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Tract on Prayer: Respectfully Dedicated to Those Who Believe That God Is A Person Capable of "Thinking and Loving"; And That He Hears and Answers Prayers of Faith.

L. B. Wilkes

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By L. B. WILKES.

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PRAYER.

CHAPTER I.

Webster says of prayer: "It is the offering up to the Supreme Being of adoration, confession, supplication and thanksgiving." I suppose it is, in whatever form presented, the soul's request for what it wants or supposes itself to be in need. I think it may be "uttered or unexpressed." Let it be particularly noted, it is not something merely *offered*, performed, made or rendered, It is not something simply *said*. I suppose it to be quite wide of the mark to call upon men to *say*, *make*, *offer*, or *perform* prayer.

I raise this point here and give it some emphasis, because I fear there is much of such, so-called, praying done. In many cases, as it seems to me, praying is done very much as is a job of carpentry: It is considered, laid out, *performed*. No amount of orthodoxy can save such performances from the perdition of all ungodliness. A speaking, though in the forms of a prayer, that is merely to be heard of men or to fill out a programme, is not praying. It is possible that there are vast numbers of people who profess to be christians, and who pretend to pray, but who do not, in truth, *pray* at all! If such persons do really pray—if, as they claim, their whole souls go out to God in the service—how, among many things that might be named, can the language, "say your prayers," or "perform divine service," be accounted for?

In the nature of things, a person will not, indeed, he cannot, pray unless he feels a pressing want. The more deeply he feels his want, the more certainly will he pray and not merely say a prayer. How absurd the idea of a man's taking up some old book from which to read to God a prayer,

when on the scaffold and in a moment to swing into eternity! Is it any less a trifling with sacred things under any other circumstances?

It is not only necessary, in order that prayer shall be acceptable to God, that the one who prays shall deeply feel his need, but he must have his whole soul, body and spirit engaged. It is not strange that this should be so. A friendly act to me done by any one is acceptable only on the hypothesis that it came from his whole heart. This, it seems to me, needs no demonstration nor elaboration here. It is in the near vicinity of the self-evident.

It is not only necessary that a man should *feel* a pressing want, and that he should be *sincere* and intensely earnest, in order to pray acceptably, but he should, at the same time, see that he is himself not able to supply his own want. One who feels that he has no great want of any given thing, or that he can himself, most likely, supply it in some way before it is too late, will not, cannot pray for it. From this view does it not follow that prayer is the exponent of a soul in need, that feels its want and realizes its own utter inability to supply it? In this case the soul may and will seek God, as hereinafter explained. Without these qualifications we may not and will not pray. We may appear to men to pray; we may speak words of sound sweet as dulcimer, arranged in the most beautiful order, but lacking these qualities, or any of them, we do not *pray*. If we would cultivate the spirit of true devotion, and make the service of prayer one of joy, we should often call to mind our relations to God, that in him we live, move and have our being, and from him we have "life and breath and all things;" that every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights.

CHAPTER II.

Pray in Faith.

However much our wants may be felt, and however clearly our inability to meet them may be seen, still we cannot and we will not pray unless we do distinctly recognize the existence of some being above us who is able and willing to give us the blessings we need. In other words, no one can pray to God without first having faith in him. On this point reason and revelation are both exceedingly satisfactory. There is nothing, to my mind, more irrational than the supposition that a man may pray to God, in whom he does not believe, for blessings which, in that case, he has no reason to think he will receive. The thing is in reason impossible, and impossible in the performance. We may deceive one another and even ourselves, but without faith we do not pray. Paul says, Heb. 11:6: "For he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

For a person, then, to pray for blessings to a being in whom he does not believe is not only a gross absurdity, but it is a great evil. Those who so teach and practice, their name is Legion, invite the scepticism if not the contempt of all cultivated, thinking men. Paul in his Rom. letter, 10:14, raises the question in such form of words as to affirm the absurdity of the opposite view most emphatically when he says: "How then can they call on him in whom they have not believed." Of course he means to say, as he does virtually say, *they cannot do it*. When God says a thing cannot be done, it is better for us to believe it cannot be done, than we attempt not the impossible. Suppose I instruct a man to *try* to do what God says cannot be done; is not my conduct impious? Is it not an attempt to prove God a liar? "Let God be true though every man a liar." The Apostle James, 1:6, says: "But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting." And of the one who shall ask without faith, if that may be, he says: "For let

not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." If, now, it be unscriptural and unreasonable to pray to God without faith, as it certainly is, it is equally so, without faith, to pray to God for faith, and he who does the one or the other is a poor Christian philosopher, and a dangerous misinterpreter of the word of God.

But did not the Apostles, at one time, say to the Lord, "Increase our faith?" Yes; but this was a very different thing from praying to the Lord, without faith, for faith. Indeed, the passage itself shows that the Apostles at that time had faith, and only sought an *increase* of it. The faith of which I am now speaking, is then, not only a necessary antecedent to acceptable prayer, but it lies at the very foundation of every approach that is now, ever was or can be made to God. It is the victory over the world.

It is altogether possible that men may suppose they have this faith, whereas, in fact, they have it not. They *may* have strong faith and not *this* faith. They may even have joyous assurance that God hears their prayers, and has accepted them in the beloved, and yet have not the faith of the gospel of the Son of God. Their faith is not *the* faith, and their assurance is a delusion. As it is so important that we should be right in this matter, it is a source of great gratification that God has left us no reasonable excuse for being wrong.

I hold it to be certain that when God tells us that a given thing is to be obtained in a given way, it must be sought in that way, and in that way only, unless he has said it may be obtained in some other way also. Now God has said, "faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God." And as he has not said it may be obtained in some other way, I conclude it should be sought in no other way, and that it can be had in no other. A man who would be a believer, is then shut up to the word of God as the means of his faith. Other things may be consulted and studied, but profitably only as they assist in understanding the word of God.

CHAPTER III.

Pray to God.

We should pray to God, and him only should we serve. So prayer ought to be more than simply, the soul's request for blessings. It should be this request, made to the Supreme Being. The Apostle John, in the Isle of Patmos, fell down before the angel "to worship him. And he said to me, see thou do it not. I am a fellow servant of thine, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God." Rev. 19:10. To worship or serve any other being than God is idolatry. It is not wrong to *make* a golden or other sort of image of anything in heaven or upon the earth. We are constantly doing such things; and I suppose we do them in entire innocence. The sin forbidden in the second commandment is not in making or having images, but in worshipping them.

The worship of any being is, in its *essential nature*, not in words, nor in any forms, but it consists in giving the supreme devotion of the heart to the object worshipped. The sin of idolatry, then, may be committed, and I suppose it often is, without an image of any sort being present before the worshipper. The *supreme* love of the heart bestowed in any way on any person or thing, other than upon God, would be an example of idolatry.

Let us not conclude, then, that because we have not in our midst imposing structures of marble, brass, gold or silver as objects of worship, we are, therefore, not an idolatrous people. I believe the opinion is general, that idolatry did, and does prevail much more extensively among the ignorant and barbarous than among the enlightened and highly refined.

This opinion is probably not entirely correct. I am not at all sure but that idolatry prevails to nearly as great an extent in modern and highly enlightened countries as it does or ever did in the less cultivated or more ignorant lands. The Savior

teaches, we cannot serve both God and Mammon. He seems to me to also teach, we must serve God or Mammon. If this be true, it seems to follow that every man is either a servant of God or he is an idolater. I do not dogmatically affirm this severe conclusion, but how to avoid it according to either reason or revelation I do not see.

God does not forbid idolatry simply because he can forbid it, and can punish the disobedient. I presume to say there was nothing arbitrary on God's part in his forbidding it. Indeed, I do not believe there is, or ever was, a demand of God made on man which proceeded simply from the fact that he is God. All of his appointments requiring or forbidding anything arise out of the unmixed goodness of God, and are for the good of man. We may not always understand the reasons of God's commandments. Indeed, we frequently do not fully understand them; yet there is always a necessity for what God does, which is the reason why he does it.

Now, I suppose the worship of God is necessary to call into activity, and into their highest development, the noblest powers of our nature. This development being necessary to our highest happiness, such as God must have intended for us when he made man, it follows that he must have provided the means of this development. Hence, the injunction, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve," is not only a lesson of the Holy Scriptures, but it is a dictate of the reason as well.

But might not the development of which we speak have been had in some other way? I answer, it could not. God appointed light for the eye, and nothing but the appointed thing will or can meet the want. So, God has appointed the worship and service of himself as the means of meeting and satisfying the soul's highest cravings, its deepest wants. So the first of all human obligations, and the greatest of all hu-

man privileges, like sisters, meet and kiss each other at the altar of prayer. A soul is never in its normal, God-intended condition when not in worshipping relation to God. David, when his soul was in harmony with the will of God, and when his life was in the line of duty, could say, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O, God." Again, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." "Bless the Lord, O, my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

It is of the nature of worship that the worshipper must admire, love and strive to make himself, in character, like the being or thing he worships. It is claimed that the history of all worships attests the truth of this statement. But to the man of faith the Bible makes it plainer still. Of idols and of idolatry David says: "They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them." In this fact, that the worshipper will and must, if he worship sincerely, strive to become, in character, as the object worshipped, I think we may see why God requires us to worship and serve him only. On this principle we may also account for the fact that there are multitudes of people who pretend to worship and serve the living God, and yet are little like him. It may be they do not really worship him at all, else they would be like him.

CHAPTER IV.

For What May we Pray?

I suppose we may pray for what we want—for everything we want that it is lawful for us to have. Of course, as we cannot pray without faith, and as the faith which we must have in order to pray acceptably comes by hearing the word of God, and not otherwise, it seems to follow that the objects for which we may legitimately pray are those either explicitly or implicitly set forth in the word of God. We then not only cannot pray acceptably for blessings, except such as the word of God authorizes, but from the premises now before us, I conclude we must pray for these only as the word of God prescribes.

There are three ways in which duties and privileges are made known in the Bible: 1st. They are expressly mentioned. 2d. They are included under general principles *expressly enunciated*. 3d. They are expressed by means of examples having the divine approval. In regard to the first class of duties or privileges, no trouble need to arise. In regard to the third class the case is nearly the same. In regard to the second class the case is quite otherwise. It is often difficult to determine whether a given act or course of conduct is or is not in harmony with a certain declared principle. There is probably no Christian man who has long struggled to please God, but has experienced the trouble of which I speak. I know I am to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, but just which one of the hungry ones I ought to feed, or naked ones I ought to clothe, or whether I ought to feed or clothe a given one or not, often I cannot tell. I know those who will not work shall not eat. I know also that those who *cannot* work must be fed. But what my duty is in regard to the man before me at a given time I frequently do not know. Again, just how much I shall spend to

feed the hungry and clothe the naked I know not. If any one should say, spend as much as you are able to spend in that way, I agree with him. But what man always knows what he is able to do? Not one. A principle or a thing very plain in itself, quite distinct from every other, is sometimes very difficult and even distressingly so, in respect to its practical application in life. Night is a very different thing from day, but it is sometimes impossible to decide whether it is night or day.

Many difficulties, such as I am here considering, do actually arise, as to prayer, in the life of every intelligent Christian. He does not know whether a given thing may be asked for or not. Nor does he always know *how* to present his petition. If it be said the word of God is his guide, this is, no doubt, true. But, as we have seen, it is not always in practice possible to decide what the Bible does teach on every question that lies along the extended boundaries of the permissible and inadmissible. Jesus said: "If it be possible, let this cup pass." Paul said: "For we know not what we should pray for as we ought." The fact that our way is occasionally not entirely clear is not proof, however, that our privileges are, therefore, less. The opposite of this is, rather, the truth. I feel sure, brethren, that it is not offensive to God in such cases for one of his children, a man of sin and of sorrow, and, at best, very imperfect, to pray to his Father in heaven, though he may not always be the happiest in his modes of expression, or entirely orthodox in respect to the matter of his petition. The throne to which, in prayer, we go is not one of hard exactions—it is a "throne of GRACE." Where we are not and cannot be certain that the object sought is one which God has in any way promised to grant, we should always feel, as in every other case, Father, not my will, but thy will be done.

CHAPTER V.

May we expect that our prayers will always, and that all of our prayers will be answered?

In respect to the subjects upon which God has spoken expressly, we may indeed be certain that he will hear us. The degree of certainty felt in every such case is proportioned to the strength of faith possessed by the one who prays. But wherein we are left to the guidance of general principles, we cannot always feel certain that the precise thing asked for will be given. We are, however, not expected, or even allowed to pray in such cases without faith. We may believe as firmly as in any other case, not that we will certainly receive the precise blessing we wish, but that God will certainly give us the blessing we need; that if the Father should not bestow upon us the blessing requested, he will certainly do for us that which would be better; he will withhold it or give us something else. So there is no less faith in God and in his mercy in respect to praying in the latter case, than in the former.

David, in time of distress, caused by his enemies pressing hard upon him, when the sorrows of death compassed him, and the floods of ungodly men made him afraid, said: "In my distress, I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God; he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears." He continues, "he bowed the heavens also, and came down, and darkness was under his feet. And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly; yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind." How beautiful, touching and comforting to the heart of faith is this language. Indeed it could not be otherwise. If our earthly fathers know how to give good things to their children, if they fly to their relief when they cry to them, how much more shall our blessed Heavenly Father fly to the relief of his crying children. God fed Elijah in the wilderness; he multiplied the meal in the

barrel and the oil in the cruse for the poor widow of Zarephath. God opened the prison gates to Peter. The explanation is: prayer was made without ceasing, of the church, unto God for him. And a whole ship's crew was saved upon the prayer of the Apostle Paul.

CHAPTER VI.

Reign of Law.

But it may be replied: These were times of miraculous manifestations and interpositions, but now there is a reign of law. I admit there is a reign of law now. Indeed there has always been. Or there was, I suppose, never a time when the ways and doings of God were either without law or against his law. The laws for the government of things temporal and spiritual are *essentially* the will of God. This has always been so. It is so now. When the will of God in regard to anything, is that it shall or shall not be, or shall be in a certain way, or upon certain conditions, this will of God in reference to whatever matter, is the *law* of the case, and there *is no other law in this case*, for this will of God to violate. At any time in the history of man, when God deems it necessary, in order to accomplish his design, to interfere, so to speak, directly, and bring to pass an event desired by means unusual, or never before by him employed, or even to suspend or reverse the operation of any law or laws of his in uniform operation beforetime, it is a fixed law of his that he will do it. To suppose the fact to be otherwise, is to misunderstand the nature of both God and man, and the divine relation between them. Man was not made for laws, but laws for man. No law or regulation of God can be otherwise than the very best thing possible for man. Or, which is the same thing in principle, if any existing regulation fail to serve its purpose, or tends to defeat the end in any case, God sets it aside, and must, in reason, do so. When he so acts, he does not violate his own law or break it, but he sets it aside because the law in question ceases to be his law, and the power employed becomes the law of the case.

Some one may suggest that God made a mistake in that his laws were not sufficient for the emergency which is herein

supposed to have arisen. But no: the laws in force and known before were not for this supposed case, else they had been entirely sufficient. The law, or will of God, which now emerges, is an old law, commensurate with the eternal years of God. It manifests itself in operation when the necessity for its presence exists, and, of course, not before. So, if miraculous manifestations be at any time necessary for the accomplishment of his purpose in carrying on his moral government over rational beings, God would make them, and this, not according to some new law sprung into existence to meet an unexpected emergency, but from his unalterable, eternal nature. In harmony with this divine philosophy, far in advance of the then times, Paul exclaims: "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?" Underlying the current doctrine of the reign of law is its logical antecedent, materialism; or, if the idea of a living, personal and intelligent maker and ruler must be admitted at all, he governs his intelligent creatures, made in his own image, just as he does the planets in the heavens or the trees in the forest. God can deal with man as matter simply if he can only will to do so. He can kill man and make him alive if he chose to do so. He can and he does cause changes of a physical nature in man continually. But he cannot *govern man* simply by the operation of physical laws alone. Seeing man is such a being as he is, to govern him God must, from the nature of the case, address his reason and his heart. Suppose it to be for the good of man that he should believe that God can and will raise the dead. It is an unalterable law of God that he will furnish the proof. The operations of merely physical laws do not prove this proposition. Those in ordinary operation never can prove it. To prove it God must actually raise the dead. This is a miracle. The good, the exaltation and the salvation of man are, with God, ends; physical nature and its laws are but means to these ends. Because man is *man*, and not an insensate lump of

irresponsible dirt, when the ordinary operations of nature's laws would not accomplish or would defeat the end, the means are made to yield or modify in favor of the end. This is as certainly and as rationally a law of God as is the law of gravity or as any other law in nature made and provided.

Man I take to be the reason of this earth, with its present and past conditions and its future. Within the well known geological and astronomical history of the earth and its environments there have been many mighty and often sudden revolutions made, the changes in all cases having man and his welfare for their reason. I am now prepared to say, with the hope of being understood: It is a uniform law of God that he hears the prayer of faith, made according to his will. The man made to see, mentioned in the ninth chapter of John, thought it strange that the Pharisees did not understand the real character of him who had healed him. He proceeded to announce a great truth which he supposed was well understood, which he thought it strange the Pharisees did not understand, and which it is equally strange people do not now understand, when he said: "Now we know that God heareth not sinners, but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth."

The Apostle John announces the same law of the divine government when he says, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will he heareth us." And the Apostle James states the same common-sense and Scriptural law when he says: "You ask and receive not, because you ask amiss." It is plain from these Scriptures and from the light of reason as well, that a prayer to be acceptable to God must be according to his will. As stated in another part of these pages, it is not always easy to decide whether a given thing is a legitimate object of prayer or not. Where God's will has been plainly expressed there should be no doubt as to the result.

Suppose a man should find himself without food. Should he not at once seek to know God's will on the subject? But suppose he should say: "God is able to give me food; he can command the stones into bread if he will; he has said, 'Ask and you shall receive;' and Jesus taught his disciples to say, 'Give us this day our daily bread.'" He falls upon his knees and pours out his anxious soul to God in prayer for bread. Suppose you God would give him bread? No. But why not? He asked, but did not receive because he asked amiss. God has plainly taught that man shall earn his bread by the sweat of his face; that if he will not work neither shall he eat. This ignorant or deluded man thought because bread is the gift of God and is of the grace of God, it would not be necessary, or, probably, it would be impious, to work for it. Bread is of grace, he thinks, and not of works, lest any man should boast. Doing the will of God never was, in any dispensation, Patriarchal, Jewish or Christian, opposed to the grace of God. If such a thing could be, then God can be opposed to himself, can deny himself, which is not possible. Will good ignorant men never learn that to do what God commands is not opposed to grace, and that the grace of God never comes upon men who will not do his will, nor upon any till they do it? (I, of course, speak only of the responsible.) We say of the man who prays as above, he is crazy, and, persisting in his course, he would be adjudged to the Insane Asylum. Why a man who reasons and acts in precisely the same way on the subject of the Christian religion should not be written down a lunatic also, I do not know.

It is, then, an abuse of prayer, or rather it is not prayer at all in a Scriptural sense, to say things as to God without faith. This faith must be no common affair. Men may and often do believe that God will do for them things of which he has never spoken a word, or which he has never promised to do. In such cases their faith "stands in the wisdom of men," not

"in the power of God." Such men may think they have faith, and, indeed, they do have faith, but it is not the faith of the Gospel of the Son of God; it is not the faith that comes by hearing the Word of God. In a word, it is not *the faith* demanded in order that a prayer may be a prayer of faith, and hence such an one as secures the blessings of God.

CHAPTER VII.

A Great Error.

We have around us and among us a gigantic error touching the subject of prayer. There is a very prevalent sentiment to the effect that because God is omnipotent and infinitely good he will do just anything for men they may ask him to do, if they only ask in faith. It is entirely overlooked that though God is omnipotent in respect to physical matters, it does not follow that he can consistently or that he will actually do everything that we in our reckless, irrational longings may wish or ask him to do. Who has not heard the wildest, most reckless, unscriptural and insane ravings of men said to be *at prayer*? And because the thing was called prayer, and was *performed* by a man no doubt very good and honest in his intentions, we are called upon to regard the performance as a sacred thing. Such men are often spoken of as *mighty in prayer*—as taking hold upon the very horns of the altar of God. To express the opinion that such prayers are unscriptural and of evil influence is to incur censure and be liable to the charge of not believing in prayer.

Because I am not willing to go to the unsanctified lengths and to adopt the unscriptural means employed by such men, am I to be cast out of the Synagogue as an evil-doer, denied the right of a fair trial, put into the inner prison with the great writ of habeas corpus suspended, and at last die a cruel death without the benefit of clergy or of burial? Such things have been.

In actual life, in this kind of praying, nine times out of ten the blessings sought do not come. The one in waiting waits still; to the one who knocks it is not opened; the one who seeks does not find. The thinking world around us sees all this. The great mass of them have but little critical knowledge of these things. They suppose that what they see

and hear is the Christian religion in operation. They make up their minds as to this religion from what they see. They decide there is nothing in it but a mere superstition. These pious souls, they say, quote the promises of God, and when they are put to the test these promises fail. The effect is just what we might expect. Very many well-educated people in worldly things, under such proceedings, grow technically rational, skeptical, infidel. It cannot be otherwise. What a man sows that he must also reap. In fact, it is dishonest not to be willing to reap as one sows. The sowing, in this case, is infidel; the reaping is, of course, the same. The explanation often given of these failures is, the unblessed did not exercise faith in God, did not put their trust in him. But a careful examination will show, as it has shown in thousands of cases, that this explanation contradicts facts; for many such petitioners do put their trust in God as far and fully as that thing can be done by those who do not know and are not doing the will of God. The true explanation is, they fail because God has not promised the blessing they seek in the way they seek it. "They ask and receive not because they ask amiss."

CHAPTER VIII.

Revival Prayer.

In many of the so-called great revivals of our times, there is, no doubt, a true awakening of sinners on a large scale. Many are brought to see and feel that they are sinners, and made to cry out for the salvation of God. I rejoice at this fact. They are told to seek and they shall find. This is of course true when the seeking is done as required. Sinners are taught to believe that to pray for this salvation is the seeking that God requires; that this is the special divine prescription for *this case*. Well, they do seek in this way but do not find. Now, why is it that so many of these seekers fail to find? That there is a fault somewhere no one can fail to see. The fault is not in God or his word. It is still true that those who seek according to the text shall find. But these do not find. Often, at least, it is not the fault of the seeker, so far as honest, earnest prayer is concerned. Yet failure is confessed. If their guides would commit themselves entirely to divine guidance, as they ought, they should have no difficulty in learning the true cause of failure and the way to correct their mistakes. If Jesus has prescribed a definite way in which the sinner must seek salvation, then, of course, in this way only is salvation to be sought, if it is to be certainly obtained. Sought in this divinely prescribed way, it is, of course, always found. Sought in this way there are no failures. It is not much to the credit of a man to be found demonstrating, even in appearance, that the promises of God fail when brought to the test. Yet this is the rule rather than the exception in many of the so-called great revivals. The whole question, then, resolves itself into one of fact: Has the way, in which the sinner must seek salvation, been given by the divine Master? The question is one not of possibilities or of power; it is one of fact. Nor is the fact one to be guessed at. It is to be determined by a direct appeal to the Word of God,

where, if at all, the fact is to be learned. This appeal having been made, I ask: Do the inspired records say that the sinner—the one who has never been forgiven—must pray for the forgiveness of his sins with the specific promise that upon *that condition* he shall be forgiven? I answer, *they do not*. There is no such statement or intimation in the word of God. If God had so conditioned the sinner's salvation, then, unless he is unfaithful concerning his promises, no man ever did since the promise was made, pray for the forgiveness of his sins and fail to obtain. If the oracles of God do, definitely, prescribe what the sinner must do when he seeks remission of his sins, as it does, it is an error of no small magnitude to turn away from the holy commandment.

Whatever may be our differences in respect to many religious questions, we are, I believe, all agreed that what is called the great commission as recorded in the New Testament is the law in respect to the sinner's salvation; that its terms are the conditions upon which God promises to forgive. We all know or should know and may easily know what it says. Its terms are as few and simple as could be wished. There is, it seems to me, no reasonable excuse why a man, who is responsible, should not understand them or any of them. But admit, if we must, that the commission may after faithful effort to understand it, be misunderstood, we still have a remedy in the fact that the apostles to whom the commission was more directly given, did understand it. They acted faithfully under it, observing and enforcing all its provisions, omitting or interpolating nothing. In their preaching and practice, therefore, we have an infallible commentary on the commission. That is, we have, in actual practice under divine guidance, set forth what the sinner must do to be saved. On the occasion of the first sermon under this commission, unconverted sinners were made to ask, "Men and brethren what must we do?" The conviction came with terrible power upon their souls that they had crucified the innocent and only begotten

son of the living God. This conviction which pierced the sinner "to the heart," explains why the question was asked as it was on the occasion. Now awakened as they were, and believing as they did, they ask what they must do. They sought forgiveness, they were seekers from the heart, and they were in the presence of those whom Jesus had commissioned to answer the question: "Men and brethren, what must we do?" Their seeking consisted of inquiries addressed to men who, they supposed, knew how to guide them and would guide them in the right way, and in doing what was told them. I repeat, they were told how to seek the blessings desired, with the promise that they should find. They did, at once, seek as they were instructed to do, and they did, *every one*, find. Having already believed, they were told to repent and to each one of them be baptised. They sought the blessings of God *by doing the will of God*. This is the way in which every blessing, temporal and spiritual, is to be sought if it is to be found.

A comparison of the instructions here given by inspired men with the terms of the commission under which they acted, will reveal a perfect agreement. But a comparison of the proceedings of the apostles of Jesus Christ with those of the apostles of modern revivals, will show an irreconcilable difference. In this fact is to be found the explanation of the fact that no one who, in good faith, followed the teachings of the apostles ever failed to find; whereas, many who follow the teachings of these modern revivalists do fail to even "hope they have found."

This modern revivalism is good in that it mellows the soil in which to sow the good seed of the kingdom; it is an almost unmitigated evil in that it sows tares in that prepared soil. The steam engine must be well oiled and have a good head of steam on hand if the cars are to make good, profitable progress; but if it be not under the guidance of a wise and correct management, the fact of its excellent running condition

only hastens it to destruction. There may possibly be a shorter route to individual and national infidelity with all its multiplied evils and speedy ruin than the one we now consider, but on no other road can quicker time be made, and by no other will the last station be more certainly reached.

I have said so much on the subject of modern revivals in connection with the question of prayer, because prayer is about the *alpha* and *omega* of the sinner's duty in order to salvation, as taught in them. True, the sinner is told to believe, but then he is told to pray for faith.

The Church of God has much more to fear from ignorant and from hypocritical friends than it has from open enemies. Strauss, Renan, Mill, Tyndal, Huxly, &c., say, come and let us reason together. Where truth has the chance of being heard in a fair contest, it fears not. But let any man go into one of these revival meetings and begin to reason, or to quote the scriptures pertinent, on the questions of the sinner's duty in order to salvation, and he will soon learn that such things are out of place there.

CHAPTER IX.

Subjects Omitted.

The common-place features of the subject, such as family prayer, public prayer, closet prayer, earnest, regular prayer for all men, I need not discuss. All spiritually minded Christian men know their privileges in these respects and will, as they ought, embrace them. A truly pious man does not feel that prayer is a burden, but that it is a glorious privilege. Luther, in the early part of his work was accustomed, it is said, to pray only two hours per day; but later in life his labors became so onerous that, he said, he could not bear up under them without praying three hours per day.

The question has sometimes been raised, whether we ought to pray *unless we feel like it*. I think it is clear, unless the heart, in very tender, feeling, affection for God, should go forth in our prayers, we not only ought not to pray but we do not pray. If, at any time, a man does not feel just like praying he has, for only a moment or two, but to reflect upon the unnumbered and unmerited blessings which God has bestowed upon him every hour of every day of his earthly life, and upon the unutterably precious and everlasting benefits that are by the grace of God in store for him at the end of the race, and he will *feel like praying*. It is a sign of no ordinary disease that a man who professes to be a Christian man does often feel not like praying upon occasions suitable for prayer. I should say to such an one, not that he should pray, but that he should *repent*. As our formalisms and legalisms are laid aside, and specially our carnality, we will, like the little child, love to speak with our Father who is in heaven.

CHAPTER X.

Fighting Prayers.

Fighting prayers are very peculiar, and should herein receive some attention. They are of human origin and chronologically, of comparatively late invention. Like certain fine wares, they are brought out only on special and extraordinary occasions; and like some fine horses, they often so far over-leap themselves as to soon break down. It is not everyone who is competent to wield this engine of war successfully. To perform well requires a bold, war-like man or woman who does not hesitate to *rush* into the presence of God and *demand* of him the object of their petition. I suppose it is thought that the sinner or whoever is to be conquered, seeing how familiar with God and how bold in his sight those are who so pray, will fall down on his face and worship God, and report that God is in them of a truth.

But this sort of prayer, so called, has its more characteristic feature in the fact that it is not really addressed to God, angel, man or devil. Its sole aim is *against* somebody or thing. Its battle-cry is victory or death. Its best exemplification, so far as I have been able to know, was seen in the late crusades in several of the States against the infamous whisky traffic. The object which the crusaders had in view was so very good, and the traffic which they attempted to destroy was so unmercifully and enormously wicked and inexcusable in all its phases that there was a strong inclination to apologize for, or excuse the parties for the use of the means they employed.

They leveled their engine directly *against the men* engaged in the traffic very skilfully and with great power. They went directly to the persons to be crushed and prayed *at them*, to be heard of men.

There are other examples of this species of prayer, but this one must suffice to illustrate my idea of fighting prayers.

CHAPTER XI.

Conclusion.

In conclusion, how comforting to the often troubled Christian heart to feel that it has an ever-living Father more ready to give good things to his children than earthly parents are to give good things to their children ; to feel that not a hair of the head, not a pulse of the heart, not a thought of the soul, not an act of the will, not a cry of distress nor a shout of joy that his heart-searching and reign-trying God does not see or hear and regard. He is a God near and far. He is on my right hand that I should not be moved, and "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." The human soul was made to see in this, and things like this, the bliss for which it sighs. For our God the world has no substitute. Scientists send us up or down the stream of the generations and evolutions past until we stand in thought confronting *protoplasm*. Here, without chart or compass, bewildered, amazed, we stand. Science goes no further, and it never *guesses*. Here we stand, having no God, and, therefore, no hope ; for he who has no God can have no future, and hence no hope. The onslaught made by scientists upon our religion during the last decade or two has been a weak affair indeed. The unknown God of the ancient Greeks is the unknown of Mill and Tyndale. What ancient philosophy did not know, modern science cannot learn, concerning God. No one knows the Father but the Son and he to whom the Son will reveal him.

It is because science does not know God, and hence cannot reveal him, that we have the Bible. The presence of the Bible condemns the pretensions of scientists in this respect. It comes to reveal God to us and us to ourselves, and to put us into happy fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

"Holy Bible, book divine,
Precious treasure, thou art mine.
Mine to tell me whence I came,
Mine to teach me what I am."

Prof. Maxwell is quoted by J. W. Dawson as saying : "There is no need to be frightened at the phantoms raised by such terms as matter, and force, and molecules, and protoplasmic energy, and rhythmic vibrations of the brain. There are no real terrors in a philosophy which affirms the conceivability that two and two might possibly make five ; or in that which predicates that an infinite number of straight lines constitute a finite surface ; or in that which assimilates the motives which induce a parent to support his offspring to the pleasures derived from wine and music ; or in that which asserts the unknowableness of the Supreme and the vanity of prayer. Surely philosophies which involve results such as these have no permanent grasp on human nature. They are in themselves suicidal, and, in their turn, and after their brief day, will, like other such philosophies, be refuted or denied by the next comer and are doomed to accomplish the happy dispatch." Mr. Dawson, himself one of the first, if not the very first, geological minds of this or any age of the world, says : "Truth and divinity are stamped on every line of the early chapters of Genesis, alike in their archaic simplicity and in that accuracy as to facts which enables them not only to stand unharmed amid the discoveries of modern science, but to display new beauties as we are able more and more fully to compare them with the records stored up from of old in the recesses of the earth. Those who base their hopes for the future on the glorious revelations of the Bible need not be ashamed of its story of the past."

Let us then, more and more, draw nigh unto God, and he will draw nigh unto us, for "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him: to all that call upon him in truth."

Dear brethren, for the sake of God's precious cause, for the sake of truth—all truth, for the sake of the world under the dominion of the wicked one, for our own soul's sake for time and for eternity, let us be emphatically and be regarded as a praying people. And may the Lord help us so to be.

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