although he does not always move the lips and utter words, still the heart heaves and beats with sighings continually, like the pulse in our veins and the throbbings in our breasts. We can as little find a Christian without prayer as a living man without pulsations, which are never quiet, but always stir and beat, though the man be sleeping or otherwise unconscious of it.”

Indeed, no one who does not thus, by the Holy Spirit, inwardly continue unceasingly in prayer, will ever engage in special acts of prayer in spirit and in truth.

But whilst the possession of the Holy Spirit, whose presence is unceasing prayer, is the essential feature of all worship, the frequent examples in holy Scriptures of prayer clothed in appropriate words, and the frequent mention of stated hours for devotions, render it without doubt that it is by no means unimportant to collect our thoughts, at proper intervals, for the act of prayer. Indeed this is necessary. For whilst there are some enjoining incessant prayer in the soul, there are others just as surely demanding the exercise of our prayerfulness in acts of prayer, without which there could be no praying together by Christians. The former implies the latter and will not continue without it. For the Holy Ghost, praying incessantly within us, also prompts us to collect ourselves at times for acts of devotion; and the refusal to do so is a resistance of the Spirit. The person of proud pretended spirituality who feels himself above any special acts of prayer, on the ground of the presumed unceasing prayer within, and a contempt for all externals, may have “begun in the Spirit,” but willfully rejecting the promptings of the Spirit, is really seeking to be made “perfect by the flesh.” Gal. 3:3. The contempt of all formal exercises, whether internal or external, upon the pretense of being above them is evil in its origin and destructive in its consequences. To be temples of the Holy Spirit and thus spiritual, not carnal, is the high prerogative of Christians. The residence of the Spirit within us pre-

cedes all good thoughts and intentions, words and works, and, as alone giving Christian character to these, is far more important. But the pretended exaltation of the former by means of despising the latter, is really a rejection of the whole. Damming up the spring on the ground of our preference of waters to those of the stream flowing from it, is the very way to deprive ourselves of sweet water entirely. The Word of God, while it again and again inculcates the precious truth that we are not saved by the deeds of the law, or by any exercise of our own whatever, but solely by a divinely wrought faith clinging to the divinely-given truth, still is just as earnest and frequent in its admonition not to grow weary in well-doing, lest, resisting the Spirit who prompts to good works, we resist the grace imparted by the Spirit unto salvation. No one, therefore, who rejoices in the possession of the Spirit of prayer, and who would not do despite to the Spirit and grieve Him away, will use this pretense to neglect the special acts of prayer, to which the Spirit prompts, and which are as necessary to preserve that Spirit as they are delightful to the child of God who appreciates his privilege. His soul will oftentimes rejoice to turn away from the scene of these earthly labors and sufferings in which he serves his God, to hold direct, conscious communion with Him. He cannot help but fix his thoughts at times prayerfully upon the unnumbered mercies of God and his own great defects and wants, and give form to his wishes and feelings; and then often out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak.

## **4. Regularity in Prayer.**

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Whether the prayer in which our prayerful life assumes the form of definite petitions and thanksgivings, be “uttered or unexpressed,” is wholly immaterial in itself, and must depend entirely upon circumstances. Our thoughts and feelings, our hopes and fears, our desires and regrets are all plain to our Father without an audible utterance. He understands our thoughts afar off. When we have entered into our closets and shut our doors to pray to our Father who is in secret, the utterance of requests aloud, as it is unnecessary in itself, will probably be ordinarily preferred by but few. The sounds in that retirement will rather disturb than promote devotion, and may make that



public which was intended, or pretended, to be secret, and thus look like hypocrisy. When, on the other hand, we have assembled with the family, or with the great congregation in the Lord's House, there can be full agreement in all things embraced in our prayers only when these are audibly expressed; and perhaps none would ordinarily prefer to have the prayers, in such circumstances, said by each one for himself in silence. Social worship would thus be impossible.

These withdrawals from the duties and care of our earthly vocation, to hold undisturbed communion with God, should not only be frequent, but, as far as possible, at regular intervals. Regularity is beneficial in all acts which can be regulated, but is especially so in all such exercises as, though duty requires them to be frequently repeated, are yet, on account of our innate aversion to them, very apt to be neglected. For, unless a special time is set apart for attending to them we incur the danger of postponing them until all other engagements, which are more congenial to our natural tastes, are met, and thus of gradually omitting them entirely. Where there is the degree of spiritual life requisite to prompt to a discharge of the duty with sufficient frequency, there will seldom be an objection made to regularity. It cannot be maintained that want of time forbids it; for the duty will seem important enough to devote some time to it every day, no matter what other employments await us. God has allotted to us abundant time for all that He has enjoined upon us and the conscientious Christian would be just as likely to say that he has no time for his daily work or daily meals, as to say that he has no time for prayer. Indeed, if those who object to stated times of devotion, upon the plea of having their time too much occupied with other duties, could but once be persuaded to attend to their devotions when the hour arrives, refusing to attend to their temporal concerns at such seasons on the ground of having no time to make money, or to seek enjoyment of a secular character, they would soon become convinced that the day is long enough for all, and that all other duties are discharged with more alacrity because the spiritual have been discharged. That occasionally circumstances of an extraordinary nature may occur by which an omission of the ordinary devotions is not only justified, but even demanded, does not in the least interfere With the rule which, of course, is not absolute.

Again, to the objection that devotional exercises are likely to degenerate into mere formality if they are regularly attended to, it is sufficient to reply that all worship will be merely formal, when the heart takes no interest in it,

whether it be occasional or regular, and that the circumstance of regularity cannot in itself produce such formality. For although it be just to say that we are in a more devotional frame at some times than at others, yet it follows from this, neither that we should set apart no time for worship but leave all to the recurrence of this proper mood, or that our prayers are any more acceptable to God when made under its influence. The prayer of faith will always be pleasing to God. If our Christianity lie merely in the devout frame of mind which we find sometimes receding, not in the faith which in the true Christian underlies every frame, and prevents despair in the saddest hours, as it prevents presumption in the gladdest, then this objection would hold good. Then we should be constrained to say that prayers are altogether unavailing unless those who present. them are precisely in the most devout mood, because then we would be constrained to say that the person is not a Christian, that is, not a believer, because not in the right mood. But if Christianity is a life which may abide in us in spite of the ever varying feeling which our intercourse with the external world may suggest, and the ever changing moods which come over the mind; if faith remains such notwithstanding discouragements and depressions; then prayer is just as acceptable in the one as in the other frame of mind, and though it may not be so much enjoyed by us, will just as surely be answered. As the meadow sometimes gladdens in the sun's bright blaze, sometimes darkens in the shadow of clouds flitting over it, but remains the same whether dark or bright; so will the Christian soul remain the same. As the waters of the lake are the same when ruffled by the winds as when asleep in halcyon peace; so ruffled by troubles or placid with peace, the believer addresses his faithful prayer to God and trusts his merciful Father's promise.

Indeed prayer is most needful when we are in what is supposed to be an improper, or at least not a right frame; because then, although we may not luxuriate as well in the feeling of mercies bestowed, we are most in need of that awakening power which proceeds from the law, or of that consolation which the Gospel brings, and in our devotions these cannot but be used, as all our confessions and petitions must cluster around divine commands and promises. But in the Christian there can be no improper frame to pray; because having the Holy Spirit and being a believer, he "prays without ceasing." The extraordinary fervor which sometimes glows in his soul, the abstraction from the world and absorption of his mind in spiritual things with which he is sometimes favored, desirable as these are for our enjoyment of

grace, add nothing to the force of our prayer with God; for to Him our prayer is as our faith, not as the effects of our faith upon our feelings at the moment of prayer.

Besides, if we wish to use the most favorable hour for prayer, we need only set apart certain times, choosing those hours when the mind is usually clearest or least likely to be disturbed by temporal concerns, and the devotional frame will conform to the regular time: for nothing is so well adapted to produce fervor in prayer as meditation and prayer itself; nothing so much favors abstraction from the world as retirement from its noise and bustle. If we mingle in the world's business and pleasures until the recurrence of the devout frame admonishes us to retire for prayer, the recurrence will be but rare and will continually become rarer, until the business and pleasure eventually becomes a barrier by which the devout frame is effectually excluded. That it is important to have fixed hours for prayer is shown us by examples of holy men of old.

“Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice.” Ps. 55:17.

“Daniel kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.” Dan. 6:10.

This of course does not render it obligatory upon all men to choose precisely the same hours. We do not plead for a universal law, to which all would conform alike; we would not restrict man's Christian liberty; but merely urge that each one, in the exercise of that liberty, would, according to the examples given in Scripture, make a rule for himself and then conform to it, so that his devotions may be regular. The true care for the preservation of those gifts which God has imparted to us, and which we are in danger of losing amid the cares and temptations of the world, will suggest this, although there is no positive law by which it is rendered obligatory. That each one can still use all those opportunities for prayer which may present themselves at other than those times especially set apart for the purpose, and that the regular do not in the least interfere with such occasional devotions, is self-evident. Indeed, the probability is that those who regularly pray at appointed seasons will notwithstanding such regularity, nay rather

on account of it, pray more frequently at other hours besides, than those who leave all to varying circumstances and changing moods.

We have hitherto urged regularity in prayer upon the presumption that individuals engage in it separately. When we consider that all prayer is not private, but that sometimes two or three met together in the Lord's name, sometimes hundreds, the necessity of regularity in prayer is evident from other considerations. That the family can ordinarily be prepared to assemble only when a particular hour has been set apart for meeting and previously made known, and that a congregation cannot possibly meet together without this, is so evident that nothing need be said upon it. Regularity is therefore highly important in private and necessary to public prayer.

## 5. Patience in Prayer.

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The promises of God in reference to the prayer of faith are plain and definite. We may trust them unconditionally. The confidence of those who cling to the Lord's words will never be put to shame. "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Matt. 21:22.

But the flesh tempts to impatience when the answer to our prayers is not granted as speedily as we judge best, nor in the form which seems to us most salutary. We are prone to trust too little in the wisdom of our loving Lord and too much in our own. We must have patience. We must wait.

"It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."  
Sam. 3:26.

Our Father sometimes proves us, that our souls may grow stronger by the delay. The blessing is not denied us when it is temporarily withheld.

"For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." Is. 54:7-8.

Those who have confidence only so far as they can see the fulfillment of God's promises have no confidence in these at all. If we believe, provided testimony is furnished in addition to the testimony to be believed, we have no faith in the words. A man's veracity is not trusted when we confide in his statement only on the condition that sufficient proof be furnished, aside from his declaration, to afford a ground for our confidence. It is unbelief that regards God's Word as doubtful except when its statements are verified by other evidence than the divine assurance. Prayer offered in such a spirit has no promise, and we have no ground for expecting it to be heard.

“He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.”  
Prov. 28:9.

We must pray in faith, and bide the Lord's time.

When the pastor prays that evils which threaten his flock may be removed, and that blessings which seem so needful to its growth and establishment may be conferred, he must not become impatient if the evil continues to harass him and the desired improvement is not perceptible. He must continue instant in prayer, and wait. When the father prays that faults which trouble his household may be driven away, and that gifts which bring peace and comfort in their train may be bestowed, he must not become disheartened and grow weary in prayer if a day does not furnish proof to his eyes that his petitions are heard. He must have patience. When an individual has sufferings to endure and pours out his heart to God in cries for relief, he must not dismiss his confidence and his courage if there is some delay in the help desired or it does not appear in the form expected. God's ways are not our ways. The prayer is always heard, even if it is not answered at the time and in the way we expect. God for our good may require us to wait, but He will not suffer our confidence to be put to shame.

## **6. From Care to Prayer.**

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Our Lord admonishes us: “Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this

life.” He thus warns against the danger which lurks as well in the cares of life as in the craving for meats and drinks. “Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.”

The lesson which is thus inculcated is urged more at length in the sermon on the mount, where the Lord says:

“Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? 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 today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith.”

As we are commanded to do with our might what our hands find to do, and not to grow weary in well-doing, this of course is not designed to render us indifferent to the work of our calling or to encourage idleness in the vineyard of the Lord. It is required of a steward that he be found faithful. But it does show us that our anxious thought and self-consuming care about the supply of necessary food and raiment is as heathenish as it is useless. After all those things do the Gentiles seek, and neither they nor we can by taking thought add one cubit to the stature. God provides, and in Him we are to trust. We are to do the work assigned us, and leave the care as to what we shall eat and drink and wear to the Father, from whom all good gifts come. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all those things shall be added unto you.”

The endeavor to divest ourselves of the cares of this life would seem, in the estimation of many, to lead to culpable recklessness in all earthly vocations and labors. But it seems so only when very important elements in the lesson are overlooked. It is not taught that the necessaries of life are not worth caring for, neither is it intimated that no provision is to be made for them. But are we to provide, and is the care that in such providence our wants be not overlooked and neglected, our business? That is the question. God provides, not we; therefore the care belongs to Him, not to us. Man’s meddling with God’s prerogatives is only an indication of human distrust of divine providence, and hence the rebuke: “O ye of little faith.” Human self-conceit doubts whether God is managing His affairs wisely and well, and

therefore assumes the care that belongs to Him, and what it gets for its foolish pains is the self-torment which such arrogance entails.

The care for the necessities of life is to be committed to better hands than ours, that we, who cannot supply them at any rate, may not groan under useless burdens. St. Paul gives the key to the matter when he says:

“Be careful for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.” Phil. 4:6.

The Lord will provide; we are but to trust His promise and His providence, and lay our wants with believing hearts before Him, “casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.” 1 Pet. 5:8. We are in need of many things, but the consciousness of this should not impel us to consume ourselves with cares about the means of securing them, or to permit such cares to harass us and thus interfere with the faithful discharge of our duties; on the contrary, this should only induce us to make our requests known unto God, assured that He careth for us and that He will provide. “The Lord is my Shepherd: I shall not want.”

## **7. Thankfulness.**

**Originally Published in the *Lutheran Standard*, 1887.**

Our rulers do well to appoint a day of thanksgiving every year and thus to remind the people of a duty which they are so likely to neglect. The proclamations issued to this end are not generally such in all respects as Christians would prefer. They sometimes have a discordant sound to ears that are accustomed to the Gospel. But they remind the people of a duty, and in this respect they accomplish a good purpose. Not that thanksgiving for the innumerable blessings which we have received becomes obligatory upon us by reason of the President’s or the Governor’s proclamation. Our rulers have no authority to enjoin religious worship upon the people, and the worship engaged in merely because of such an injunction would be a mere formality. The powers that be merely recommend the thanksgiving and designate the day on which the people shall unite in rendering it, while those who actually praise the Lord for His goodness are actuated by other motives than

that of rendering external obedience to these powers. They give thanks because they are thankful, but such thankfulness is not created by official proclamations.

Nevertheless, it is needful to be reminded of duties, and gratitude in the heart, and its expression of thanksgiving and praise are duties but too much neglected among us. It is needful to rehearse the blessings for which it is meet that we give thanks, that they may move us to lift our hearts in thankfulness and to enter into the courts of the Lord with praise. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." He has made us and given us all that we have, and constantly preserves us; "He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life; He defends me against all danger, and guards and protects me from all evil; and all this purely out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me, for all which it is my duty to thank, praise, and obey Him." And much more than this has He in His infinite mercy done for us. He has sent His own dear Son to save us, "who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sin, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold and silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own, and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness." Nor has He left us in the blindness which disqualifies us for the appreciation of all those blessings, but has given us His Holy Spirit that our eyes might be enlightened and that we might believe in the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. God; has sent showers of blessings upon us in temporal and in spiritual things. "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men."

But, strange as it may seem when we look merely on the blessings which should move us to gratitude, without taking into account the sinfulness of our nature that renders us blind and thankless, most of men will not praise the Lord for His goodness. Some will not even so much as outwardly comply with the recommendation of our rulers. They will not even join the people of God in their public assembly to give thanks, and will not even with their voices render unto God thanksgiving. Some, though they go up to the Lord's house or join the company at home that lifts up the word of praise, will not lift up their hearts to God, but confine their thanksgiving to mere



words. Such thanksgiving is vain. Let us beware lest the rebuke be applied to us:

“Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.” Matt. 15:7-8.

Some join in a feeble way in giving thanks to the Giver of all good, but it is in but a feeble way because they think of their own deeds and have a fond imagination of their own merits and worthiness, and cannot consent that all praise and glory should be given to God. And that same selfishness, which seeks at least something for self, and cannot consent that all should be given to God, induces many to resist all claims and all impulses that would urge the giving of thanks with hands, as well as with hearts and voices. There are but too many who would be ashamed to be classed among the ungrateful wretches who are daily receiving benefits and yet never giving thanks, and yet are not ashamed to confine all their thanksgiving to the mere saying, with at most a superficial feeling to save the utterance of the lips from being sheer hypocrisy, whilst in fact there is no depth of gratitude that would make any sacrifice for the glory of the bountiful Benefactor Whom they praise. Oh see to it, Christians, that ye be not found ungrateful in the eyes of God, notwithstanding your gushing utterances of gratitude. ’ It is right that in our families and in our churches we should say and sing the praises of the great Creator and Preserver of the Universe, and especially of the Mighty Savior of men, who hath given us all things richly to enjoy and secures to us a home and state of blessedness after all earthly joys and sorrows are ended; it is right that we should make a joyful noise to the God of our salvation, for the gratitude that is in the heart wants utterance, and will find utterance naturally in words as well as “in works; but gratitude is, first and foremost, a matter of the heart. If that do not realize the blessings which God bestows, in temporal and spiritual things, the voice of thanksgiving is a mere sham. Let us examine ourselves, whether our’ words correspond to the condition of our hearts. Hollow phrases, heartless utterances, are an abomination to God. Contemplate the mercies of your God and realize His greatness, then will your thanksgiving be acceptable to Him who proveth the heart.”Now all to God give thanks with hearts and hands and voices."

## 8. Thanksgiving.

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Christians are a thankful people. The Holy Spirit enables them to appreciate the mercies which they daily enjoy and moves them to bless the Lord, from whom all good gifts come. While naturally man is inclined to ascribe the honor to himself which belongs to another, and therefore gratitude has but a feeble growth in the soil of nature, those who believe in the Lord Jesus in virtue of their regeneration give the glory to God and therefore enter into His courts with praise and thanksgiving. The call upon them to give thanks unto the Lord is in full accord with their inclinations.

Nor does this Christian impulse to thanksgiving exclude from its range the temporal blessings to which the “powers that be” ordinarily refer in their proclamations appointing a day for this special purpose. Believers have blessings of higher import than these for which to be thankful. Christ and the salvation in Him is more to them than all the earth. But it does not follow that they are unable on that account rightly to appreciate the temporal gifts which God bestows. On the contrary, they appreciate them all the more because they see in the necessaries and comforts of this life manifestations of the same mercy which has made such wonderful provision for the soul’s salvation and which is leading them through this earthly probation to the life of bliss which lies beyond.

“Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer.” 1 Tim. 3:4, 5.

The Christian sees all things in their relation to God’s mercy in Christ, and is all the more thankful because the word and prayer sanctifies all.

That our government recognizes the hand of God in our many national blessings and calls upon us to thank God for His bounty, is an additional cause for thanksgiving, notwithstanding that the “powers that be” seem studiously to avoid any reference to the name of Jesus in their official proclamations. The power of Christianity is felt throughout our land and exerts its benign influence on temporal affairs even where there is no express recognition of its spiritual power. Christians are thankful for God’s mercy, and

they are ever ready to give expression to their gratitude for all the mercies, spiritual and bodily, which they daily receive. "Give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever."

## 9. Praying and Working.

### Part 1.

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As Satan strives in every possible manner to mislead souls, he induces some, who have been led to accept the Bible promises concerning the efficacy of prayer, to neglect, industrious labor, as if the former would serve as a substitute for it. They are deluded into overlooking the means by which and the conditions under which God has promised to answer prayer, and thus harbor a hope that has no foundation.

If a person earnestly seeks his soul's salvation, he will come to God, who alone can save, with his heartfelt supplications. But he deceives himself if he supposes that his prayer is itself the means by which his requests will be granted, or that in answer to his prayer the blessing will be bestowed without any means. The grace to this end is always conveyed by those channels which have been appointed for the purpose. It is given by the Word of God and the Holy Sacraments. He that will not use these, as the means through which God has promised to impart the gift desired, has no reason to expect it, even though he should use forms of prayer unceasingly.

In temporal things the case is the same, and in these the truth is more generally recognized, because it can be tested by convincing experience. The man who prays that his field may yield an abundant crop, but neglects to plow the ground and sow the seed, would be regarded as doing an absurd thing, and that with reason. This is not because the prayer could not be answered as easily without his labor as with it. But God will not work miracles to accommodate men who refuse to submit to His ordinary modes of operation; and because He has given no promise to do this, His people will not ask it, since they are instructed to pray in faith, according to His will. The mechanic does not expect a rich yield of manufactured articles where no work is done. God bestows gifts, but He does it in His way, and per-

forms miracles only where the ordinary means and instrumentalities will not subserve His purpose. God will not prepare our dinners to save the cook the trouble, and does not want us to pray that He would. "He that will not work neither shall he eat."

It is thus also in the operations of the Church. A person that prays daily for the prosperity of Zion, but is willing to do nothing, is praying very superstitiously, if he is not engaged in conscious mockery. He has no ground for believing that such prayer will be of any avail. It is asking Without faith, because against God's ways. What would be the use of asking God to appease hunger, when we have abundance of food and refuse to eat it? And what is the use of asking the Lord to supply our spiritual wants when we have the bread of heaven before us and refuse to eat it? There is a contradiction in the prayer which deprives it of the character essential to render it effectual. It is not believing prayer. And if we ask God to extend His Church and let others enjoy the blessings of salvation, but are unwilling to give any time or money to accomplish the end, can there be any sincerity in the request, or any reasonable hope that it will be granted? It is God's plan that His people shall be workers together with Him, and if they will not do this, they are not of those whose fervent effectual prayer availeth much.

Pray fervently, but work earnestly also. God's blessing will rest upon the work, and the prayers will be abundantly answered. Pray and work. Work and pray.

## **Part 2.**

### **Originally Published in the *Lutheran Standard*, 1881.**

In our corrupt nature the danger always exists of separating what belongs together and of running into extremes. Some appear to think that when they have prayed for a good cause or work, they have done their duty in that behalf. Others conclude that when they have given the good work the benefit of their labor or money, all is done that could reasonably be required of them. Both do something, but both leave something undone. The prayer and the work God has joined together, and man errs when he puts them asunder.

There is cause for censure when a man prays with seeming fervency for the accomplishment of an object, but refuses, when he is asked to contribute money towards it or perform some labor in its behalf, to do anything,

though he has it in his power to do it. The case is one in which not only but half the duty is done, but in which it is questionable whether what seems to be done is not a mere sham. If one prays for a cause with real fervor and earnestness, his desire to prosper it will be sufficiently great to move him to work for its prosperity. His refusal to do this justifies the inference that his heart was not in his prayer, because it is manifestly not in the work.

But there is cause for censure also when a man works, but will not earnestly ask God to bless the work and render it instrumental in accomplishing the end. The fact indicates an absence of trust in God, of dependence upon His grace and blessing, of purpose to glorify His name. In this case also the duty, while it seems to be done but half, is in reality not done at all. Such work is not in accordance with the divine will, and is therefore not what is commanded us when the Lord requires us to labor; His will is that whatsoever we do should be done in His name and to His glory, and all works done from motives of self are again a sham, however good they may seem. If we really mean to work for the Master, we cannot fail to ask the Master to own, direct, and bless the work.

Therefore praying and working must go together. Having learned the Lord's will from the Word which He has given us, we are taught to pray earnestly that it may be done, to the praise of His great name and to the welfare of His fallen creatures. Such prayer will embrace especially the work which has been assigned to us in our sphere and calling, as that in which we are immediately engaged, without neglecting the cause of truth and righteousness throughout the world. But when we have asked God to prosper His work, that His will may be accomplished in us and around us, the portion of it which lies within our sphere and calling must be energetically taken hold of by us, as we are plainly the instruments whom God would use for accomplishing it. Our prayer would be a mere formality without such work. If we are sincere in asking God to enlighten us, we must use the Scriptures, through which He gives us light; if we pray heartily for the spread of the Gospel and the deliverance of man from sin and death, we must do our share in money or work, or both, to effect this end. We must pray to God, from whom all good gifts come, but not forget that He would use us as His servants.

### **Part 3.**

**Originally Published in the *Lutheran Standard*, 1881.**

Work and prayer must go together. This is a truth which has not been too much emphasized, frequently as it has been repeated. Those who think that their running to and fro in a perpetual haste to reform the world and save men from impending ruin, but forget that our help is in the name of the Lord without whom we can do nothing, and forgetting this do not fervently pray to Him that His will may be done, are wasting their lives in busy labor that accomplishes nothing. On the other hand, those who imagine that all that is required of them is to cry unto the Lord day and night that miserable man be helped and saved, are equally mistaken. All is dependent upon God's power and blessing but He wants to use us as instruments for the accomplishment of His will. Therefore the more ardently we pray for the prosperity of God's work in the world, the more earnestly will we take hold of that work and do what God desires to perform through us. Praying and working must never be separated in the Christian life.

## **10. Private And Public Prayer.**

**Originally Published in the *Lutheran Standard*, 1866.**

The propriety of different kinds of prayer themselves no one whose desire is to glorify God will doubt, much less deny. Our Savior has distinctly commanded secret, and the whole plan of the church implies the necessity of public prayers.

“When thou prayest enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”  
Matt. 6:6.

This is necessary, not only to cultivate humility in our approaches to God, which is endangered by praying only in the audience of others, but also to give frankness to our confessions, which is ordinarily possible only when we know that none but God hears us; for the desire to gain the applause of those who hear, and the dread of sinking in their esteem, will always influence those who never pray when God alone is near. The command of closet prayer by no means excludes prayer in public. It presupposes that men will

bring their joint petitions before God together. That which is rebuked in the context is not the publicity of prayer in itself, but the proud publicity of that which should be private, and seeks to make the impression of being so intended—the praying merely to be seen of men. Such praying in public is wrong continually and in all respects—wrong in spirit and in the pharisaic person framing the petitions, and wrong in substance, and therefore condemned. For the very pride which prompts the individual to pray, in order to be seen and heard of men, will, when he forms his own prayer, render the contents unscriptural as the spirit which suggests them, or at least controls their utterance; no confession will be made, no thanks returned, and no petitions presented, which could in any way tend to degrade the individual in the estimation of the mixed multitude who hear. No one can acceptably pray extempore in public unless he has learned to pray in private where God alone hears, and has learned to address his prayers to God only; no one can even join acceptably in the prayer which is read or which another speaks, unless he has learned to pray to God in secret; for even in the latter case the proud heart will seek satisfaction in the thought of being seen in the praying company and thus being considered devout, even though there be no opportunity of gratifying the desire of exhibiting great skill or great piety in the composition of the prayer. Besides, every one who prays at all must have felt the inward necessity of bringing his own individual concerns before the Lord; and as these concerns and interests differ in each individual, they cannot, though they may be uppermost in each one's mind for a while, find their appropriate utterance in any public prayer. Apart, therefore, from the positive command to pray in secret, and the examples of Scripture inculcating it, the individual desires and wants of the Christian will prompt him to it. It is necessarily implied in the command: “pray ye!”

The mention of public prayer is so frequent in Scripture, that no attentive reader can have failed to notice it. “The temple of the Lord is a house of prayer.” Is. 56:7. This was not an appropriate designation only under the old dispensation; it is especially so now, since “all believers are kings and priests unto God, that they may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Rom. 15:6. The apostles, after our Lord's ascension, all “continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren.” Acts 1:13—14. The early Christians, after the mission of the Holy Ghost, “continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship,

in breaking of bread and in prayers.” Acts 2:42. The commandment is given to all Christians to resort to the house of prayer, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is”, Heb. 10:25; and the apostle exhorts, “first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men.” 1 Tim. 2:1. The place where prayer is wont to be made is where the Christians assemble; one of the prominent features in all their assemblies is prayer. This, as we have already said, is required by the very nature of the Christian Church. The holy means of grace cannot be applied unto salvation in the case of a soul that will neither ask nor thank. Where grace is wrought, prayer is produced; the Holy Spirit, who is given us, prays incessantly; and where there is an assembly of those whom the Holy Spirit has made of one mind, their prayers will ascend in unison as from one mouth. We are aware of no churches, however low they may have fallen, where the voice of prayer is not heard; there is and can be no true worship without it as there can be none without the word of the Lord; God cheering us and we gratefully responding. The neglect of public prayer would be the neglect of the Church and her means of salvation. Moreover, as private prayer is prompted by an inward necessity of the individual, so public prayer is prompted by an inward necessity of the congregation as a communion of saints. As we have special wants which urge us to enter our closet with God alone, so we have common wants which urge us into the house of prayer, where sympathizing souls are met. They who never feel a want for such prayer with one accord in the congregation, have never learned to pray aright in the closet. Their pretense of sufficient prayer in private is a mere pretense. Their hearts not beating in unison with those of the brotherhood in Jesus, they are not of the brotherhood, and their prayers are therefore unavailing sound, if the form is attended to at all in secret, which, where public prayer is despised is very doubtful, except where the most pitiful ignorance prevails. And they who are indifferent to the prayer of the Church, but still hold public worship in high estimation for the sake of the sermon, will be found to care nothing for the sermon as a means of grace, as an exhibition of God’s will, but value it only as an exhibition of the sermonizer’s skill. The command, “pray ye” implies communion in prayer with those who have the same spirit and faith; and where two or three are gathered together in Jesus’ name, He Himself is with them. Matt. 18:20.



Of family prayer the Scriptures do not make special mention, as it is so plainly implied in the duty of prayer in general, as well as in the duty which a parent owes to his children and servants in this regard. That there should be daily worship is manifest enough. The first Christians continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, “praising God and having favor with all the people;” and in consequence of this “the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.” Daily prayer in communion with other Christians must be sweet, must be sought. Whether this be in union with many in the Church or with few in the family is not material. But where daily prayer is attended to in the temple, the daily gathering around the family altar should not be neglected; for there are always those who cannot so well attend the prayers in the Church as in the family, sometimes those who cannot attend the former at all. Therefore should the head of each family, as a member of the general priesthood, exercise the functions of a priest in his own house. The obligation to do this is not only the general one involved in the law of love, but also the special one implied in the fourth commandment, which requires him to rule well his own house and train up a child in the way he should go. As this training refers to children’s spiritual as well as to their temporal interests, he is required to pray with them, and teach them to pray, as a pastor over the little flock. No one can appropriate the words: “I and my house will serve the Lord” unless as a priest he shows children and servants the way to heaven, and leads the way himself, presenting acceptable sacrifices daily.

## **11. Praying In Public.**

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It is regarded by some as a reproach to the Lutheran Church that she has not shown herself friendly to prayer meetings conducted by the laity, and has never exerted herself to encourage her members in developing their talent for praying in public. There is so much said, too, in laudation of such public praying, that many have learned to look upon it as a kind of gauge by which the spiritual life of a congregation may be measured. We read in the papers of some sects, which are devoted to a certain species of sentimentalism

called by them “vital piety,” about congregations that are alive, because there is a goodly number of praying members among them, meaning members who pray in public. This certainly should deceive no Christian, and least of all should it be permitted to disturb Lutherans, who find that their congregations cannot compete with such saintly societies, the public efforts of the members in prayer being the standard.

A twofold error underlies this boasting. In the first place it assumes that the members do not pray unless they pray in public. Measured by this standard the state of piety is fearfully low in the best of congregations even among those who regard it as the test, as the number of those who “lead in prayer” is always comparatively small. This assumption, moreover, does gross injustice to many pious souls, who are not gifted with the talent to express themselves readily in the presence of others, and who are too modest to desire such prominence even if they had the talent. In the second place, it implies that prayer, in its nature, is an external act to be performed before men, so that, according to this notion, the humble soul’s devout intercourse with God in the closet would not be considered prayer, as it lacks an essential element. The “praying members” are only those who have been seen or heard in the act by man. This may be the reason why some take pains to make their prayers a matter of public notice even when they are not said in the public meeting. Strange that it should not be noticed that this is in direct violation of our Savior’s rule:

“When thou prayest thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father Which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.” Matt. 6:5, 6.

The assumption that a congregation has no praying members because the members do not pray in public, is utterly gratuitous and obviously uncharitable. Our people need feel no concern about such taunts, and should regard them rather as reasons for pitying those who make them, and motives for praying that God would enlighten them by His word and give them better hearts.

The Lutheran Church, so far from being indifferent to prayer, and the education of her members with a view to render them instant and fervent in it, has ever been distinguished for her zeal in this respect. Where her life per-

vades the people there is a priest in every family, and daily are sacrifices offered in Jesus' name at the family altar. She cannot conceive of a Christian capable of exercising his mental faculties who does not pray. Her people continue instant in prayer. But she has reasons for not encouraging the lay membership to exercise their gifts in the public assembly.

The Augsburg Confession, Art. 14, says of our churches that "concerning Church government they teach that no man should publicly in the Church teach, or administer the sacraments, except he be rightly called." The word of God and 'the holy sacraments belong to all Christians, not only to those who have the pastoral office. All believers have the duty of obtaining a knowledge of the truth, and of teaching that truth as opportunity presents. "Exhort one another daily as it is called today." "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs." "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." But this duty of teaching must be exercised decently and in order. As every member in the congregation has the same right, the exercise must be regulated. If all should presume to speak when the congregation assembles, a scene of utter confusion would ensue. Therefore God has ordered that a call should be given to such as have peculiar qualifications to exercise the common right in the name of all. Others have just as good a right to teach as the minister, but not publicly in the congregation, where the minister is called to do it. So it is with public prayer. Every member has access to the throne of grace through Jesus, and no ministerial mediation is necessary. Every believer is a priest and can offer acceptable sacrifices to God through our great High Priest, Jesus. But not every one has a right to discharge these functions publicly in the congregation, where the minister is called to do it. He can pray without interfering with the duties and rights conferred upon the public officer, exercising the gifts in the order which is pleasing to God, not in the disorder which He condemns. Publicly in the congregation no one must perform priestly functions without a regular call. To do it is to trample upon sacred order. If one be rightly called to exercise his gifts he may of course do it, even where there is a pastor regularly called, but he becomes thus an assistant minister, and the relations of the minister and his assistant or assistants would require regulation in order to prevent confusion.

That the minister may, under certain circumstances, request a member of his congregation to officiate for him, whether in preaching or praying, we do not deny. The responsibility rests on him if any evils result from it. But it is arrogating more power than the congregation has committed to him, when he delegates a part of his duties to others, whom the congregation has not called to discharge them. They have deemed him qualified to perform them and given him a regular call to do it. They have not called others, and it would certainly be well if they were asked about it before others are chosen to officiate often. But even if the minister has a right to ask others to act sometimes as his substitute in the public ministrations, it is a grave question whether he does wisely in requesting members of the congregation to officiate for him. They can certainly, if they have a mind to pray, do this as well when he utters the prayer as when they do it. And if some have a desire to render themselves conspicuous by publicly uttering prayers, those who know the human heart would agree in pronouncing them the least likely to be benefited by giving them the opportunity, while those who are best qualified spiritually are the very ones who would prefer to have the minister do that to which he is called, while they heartily join in the prayers which he utters. In the way of order there is no danger that impious souls will use public prayer as a means of administering to their neighbors a castigation under the cover of an address to God, or that pious souls, who yield to the minister's importunities, will be ridiculed for their want of skill in constructing sentences.

## **12. Prayer For More Laborers.**

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In view of the great harvest that waits to be gathered, and the few laborers that are ready to enter the field and reap it, the question comes from various quarters, What shall we do? We know of no more appropriate answer to give than the words of our Lord, spoken when He saw the multitudes and was moved with compassion on them because they fainted and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

“Then saith He unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth laborers into His vineyard.” Matt. 9:37—38.

This remedy may seem at first sight not adequate to the evil. It is presumed that every Christian prays, and that in his prayers he will not overlook that which he feels to be so pressing a want; and on this presumption it is natural to argue that prayer has not accomplished the purpose, and that work is now needed—earnest persistent work to secure the needed laborers. But in reply to this it would be proper to remark, that it is presumed that every Christian works, and that in his work he will not overlook that which he feels to be so pressing a want; and on this presumption it is natural to argue that work has not accomplished the purpose and that something else is now needed. Well, what? The Lord says, “Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that, He will send forth laborers into the harvest.” Let us lay aside our presuming and our arguing. on our presumptions, and look at the Lord’s word and do it.

Verily, there is something in that. First of all there is this in it, that in our straits about supplying the wants of the Church we get rid of the vain notion that all depends on our Wise planning and vigorous pushing, as if the vineyard were ours and all the fruit were a result of our providence and skill. There is a Lord of the harvest, and the harvest is His. Christians know that very well, but there is need of saying it notwithstanding—there is great need of saying it now, when the calls are so many and the laborers are so few. Not that we are to quit work, and to refer the whole matter to the Master while we look on in lazy indifference. The words say no such thing. The Lord wants to use believers, not to dispense with their work. But He is the master, and He provides. This He wants us to know and realize. If He does not send forth the laborers, they will not be furnished. All our care and worry and work will amount to nothing, if He do not provide. Therefore pray Him to do it. “Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.” Ps. 127:1.

But some say that they have prayed and prayed again, and still the harvest is plenteous and the laborers are few. Nay, it seems that the harvest is constantly increasing in plenteousness and the ration of labor is diminishing. Would we be in such a strait if this were not the case? And some of little faith thereupon concluded that prayer is not the way to help. If you who read this have such a thought, reflect a moment. Do you not see that God has been hearing the prayers of His people, as you ought to know that He

does even when you do not see it, and that the increasing plenteousness of the harvest is a result of the work done in His name by the laborers sent? And do you not see that the increasing want is an incentive to increasing persistence and importunity in prayer? If you have prayed keep on praying; pray with more fervor as the blessing extends and the need increases; pray in faith that the Lord of the harvest will not fail to provide. He will provide: "Ask, and ye shall receive."

And there is more in it. God wants none of His people to be standing in other people's way. He wants them all to go to work, and He wants them to come to Him and earnestly say to Him, that He may assign them work. Those who pray fervently for laborers will not themselves stand all the day idle. Each one will find something to do in his sphere and calling for the Master; and some will see that they as their sons are needed for the work of the ministry, and will not fervently pray for ministers without thinking and saying, "Here I am, send me." Therefore "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth laborers into His harvest." That will bring help.

## **13. Forms Of Prayer.**

**Originally Published in the *Lutheran Standard*, 1878.**

There are few prejudices more unreasonable than those which many persons entertain against precomposed forms of prayer. That wild fanatics are found railing against the churches which use such forms is not surprising; what else should we expect of enthusiasts who follow a fancy in spite of Scripture and reason? But there are among the opponents of precomposed forms of prayer some who are not habitually unreasonable and of whom better things might justly be expected. They have probably never considered the subject well, but have allowed their minds to be influenced by some specious objections whose glitter they have unsuspectingly taken for gold. A little reflection would convince such persons that there is no good ground for objecting to written prayers.

It is necessary, in the first place, to have forms of prayer. To oppose all forms is manifestly absurd. Although an individual heart may sometimes pray without formulating its petitions, this is impossible when two or more unite in prayer. The desires of the soul must then be put into language.

Whether the form be previously composed, or whether it be prepared when the requests are uttered, is not material. It is a form in one case as much as in the other. If two or more persons are to unite in a petition, it must be expressed in some form. Therefore those who oppose forms of prayer expect, unless they would confine all praying to the groanings which cannot be uttered, a manifest impossibility. They would have brethren agree as touching the things that they shall ask and yet not use any form of words in which to express their requests. If people are to pray together, they must say what they want, and as soon as they say it they have a form of prayer.

But what is objected to is usually not the mere using of a form, but the preparation of the form prior to the time of using it. To meet the objection it is therefore necessary to show, in the second place, the scripturalness and reasonableness of employing precomposed forms of prayer.

That there is no good ground for rejecting such forms, even in the estimation of those very persons who are often loudest in condemning them, is evident from the fact that they themselves make frequent use of them without the least scruple, and without suspecting their inconsistency in using them. They sing the hymns of prayer and praise that have been previously composed. It does not enter their minds to demand that these shall be extemporaneous, nor to deny that the precomposed prayers in verse are really prayers and may be rightfully used. But if it is reasonable, and right to use a form previously prepared 'in verse, it surely cannot be unreasonable and wrong to use a form previously prepared in prose. The fact that a prayer is versified certainly would not make it proper to use it, if it were improper to use it without the versification. Those who sing hymns of prayer must admit either that they do not pray when they sing them, or that precomposed forms may be used in prayer as well as those which are extemporaneous. The opposition to the former, when in prose, is manifestly a mere prejudice.

Moreover, the people of God at all times used precomposed forms of prayer, and He was pleased with the worship thus offered. The Jews and Christians alike employed them. As soon as the church was organized we find them in use. When Israel was brought out of the land of Egypt, Moses composed a psalm in which the people brought their praises to God for their deliverance from bondage. Many of the spiritual songs found in the book of Psalms were designed to be used in the service of the sanctuary. They are previously prepared forms of prayer and praise which the Lord's people used in the olden time, and which devout worshipers still delight to use as

giving appropriate expression to the desires of their hearts. Our Lord engaged in the worship of the temple, which was liturgic. Precomposed forms of prayer were in constant use there. Such forms were used by the apostles, and the early Christian habitually employed them, as we learn from their writings. What the Church used from the beginning, and used acceptably to God, it is fanaticism to condemn, and a manifestation of Spiritual pride to despise.

But there is another consideration that must remove all doubt, if any such should still remain in any reader's mind, as to the propriety of using such precomposed forms of prayer. Our Lord Himself gave His disciples such a form and commanded them to use it. Such a form we have in the Lord's Prayer.

“It came to pass that 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. And He said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father.”

He gave them a form which has been in constant use until the present day, and in which Christians always find a model for all their prayers. Whoever cannot use this form has good reason to doubt whether his heart is right. The Lord could not give what could not be used with profit. The professed piety that cannot find in this best of prayers an adequate expression must be something different from that piety which the Savior inculcates. True Christian devotion will always find in the form of prayer which Christ composed its appropriate utterance, as it has done in all the centuries since He commanded His disciples to use it" He who supposes that there is no spirituality in such a form only exposes his own ignorance and poverty in regard to spiritual things.

If we would worship God in spirit and in truth and address to Him the effectual fervent prayer which availeth much, we must rid ourselves of the formalism which confounds the mere accident of extemporaneous composition with the essence of prayer. When we are in earnest in making our requests known unto God, we will not despise the forms in which those desires are appropriately expressed, and which other children of God have used and still use for the purpose.

## **14. Attitude In Prayer.**



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God has prescribed no attitude or gesture as necessary in prayer, and Christians are therefore entirely free in this regard. They may kneel or stand or lie on their faces while they make their requests known unto God. Nor are we at all disposed to justify any interference with Christian liberty in the matter. But we would respectfully suggest the inquiry, whether standing with your hands in your pockets or sitting in a lounging posture, is seemly while the congregation is engaged in prayer. A man may keep his hat on when he prays; the kingdom of God does not consist in such external things: but what would you think of a man whose heart does not suggest more reverential conduct? Parents do well to teach their children the old custom of folding their hands and bowing their heads when they appear before Jehovah's awful throne.

## **15. Have You Family Worship?**

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Perhaps there are still some of our readers who, notwithstanding that they are members of the church and profess to trust in God alone, are constrained to answer this question in the negative. Why is it? That they have been neglecting it in the past is no reason why they should continue to neglect it, if they see that they ought to have it.

That they ought to have it few, perhaps none, will doubt. It is meet that we should daily read the Bible together in the household and join our hearts and voices in thanksgiving and petition to God. Each member of the family needs this, and all need it jointly, that with one accord they make supplication to God and accept the instruction which He gives by His word. It is an appropriate means of teaching the children and bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This is done both by precept and example. If nothing more is done than that a chapter of the Bible is read and the Lord's Prayer repeated, the little ones have an opportunity of learning something every day from the Scriptures, and every day's assembly for worship sets them an example of trust in God and calling upon His name. Such lessons by precept and practice will not be given in vain. The parents

should therefore for the sake of the good influence in the household, as well as for their own welfare, worship the Lord daily in their homes, that they and their houses may serve the Lord.

Fathers and mothers should not forget that the training of their children is their duty, and that the responsibility of it rests upon them. “Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Eph. 6:4. Hence our Catechism sets forth the chief parts of Christian doctrine “as they are to be taught in all simplicity by a father to his family.” Teaching and learning the truth of God unto salvation, and worshiping Him with prayer, praise and thanksgiving, should be a part of each day’s occupation in every Christian household. The duties of our temporal calling will not suffer on this account. God gives us time enough for both.

It would not be charitable to assume that all who have thus far failed to set up a family altar are people who do not pray. That would be assuming that they are not Christians. Some were not accustomed to it in their own childhood, so that it seems to them a novelty; some, when they established a home of their own, did not think of it, and now find it somewhat embarrassing to make a beginning; some have not the books which seem to them necessary for the purpose; some hesitate about introducing it because they do not know how to do it. We trust that those are few who do not want it because they are not disposed to learn the truth of God and to worship Him in humble faith.

Where there is a sincere desire to have the benefits and enjoyments of family worship, the difficulties in the way are easily removed. Those who have a pastor may be sure that he will give them any assistance needed in introducing it. Nor need it be attended with much expense. A Bible and a Catechism should certainly be in every house, even when there is no family worship. But that is all that is necessary. A hymn book and a prayer book are desirable. The former is needed for public as well as for private worship, and every member of the church should have one, that he may sing unto the Lord with the congregation. The latter is useful for private edification aside from the worship of the family. But the devout reading of a chapter in the Bible and the truthful saying of the Lord’s Prayer forms a worship that is acceptable to God and edifying to man. Those who are in doubt how to conduct worship, will find this a very simple form. The Catechism also contains all necessary directions, as well as a formula for daily worship,

showing" how a father should teach his family to pray in the morning and evening." This in connection with a portion of Scripture and, where this is possible, the singing of a hymn, will form an ample daily service.

It was in an evil time that many households were led to abandon the old custom of daily worship in the family. May we not hope that, by the blessing of God, those better days may return when in every Lutheran household the Scriptures were studied, the Catechism was plied, the children were taught the way of the Lord, and all delighted to worship Him in the beauty of holiness? You who read this have your part to perform in accomplishing an end so desirable.

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# How Can You Find Peace With God?

The most important thing to grasp is that no one is made right with God by the good things he or she might do. Justification is by faith only, and that faith resting on what Jesus Christ did. It is by believing and trusting in His one-time *substitutionary* death for your sins.

Read your Bible steadily. God works His power in human beings through His Word. Where the Word is, God the Holy Spirit is always present.

Suggested Reading: [New Testament Conversions](#) by Pastor George Gerberding

## Benediction

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 1:24-25)

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