

ARTICLE II.

THE PEARL OF PRAYERS.

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THE prayer which our Lord taught his disciples is one of the brightest gems in the treasure-house of the Bible. To the fathers it seemed that Jesus opened God's jewel-case and revealed the beauty of what one of them called "the pearl of prayers." It is indeed a crystal of devotion, in whose glowing focus are condensed some of the most precious and far-reaching truths of life.

The briefest of prayers, it is also the most comprehensive. It is *multum in parvo*, like a prince's fortune concentrated in a diamond. Tertullian says, "It contains a breviary of the whole gospel." Bishop Andrews calls it "a compendium of faith." The scholarly De Wette says, that it expresses in its seven petitions the whole course of religious experience: the first three express the unhindered flight of the soul to God; the next three, the hindrances to this aspiration by our earthly needs and our conflict with sin; and the last one shows the solution that harmonizes this conflict.

There is a remarkable catholicity in the Lord's Prayer. It is equally adapted to every time and clime, to Hindoo or Hottentot as well as Anglo-Saxon. There is not a phrase in it which any man or any priest of any nationality or religion cannot use with equal satisfaction and propriety.

At the great Columbian Exposition in Chicago, no more impressive sight was witnessed than that in the Parliament of Religions, when each morning the polyglot representatives of

every part of our globe bowed their heads, and repeated this prayer, led now by a Protestant minister and now by a Roman Catholic prelate, now by a Buddhist priest and now by a Parsee saint.

On a great Atlantic steamship recently the Sabbath service was conducted by a Jewish rabbi of distinction. Near the close of the service he invited the entire company to join with him in "the universal prayer." It is indeed "the Universal Prayer," as good for the Jew as the Christian, for the philosopher as the child.

There have been many prayers written by famous men for special classes of people. Thomas Aquinas and Lord Bacon have each given us "The Student's Prayer"; Jeremy Taylor, "The Worker's Prayer"; Thomas Arnold of Rugby, "The Teacher's Prayer"; and George Herbert, "The Preacher's Prayer." But this is Everybody's Prayer, and every one of the great human family, of whatever color or condition or church, may use its simple phrases to voice the deepest aspirations of his soul as he draws near to "Our Father."

This model prayer was evidently not prescribed as a formula always to be used. It was only once upon the lips of our Lord, so far as we know. The other prayers which he and his disciples used were as various as the occasions and needs which prompted them. This is indeed admirably suited for common worship, and may be fitly employed by congregations in united prayer. But we should not make a fetich of it, as though there were some magic in the words.

If Jesus did not give this beautiful prayer as a mere liturgical form, then, why did he give it? It was not merely that we might admire its charm, or use it to express our common aspiration; but that it might be to his disciples a striking and exquisite object-lesson, emphasizing certain things about prayer

which they need to have deeply impressed upon them: 1. The Need of Prayer; 2. The Method of Prayer; 3. The Spirit of Prayer; 4. The Power of Prayer.

No one can carefully study this "Pearl of Prayers," without getting new light upon these things. And the better one understands them, the more wonderful will the truths appear which are enshrined in these petitions.

THE NEED OF PRAYER.

The Sermon on the Mount is the Magna Charta of the Golden Age. It sets forth the laws of life which must be followed if we are to have the ideal life in an ideal society. And here is a whole section of this great address devoted to Prayer, as one of the essentials of life at its best. It assumes and emphasizes the fact that the highest, noblest, strongest, happiest life cannot exist without prayer.

It cannot be denied that in our day there has been in certain quarters a drift away from prayer. Men have been bewildered by the new view of the universe and its unchanging laws. They have felt the benumbing influence of a materialism which has crept like a malarial mist over our modern world. Some have come to doubt the efficacy of prayer, and hence its need. The blight of this subtle skepticism has touched some of those who profess to be followers of Christ, and in too many instances the closet has been deserted, the family altar fallen into ruin, and the gathering for social prayer abandoned. It is tacitly felt by such persons, though not openly declared, that prayer is but the relic of an outgrown superstition, and of no practical use; hence the up-to-date man or woman may decline to use the empty form.

But that was not the view of Jesus, the Ideal man, the wisest and best being our world has known, the Son of God, to whose clear vision the secrets of the universe were laid bare.

He believed in prayer. He pressed home upon all men the duty, the need, and the efficacy of prayer. And this "Pearl of Prayers" lays tremendous emphasis upon this.

This prayer exactly fits that ineradicable instinct in our nature which prompts all men to prayer; that fact attests the need of prayer. A native impulse in the heart makes it turn to God as the flower turns to the sun. It is a homing instinct in the soul, such as in birds sends them with unerring flight to their refuge in the home nest. In the flush of prosperity and pleasure this may not assert itself strongly, but in the hour of weakness or need the soul turns to that Infinite Power which it dimly discerns, and cries out for its help. This universal instinct in man indicates the need of prayer, as hunger the need of food.

This prayer also calls attention to Christ's own example, as evidencing the need of prayer. The heroes of faith whom the Bible portrays were all men of prayer. Abraham and Moses and Elijah, David and Solomon and Daniel, were men whose prayers are historic. But when Jesus appears, who transcends them all, a being of peerless intellect and sinless nature, the world-conqueror, the Saviour of mankind, he exalts prayer by his example as none of them ever did. His oneness with God was marked by constant communion with him.

"Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of his prayer."

By seaside and in city, in breaking bread and working miracles, he prayed. On the Mount of Transfiguration, by the grave of Lazarus, at the Last Supper, in the agony of Gethsemane, in the tragic hours of Calvary, he prayed. Surely if such an one as Jesus needed prayer for spiritual refreshment and invigoration, if for his transcendent humanity he needed the inspiring companionship of the Father, much more do we.

With our moral blindness and infirmity, our sin and sorrow, we need the help that can come only from God as we open our hearts to him in prayer.

“We may add to his example the explicit direction to pray which this Master of life repeatedly gives. The very words which introduce the Lord’s Prayer may be taken as a command: “After this manner pray ye.” One of his parables was given as an illustration that “men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” He bade his disciples to ask, that they might receive. “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation,” is his injunction. These directions came from Him who knew life and its needs perfectly.

Perhaps the new view of God and of the nature of prayer which Jesus gives exhibits even more impressively the naturalness and value of prayer. God is not a remote sovereign, indifferent or hostile; he is a present Friend, eager to bless. He is not a Creator dwelling apart from his work; he is a loving Father in the midst of his children. He is the Immanent God, without whose living presence nothing can exist. In every star, or dewdrop, or soul he dwells, an omnipresent Spirit, and he can hear our faintest whisper.

“Speak to him, thou, for he heareth, and spirit with spirit can meet;
Closer is he than breathing, and nearer than hands or feet.”

In prayer we are not trying to communicate with an absentee God, but with him “in whom we live, and move, and have our being.”

And Christ’s view of prayer is equally transforming. Petition is not the whole of it, though it is a large and important feature. Prayer should include Adoration, Thanksgiving, Confession, Petition, and Communion. The last element is too often overlooked, though it is one of the most important. We are not mere beggars at the door of the King’s palace;

we are children in the Father's house. Prayer is companionship with our Father and Friend. "True prayer," says Dr. Cuyler, "is an earnest soul's direct converse with God." We pour out our hearts to him, and listen for his response. Dean Stanley reminds us that the Moslems have one suggestive gesture in prayer; the hand is raised to the ear as though one were intently listening for a message from God. We ought also to be in such an attitude toward God that we may catch what he has to say to us, as well as voice our heart's desire to him.

It is this loving intimacy with God that gives to prayer peculiar value. Robert Burns once lamented that he had no confidential friend to whom he could pour out his inmost soul, without one day repenting the confidence; so he began a journal. We may unbosom ourselves to God, as to a most sympathetic, trusty, and helpful Friend. Madame Swetchine called prayer "a *tête-à-tête par excellence* with the best of fathers. I take him aside, as it were, and tell him all my sorrows, joys, wishes, and regrets." Matthew Henry spoke of prayer as a face-to-face communion: "Prayer is the ascent of the soul: God must be eyed, and the soul employed. 'Up with your hearts,' was anciently used as a call to prayer."

While prayer, then, is in part petition, it is not intended merely to secure personal blessings which may gratify our transient desires. This "Pearl of Prayers" shows clearly its larger service. It is to bring our souls into deep and thorough unison with God. In this loving fellowship we blend our souls with his, and receive more and more of his Spirit. Prayer thus gains an uplifting and strengthening power as we rise into the very life of God. We learn to see as God sees, feel as God feels, and choose as God chooses. Life is steadied, exalted, ennobled, and made serenely happy in this union with God.

Thus does this jewel of devotion emphasize the need of prayer; matching that instinct which prompts all men to pray; reminding us of the example and explicit direction which the Master of life has given; and illustrating the new view of God and of the nature of prayer which he gave to the world.

THE METHOD OF PRAYER.

This "Pearl of Prayers" teaches clearly the true Method of Prayer. It shows that simplicity, sincerity, and brevity are its essential characteristics. It is itself so compact, concise, concentrated, that it rebukes the rambling verbosity into which our devotion too frequently degenerates.

We are to express in the simplest way the sincere feeling of our hearts. We must, first of all, have a deep and genuine longing. "Easiness of desire is a great enemy of a good man's prayer," says Jeremy Taylor. What do you really and ardently long for? When you clearly know that, and feel the intense passion of your heart's desire, then come quickly to the point with God, and pour out your soul without tedious repetition.

Both of these points should be kept constantly in mind. Indifference and languid interest clip the wings of prayer, and it goes no farther than the lips. There must be eager aspiration, the urgent wish for better things, the soul awake and alert to enter into loving communion with the Father, if we would pray aright. Dean Farrar was right when he said, "Prayer, which we deem so easy, which we perform so perfunctorily, is, when it is real prayer, the passion of an effort, the wrestling of a life. Prayers which are not uttered from the heart are but forms, and functions, and idle breaths of articulated air." And we may well ponder the kindred statement of Frances Power Cobbe, who says, "Prayer which is not really earnest, as earnest as our poor wavering hearts and

wandering thoughts and imperfect consciousness can make it, is not prayer at all. It is a talking to the winds, and not to God. The arrow which is to shoot into heaven must fly from the bow strained to its very utmost tension."

We must beware, also, of the error of the old rabbis, who thought they would be heard of God because of their "much speaking." One of their sayings was, "Prolix prayer prolongs life." Our Lord transfixes this fallacy with his warning against "vain repetitions." Luther had caught his meaning when he said, "Many words and little meaning is heathenish; few words and much meaning is Christian."

Perhaps as good counsel as can be given on this point is to be found in the words of Dr. William M. Taylor, who says: "Be brief, but let not your brevity kill your earnestness. Pray in telegrams, and let your heart go with each message. Let your petitions be arrowy, at once in their point, their vim, their directness, their force."

Dr. Chalmers commended the prayers of Doddridge as having been "intensely businesslike." He wasted no words in getting directly at the point which he wished to press, and then he plead his case with ardor and confidence. Yet while we are not to drone out tedious prayers, which weary ourselves and others, we are to take time enough for warm-hearted communion with our Father, and we must not be so abrupt as to lose the sense of loving companionship with the Infinite Friend.

THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER.

The Spirit of Prayer, which is emphasized by these words of devotion given by our Saviour, is of course the spirit of Christ himself. If we have the mind of Christ as we pray, we cannot go amiss. If his feeling is ours, so that we long for the things he longs for, we may be sure that we offer acceptable prayer.

We are told elsewhere by Jesus that we are to ask in his name, and a large promise is given to those who thus approach the mercy-seat. But there is no magic in the syllables that compose that Name by which the mere repetition of it can secure a blessing. Our Master never encouraged superstitious credulity of this sort. He meant to teach us that we are to draw near to God as the sincere disciples of Jesus; as those who by him have been brought back to loving loyalty to God; as those who are learning of him how to live nobly and divinely; as those who, seeking to incarnate his spirit and purpose, are trying to express his ideal in daily conduct. Such an one is surely in the way of blessing.

Those were wise words of James Freeman Clarke, when he gave his interpretation of this direction of our Saviour: "To pray 'in the name of Christ' means that when we pray we are to be in Christ's spirit; to forget our vanity, selfishness, egotism; to desire the good of others; the coming of God's Kingdom of love; to pray in submission, saying, 'Not my will, but thine, be done.' If we pray thus, we may ask what we will, and it shall be done unto us, for we shall ask only what God wills. We shall ask for his Holy Spirit, for power to do good, and be good, and that power will certainly come. We shall be lifted out of our doubts, our anxiety, our fear of evil, and be inspired with courage and hope and power."

The spirit of Christ in which we ought to pray is well exemplified in this model prayer. It is the spirit of entire devotion to God; of eagerness for his kingdom; of complete submission to his will; and of thoroughgoing brotherhood with men.

Entire devotion to God was a preëminent characteristic of Jesus. He knew God; he trusted him perfectly; he was one with him in feeling, in purpose, in life. It was his meat and drink to do the Father's will. It was his mission to enable

men to understand God, so that they would love and trust and serve him naturally and spontaneously. In all his thoughts and words and deeds, God was in the foreground. He exalted him in his teaching. He glorified him in his life. If we had more of this spirit, there would be less of the petty and merely human in our prayers, and we should magnify God more.

Eagerness for the kingdom of God also shines out with peculiar luster in the spirit of Christ. He knew that the Eternal Purpose was steadily working out a sovereign plan of infinite blessing for mankind. He knew that God was in all human history, steadily developing life toward an ideal. He expected that in the age-long conflict between good and evil, right and wrong, right would conquer in the end, and good would be triumphant. He declared that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, and not far away; that it had begun to be; and while it was only the twilight of the new day for humanity, it would increase till the full splendor of noonday should flood the earth with the light of life all devoted to truth and love and God. He had a passion for this kingdom of God. He lived for it, and died for it. He made it a central feature of his prayer, and so should we.

Complete submission to God's will has found in no one else such beautiful and touching illustration as in Christ. It was manifest in his eagerness to do God's will, and to further his Father's plan for the redemption of the world. It was exhibited in the crucial hour of his agony, when his flesh shrank from the anguish of the suffering it was to endure, but when his great spirit accepted the divine plan, welcoming the cross, that, as the Captain of salvation, he might be made perfect through suffering. "Not as I will, but as thou wilt," is the keynote of every prayer of his. When the bitterest cup of human anguish was pressed to his lips, he cried, "My Father,

if this cannot pass away except I drink it, thy will be done."

This, then, must be the proviso in every true prayer, "Not my will, but thine, be done." We are not to dictate to God. We may plead for what our hearts long for, but when we have presented our request, we must bow before the Infinite wisdom and love of our Father, and say, "Thy will be done." And we shall ever surely find that our true happiness lies in harmonizing our human wills with the Divine will.

The spirit of Christ is also the spirit of thoroughgoing brotherhood with mankind. It is a social spirit, realizing that mankind is one great family, and eager for the welfare of all the brothers and sisters in that vast family circle, as well as our own. The fact that the plural pronoun is used all through the Lord's Prayer is a significant hint that it is to voice the worship of many, not of one alone. "Our Father," "our daily bread," "our debts," "deliver us from evil,"—these indicate the common needs and burdens of mankind. The solidarity of humanity is felt as we wait together before the common mercy-seat. We draw closer to all our fellow-men in the bonds of fellowship as we repeat these petitions together.

It is this pulse beat of Fraternity throbbing through this model prayer that prompts us to social devotion. Not the closet of the solitary worshiper, nor the temple when a great multitude lifts the alleluias of praise, is the place where alone we may keep company with God; but the social circle of believers, when "two or three" are met together with Jesus in the midst, or the larger gathering of devout disciples of the household of faith where the presence of the Father is realized,—these also are the places where a blessing is outpoured upon the heart, and the nobler life is enriched and energized.

THE POWER OF PRAYER.

It emphasizes also the Power of Prayer. No one will deny

its power upon the soul of him who prays. Had it no other value, this reflex influence, by which it soothes and elevates and inspires him who thus comes face to face with God, would make it a blessing one cannot afford to miss. A multitude of witnesses testifies to its great helpfulness. It clarifies thought, renews courage, energizes the will, and ennobles the life.

Dr. Theodore Bulkeley Hyslop, an eminent brain-specialist in England, has given interesting testimony on this point in a recent address before the British Medical Association. He says: "As an alienist, and one whose whole life has been concerned with the sufferings of the human mind, I would state that of all the hygienic measures to counteract disturbed sleep, depressed spirits, and all the miserable sequels of a distressed mind, I would undoubtedly give the first place to the simple habit of prayer. Let there be but the habit of nightly communion, not as a mendicant, nor repeating of words more adapted to the tongue of a sage, but as a humble individual who submerges or asserts his individuality as an integral part of a great whole. Such a habit does more to clean the spirit, and strengthen the soul to overcome mere incidental emotionalism, than any other therapeutic agency known to me."

Edward Payson said when a student; "Since I began to beg God's blessing on my studies, I have done more in a week than in a whole year before." Martin Luther confessed his constant dependence upon it in the midst of his arduous toils, saying, "I have so much to do that I cannot get on without three hours a day of praying." Sir Matthew Hale, the eminent jurist, found that it steadied and strengthened him for his legal tasks, saying, "If I omit praying, and reading God's word, in the morning, nothing goes well all day."

If it be said that these were men of cloistered quiet, we have similar testimony from men of action. General Henry Have-

lock was wont to rise at four o'clock in the morning, if his army was to march at six o'clock, rather than miss his "morning watch" with God. Each morning in General Charles George Gordon's army, the white handkerchief spread on the ground before his closed tent-flaps told the soldiers that their commander was spending an hour in the council chamber of the Heavenly King. It was in full recognition of the fact that new stimulus and strength are brought to the praying soul that Archbishop Trench wrote:—

"We kneel, how weak! we rise, how full of power!
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves the wrong,
Or others,—that we are not always strong;
That we are ever overborne with care;
That we should ever weak or heartless be,
Anxious, or troubled, when with us is prayer,
And joy, and strength, and courage, are with Thee!"

It is but an enlargement of this thought to say that prayer adds efficiency to all noble service. It not only enkindles the mind, but it empowers the arm, and gives fresh impetus to action. Man locks arms with God, and they work together for the desired results, if it be such as God chooses. We must not fail to do our part. Our work in coöperation with God is one of the necessary factors in securing the desired answer to our prayers. Frederick Douglass used to say that when a slave he often prayed for freedom, but he never found an answer to that prayer till he prayed with his feet. "Whoso labors faithfully; he prays twice," says the proverb. It is also true that he who joins earnest prayer with his work, finds that he can work with triple power.

This is the reason why Queen Mary said that she "feared the prayers of John Knox more than an army of ten thousand men." She knew that such a man plus God was invincible.

In the fields of Christian service it has been proved, times without number, that prayer adds to the worker's equipment

the very power of God. In the gentle ministry of comfort; in the stirring message that is to arouse conscience and enlist the will; in planning and leading campaigns for social betterment; in the broad field of missionary activity which aims to evangelize a country or a world, how weak is human endeavor, until it is reinforced with power from on high! Prayer binds man's effort to the arm of God.

But the power of prayer is much greater than this. We may confidently affirm that prayer actually secures results which would not have been produced except through its agency. Scripture vindicates this statement with many examples. The pages of Christian history afford many illustrations of it.

We should, of course, beware of making exaggerated or unscriptural claims for prayer. Prayer is not dictation to God, and he nowhere promises that he will grant every petition in the exact way we ask. It would be disastrous if human ignorance and finite folly could prescribe to Infinite wisdom and love a precise method of action. No greater misfortune could befall us than to have certain requests of ours literally granted. But we should not suppose that God fails to hear and answer us when we do not receive just what we craved. If our prayer be genuine, and Divine mercy withholds the fancied boon we sought, God will answer us by giving us some better blessing. Bishop Hall was right when he said: "Good prayers never come creeping home. I am sure I shall receive either what I ask, or what I should ask."

Rarely has this been better stated than by Dr. Maltbie D. Babcock: "Are the honest, earnest prayers of God's children always heard? Always. Are they always answered? Always. In the way we expect? Not always. If a hungry child asks a scorpion, will his father give him a scorpion? Not if he knows how to give his children good things to eat. Because

our Heavenly Father knows how to give good gifts, we may ask with perfect confidence for what we want. He will give what is best."

With full recognition of the fact that God's best answer to some petitions is a denial, and that the literal granting of all our requests would turn the fair order of the world into chaos, we may yet assert with confidence that God often grants the very blessings we pray for.

Nor does his statement conflict with what we know of the reign of law. What we call the laws of nature are simply the customary and invariable methods of God's action. These methods are wise and good. By adhering to them God works out immeasurable blessing for all his creatures. We have no right to ask him to set them aside and act in an arbitrary and lawless way for the gratification of a personal desire. The blessings he confers through his laws are unspeakably greater than those he could confer if he were a capricious God, being constantly persuaded to disregard these wise methods of action by the entreaties of his children, who are neither wise enough nor unselfish enough to see what is best.

But it is not necessary for God to set aside his laws in order to grant our petitions. He answers prayer by means of his laws, and our communion and coöperation with him become an important factor in the system by which law works out the desired result. We are ourselves constantly interfering with the so-called fixed order of nature. Our desires prompt the will; the free will expresses itself in action; our action works in and through the laws of nature, and secures results which the order of nature by itself could never have produced. The teeming harvests of autumn, the humble homes and splendid palaces of civilization, the triumphs of science and art, everywhere show how man, coöperating with God through natural

law, secures results of immense value. But surely God can work in and through his laws more freely and effectively than we, for he understands them perfectly. God transcends the laws he has made, and can use other methods of action if he chooses. God's power to change the course of nature how and when he pleases is undisputed. But when we pray in faith we are not asking for a miracle, but that God will use his own wise laws so as to give us the blessing. And our prayer puts us into such connection with him that by means of our prayer he can often give us just what we desire.

— The perplexity which some feel with regard to the efficacy of prayer ought to be much relieved by perceiving that God answers our petitions without setting aside or suspending his beneficent system of law. Professor George P. Fisher has stated the case in a nutshell: "To represent God as moved by prayer to grant what he is asked to give, does not imply that he is mutable in character, but it implies the opposite. For the prayer is a new fact Through the instrumentality of nature and its laws the human will can produce effects (as in raising the arm, or pumping water out of a well). If man can produce a shower of rain, God can. If nature is thus plastic in the hands of the creature, how much more in the hands of the Creator."

Prayer has power, therefore, because the ardor of our human desire is brought home to the heart of the Heavenly Father, and God and man coöperate in and through the laws which God has established to secure the blessing longed for. Sometimes this is accomplished by God's giving to a man vision and strength to do the things necessary to gain the desired end. We are ourselves important factors in getting our prayers answered. Our failure to act may often cheat us of the blessing.

Sometimes the power of our desires, poured out to God in earnest entreaty, touches other springs of action, occult and hidden, from our view, which in some way mysterious to us brings to us the blessing. A striking illustration given by Dr. William M. Taylor shows how God, through the common operations of nature, may answer the petition of his children: "There is an inland city, in the State of New York, which is supplied with water from a river that flows near it. The method is as follows: in a small house on the bank of the river there is an engine which goes day and night, pumping water from the stream into the main pipe which leads to the city. The demand in the city regulates the motion of the engine; so that the more water is drawn off, the faster the engine goes. But when a fire occurs, some one in the city touches a spring, which rings a bell in the engine-room; on hearing which the engineer, by the turning of a lever, causes the engine to move with such rapidity as to charge the mains to their greatest capacity, so that when the hose is attached to the plugs, water is sent to the top of the loftiest building in the place. Thus an extraordinary demand is met through the ordinary channel. And if this can be accomplished by human skill in a single instance, who shall say that the all-wise God has not adjusted the usual operations of his universe so as to admit of his meeting unusual emergencies through them?"

It requires no miracle, then, to answer our prayers. God working freely through his laws can respond to us as easily as parents can give good things to their children when they ask. We can go to him with hearty confidence, and pour out the longings of the heart with the assurance that we shall be heard and answered. The giving of this model prayer by our Lord is evidence enough that prayer is not an empty form, but has power to win a blessing.

Thus does this "Pearl of Prayers" emphasize the Need, the Method, the Spirit, and the Power of prayer. It advances from the voice of adoration with which it opens to the joyful doxology with which it closes,—a doxology preserved to us, not by the most ancient manuscripts of the New Testament, but by the immemorial usage and custom of the church.

In its stately progress from start to finish it touches nearly every variety of human need and religious desire.

It is the prayer of trustful sonship: "Our Father."

It is the worshiper's prayer: "Hallowed be thy name."

It is the missionary's prayer: "Thy kingdom come."

It is the patient sufferer's prayer: "Thy will be done."

It is the hungry man's prayer: "Give daily bread."

It is the sinner's prayer: "Forgive us our debts."

It is the Christian pilgrim's prayer: "Lead us not into temptation."

It is the Christian victor's prayer: "Deliver us from evil."

Then, in prophetic anticipation of that gracious triumph which God will give over every evil when his great plan is fully consummated, there comes the outburst of praise, which ascribes to our Father-king dominion and honor eternal. It is like a snatch of melody from the angel song echoing through the twilight of our world. The ecstatic chant of the "multitude which no man can number," worshiping before the great white throne, floats down to earth, and blends itself with our devotion. We catch a jubilant phrase out of the Hallelujah chorus of the skies. and earth and heaven unite in the glad acclaim,—

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, Amen."