

consider how small a labour all this is, in comparison of the everlasting end; and to remember, that all is gain and pleasure, and a delight to those that have holy hearts; and to remember, that the effects to the church and kingdom, of such holy government of families, would quite over-compensate all the pains.

---

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### *Tit. 1. Directions for Prayer in General.*

HE that handleth this duty of prayer as it deserveth<sup>a</sup>, must make it the second part in the body of divinity, and allow it a larger and more exact tractate than I here intend: for I have before told you, that as we have three natural faculties; an understanding, will, and executive power, so these are qualified in the godly, with faith, love, and obedience; and have three particular rules: the creed, to shew us what we must believe, and in what order: the Lord's prayer, to shew us what, and in what order, we must desire and love: and the decalogue, to tell us what, and in what order we must do; (though yet these are so near kin to one another, that the same actions in several respects belong to each of the rules). As the commandments must be believed and loved, as well as obeyed, and the matter of the Lord's prayer must be believed to be good and necessary, as well as loved and desired; and belief, and love, and desire, are commanded, and are part of our obedience; yet for all this, they are not formally the same, but divers. And as we say, that the heart or will is the man, as being the commanding faculty; so morally the will, the love or desire is the Christian; and therefore the rule of desire or prayer, is a principal part of true religion: the internal part of this duty, I partly touched before Part i. chap. 3. And the church part I told you, why I passed by Part ii. it being not left by the government where we live, to private ministers' discussion (save

<sup>a</sup> The Stoics say, *Orabit sapiens ac vota faciet bona a diis postulans.* Laert. in Zenone. So that when Seneca saith, *Cur Deos precibus fatigatis, &c.* he only intendeth to reprove the slothful, that think to have all done by prayer alone, while they are idle and neglect the means.

only to persuade men to obey what is established and commanded). Therefore because I have omitted the latter, and but a little touched upon the former, I shall be the larger on it in this place, to which (for several reasons) I have reserved it.

*Direct.* 1. 'See that you understand what prayer is. Even the expressing or acting of our desires before another, to move, or some way procure him to grant them. True Christian prayer is, the believing and serious expressing or acting of our lawful desires before God, through Jesus our Mediator, by the help of the Holy Spirit, as a means to procure of him, the grant of these desires.' Here note, 1. That inward desire is the soul of prayer. 2. The expressions or inward actings of them, is as the body of prayer. 3. To men it must be desire so expressed, as they may understand it; but to God the inward acting of desires is a prayer, because he understandeth it<sup>b</sup>. 4. But it is not the acting of desire, simply in itself that is any prayer: for he may have desires, that offereth them not up to God with heart or voice, but it is desires, as some way offered up to God, or represented, or acted towards him, as a means to procure his blessing, that is prayer indeed.

*Direct.* II. 'See that you understand the ends and use of prayer.' Some think that it is of no use, but only to move God to be willing of that which he was before unwilling of; and therefore because that God is immutable, they think that prayer is a useless thing. But prayer is useful, 1. As an act of obedience to God's command. 2. As the performance of a condition, without which he hath not promised us his mercy, and to which he hath promised it. 3. As a means to actuate, and express, and increase our own humility, dependance, desire, trust and hope in God, and so to make us capable and fit for mercy, who else should be incapable and unfit. 4. And so, though God be not changed by it in himself, yet the real change that is made by it on ourselves, doth infer a change in God by mere relation or extrinsical denomination; he being one that is, according to the tenour of his own established law and covenant, engaged to disown or punish the unbelieving prayerless and disobedient, and after engaged to own or pardon them that

<sup>b</sup> Plerumque hoc negotium plus [gencibus] gemitibus quam sermonibus agitur. August. Epist. 121. (August. Oper. Benedict. Edit. Vol. i. Epist. 130. p. 390. T. C.)

are faithfully desirous and obedient: and so this is a relative, or at least a denominative change. So that in prayer, faith and fervency, are so far from being useless, that they as much prevail for the thing desired by qualifying ourselves for it, as if indeed they moved the mind of God, to a real change: even as he that is in a boat, and by his hook layeth hold of the bank, doth as truly by his labour get nearer the bank, as if he drew the bank to him.

*Direct.* III. 'Labour above all to know that God to whom you pray.' To know him as your Maker, your Redeemer, and your Regenerator; as your Owner, your Ruler, and your Father, Felicity and End; as all-sufficient for your relief, in the infiniteness of his power, his wisdom and his goodness; and to know your own dependance on him; and to understand his covenant or promises, upon what terms he is engaged and resolved either to give his mercies, or to deny them. "He that cometh to God, must believe that He is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him<sup>c</sup>." "He that calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved: but how shall they call on him, on whom they have not believed<sup>d</sup>."

*Direct.* IV. 'Labour when you are about to pray, to stir up in your souls the most lively and serious belief of those unseen things that your prayers have respect to; and to pray as if you saw them all the while: even as if you saw God in his glory, and saw heaven and hell, the glorified and the damned, and Jesus Christ your Mediator interceding for you in the heavens.' As you would pray if your eyes beheld all these, so strive to pray while you believe them: and say to yourselves, Are they not as sure as if I saw them? Are they not made known by the Son and Spirit of God?

*Direct.* v. 'Labour for a constant acquaintance with yourselves, your sins and manifold wants and necessities; and also to take an actual, special notice of your case, when you go to prayer.' If you get not a former constant acquaintance with your own case, you cannot expect to know it aright upon a sudden as you go to pray: and yet if you do not actually survey your hearts and lives when you go to prayer, your souls will be unhumbled, and want that lively sense of your necessities, which must put life into your prayers. Know well what sin is, and what God's

<sup>c</sup> Heb. xi. 6.

<sup>d</sup> Rom. x. 13, 14.

wrath, and hell, and judgment are, and what sin you have committed, and what duty you have omitted, and failed in, and what wants and corruptions are yet within you, and what mercy and grace you stand in need of, and then all this will make you pray, and pray to purpose with all your hearts. But when men are wilful strangers to themselves, and never seriously look backwards or inwards to see what is amiss and wanting; nor look forwards, to see the danger that is before them, no wonder if their hearts be dead and dull, and if they are as unfit to pray, as a sleeping man to work<sup>e</sup>.

*Direct.* vi. 'See that you hate hypocrisy, and let not your lips go against or without your hearts; but that your hearts be the spring of all your words: that you love not sin, and be not loath to leave it, when you seem to pray against it; and that you truly desire the grace which you ask, and ask not for that which you would not have: and that you be ready to use the lawful means to get the mercies which you ask;' and be not like those lazy wishers, that will pray God to give them increase at harvest, when they lie in bed, and will neither plough or sow; or that pray him to save them from fire, or water, or danger, while they run into it, or will not be at the pains to go out of the way. O what abundance of wretches do offer up hypocritical, mock prayers to God! blaspheming him thereby, as if he were an idol, and knew not their hypocrisy, and searched not the hearts? Alas, how commonly do men pray in public, "that the rest of their lives hereafter may be pure and holy," that hate purity and holiness at the heart, and deride and oppose that which they seem to pray for? As Austin confesseth of himself before he was converted, that he prayed against his filthy sin, and yet was afraid lest God should grant his prayers. So many pray against the sins which they would not be delivered from, or would not use the means that is necessary to their conquest and deliverance." "Let him that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity<sup>f</sup>." "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me<sup>g</sup>." Alas, how easy is it for an ungodly person to learn to

<sup>e</sup> Bias navigabat aliquando cum impiis, et quum navis tempestate, quateretur, illique Deos invocarent; silete, inquit, ne vos hic illi navigare sentiant. Diog. Laert. lib.i. sect. 86. p. 55.

<sup>f</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 19.

Psal. lxxvi. 18. See Ezck. xiv. 3, 4. 14.

say a few words by rote, and to run them over, without any sense of what he speaketh; while the tongue is a stranger to the heart, and speaketh not according to its desires.

*Direct. VII.* 'Search your hearts and watch them carefully, lest some beloved vanity alienate them from the work in hand, and turn away your thoughts, or prepossess your affections, so that you want them when you should use them.' If the mind be set on other matters, prayer will be a heartless, lifeless thing. Alas, what a dead and pitiful work, is the prayer of one that hath his heart ensnared in the love of money, or in any ambitious or covetous design? The thoughts will easily follow the affections.

*Direct. VIII.* 'Be sure that you pray for nothing that is disagreeable to the will of God, and that is not for the good of yourselves or others, or for the honour of God: and therefore take heed, lest an erring judgment, or carnal desires, or passions should corrupt your prayers, and turn them into sin.' If men will ignorantly pray to God to do them hurt, it is a mercy to them if God will but pardon and deny such prayers, and a judgment to grant them. And it is an easy thing for fleshly interest, or partiality, or passion to blind the judgment, and consequently to corrupt men's prayers. An ambitious or covetous man will easily be drawn to pray for the grant of his sinful desires, and think it would be for his good. And there is scarce an heretical or erroneous person, but thinketh that it would be good that the world were all reduced to his opinion, and all the opposers of it were borne down: there are few zealous Antinomians, Anabaptists, or any other dividers of the church, but they put their opinions usually into their prayers, and plead with God for the interest of their sects and errors: and it is like that the Jews that had a persecuting zeal for God<sup>b</sup>, did pray according to that zeal, as well as persecute: as it is like that Paul himself prayed against the Christians, while he ignorantly persecuted them. And they that think they do God service by killing his servants, no doubt would pray against them, as the Papists and others do at this day. Be especially careful therefore that your judgments and desires be sound and holy, before you offer them up to God in prayer. For it is a most vile abuse of God, to beg of him to do the devil's work; and, as most malicious and erroneous persons

<sup>b</sup> Rom. x. 2.

do, to call him to their help against himself, his servants and his cause.

*Direct. ix.* ‘Come always to God in the humility that beseemeth a condemned sinner, and in the faith and boldness that beseemeth a son, and a member of Christ: do nothing in the least conceit and confidence of a worthiness in yourselves; but be as confident in every lawful request, as if you saw your glorified Mediator interceding for you with his Father.’ Hope is the life of prayer and all endeavour, and Christ is the life of hope. If you pray and think you shall be never the better for it, your prayers will have little life. And there is no hope of success, but through our powerful Intercessor. Therefore let both a crucified and glorified Christ, be always before your eyes in prayer; not in a picture, but in the thoughts of a believing mind. Instead of a crucifix, let some such sentence of Holy Scripture, be written before you, where you use to pray, as John xx. 17. “Go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” Or Heb. iv. 14. “We have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God:” ver. 15, 16. “that was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin: let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy<sup>h</sup>,” &c. “Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and stedfast, and that entereth into that within the vail; whither the fore-runner is for us entered,” “He is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them<sup>i</sup>.” “If ye ask any thing in my name, I will do it<sup>k</sup>.” Christ and the promise must be the ground of all your confidence and hope.

*Direct. x.* ‘Labour hard with your hearts all the while to keep them in a reverent, serious, fervent frame, and suffer them not to grow remiss and cold, to turn prayer into lip-labour, and lifeless formality, or into hypocritical, affected, seeming fervency, when the heart is senseless, though the voice be earnest.’ The heart will easily grow dull, and customary, and hypocritical if it be not carefully watched, and diligently followed and stirred up. “The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much<sup>l</sup>.” A cold prayer sheweth a heart that is cold in desiring that which is prayed

<sup>h</sup> Heb. vi. 9. 20.

<sup>i</sup> Heb. vii. 25

<sup>k</sup> John xiv. 13, 14.

<sup>l</sup> James v. 16.

for, and therefore is unfit to receive the mercy ; God will make you know that his mercy is not contemptible, but worthy your most earnest prayers.

*Direct.* xi. 'For the matter and order of your desires and prayers, take the Lord's prayer as your special rule ; and labour to understand it well<sup>m</sup>.' For those that can make use of so brief an explication, I shall give a little help.

*A Brief Explication of the Method of the Lord's Prayer.*

The Lord's prayer containeth, 1. The address or preface : in which are described or implied,

I. To whom the prayer is made.

- |   |   |                 |  |  |
|---|---|-----------------|--|--|
| 1. Who he is: GOD : not Creatures, Saints, or Angels. | 2. How related to us, he is OUR FATHER, which comprehendeth fundamentally, that he is | } And therefore | 1. Our Creator.                          | } 1. Our Owner, or Absolute Lord.                                  |
|   |   |                 | 2. Our Redeemer.                         |  |
|   |   |                 | 3. Our Regenerator, (to the regenerate.) | 3. Our Benefactor and chief Good, and so our Felicity and our End. |

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 3. What he is in his attributes : WHICH ART IN HEAVEN. Which signifieth that therefore he is, | 1. Almighty ; and able to grant all that we ask, and to relieve and help us in every strait.  | } In this one word is not only implied all these attributes of God, but also our hearts are directed whither to look for their relief and direction now, and their felicity for ever, and called off from earthly dependances, and expectations of happiness and rest ; and to look for all from heaven, and at last in heaven. |
|   | 2. All-knowing : our hearts, and wants, and all things being open to his sight.   |   |
|   | 3. Most Good : from whom, and by whom, and to whom are all things ; the Fountain, the Disposer, and the End of all, on whose bounty and influence all subsist. And the present tense 'ART' doth intimate his Eternity |   |

II. Who are the petitioners— Who are

- |                           |  |   |                |  |  |
|---------------------------|--|---|----------------|--|--|
| 1. Man : as to his Being. | 2. By Relation, God's children.                              | } and therefore all may thus far call him Father. | } 1. His Own ; |  |  |
|                           |  |   |                | 1. By Creation: so all are : and therefore all may thus far call him Father. | 2. His Subjects :  |
|                           |  |   |                | 2. By Redemption: as all are as to the sufficient price and satisfaction.    | 3. His Beloved and Beneficiaries, that live upon him and to him, as their End. |
|                           | 3. By Regeneration: and so only the Regenerate are children. |   |                |  |  |

- |                |       |                                   |   |                      |                                |
|----------------|-------|-----------------------------------|---|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 3. By Quality. | } Yet | } 1. Loving God, as their Father. | } All which is signified in the word OUR— |                      |                                |
|                |       |                                   |   | 1. Dependant on God. | 2. Loving themselves, as men.  |
|                |       |                                   |   | 2. Necessitous.      | 3. Loving others, as brethren. |
|                |       | 3. Sinners.                       |   |                      |                                |

<sup>m</sup> Of the method of the Lord's Prayer, see Ramus de Relig. Christ. lib. iii. cap. 3. and Ludolphus de vita Christi, Part I. cap. 37. and Perkins in orat. dom. and Dr. Boys on the Liturgy, pp. 5—7.

1. For the end simply, which is GOD; in the word 'THY' repeated in every petition.

I. The highest or ultimate, that is, the glory of God; 'HALLOWED BE THY NAME.'

2. For the end respectively in the interest of God, and that is in

II. The highest means of his glory, 'THY KINGDOM COME:' that is, let the world be subject to thee their Creator and Redeemer; the universal King.

III. The next means, being the effect of this; 'THY WILL BE DONE,' that is, let thy laws be fulfilled, and thy disposals submitted to.

I. The first Part is according to the order of estimation, intention, and desire; and is,

II. The Prayer, or Petitions, in two parts: of which,

II. The second Part is according to the order of execution, and is for ourselves, beginning at the lowest, and ascending, till the end first intended, be last attained: and it is,

3. For the lower end, even the subject of these means; which is the public good of mankind, the world and church: 'IN EARTH,' that is, let the world be subjected to thee, and the church obey thee; which will be the greatest blessing to them: ourselves, being included in the world. And the measure and pattern is added, 'AS IT IS IN HEAVEN,' that is, let the earth be conformed as near as may be to the heavenly pattern. So that this part of the Lord's Prayer, proceeding in the order of excellency and intention, directeth us 1. To make God our ultimate, highest end; and to desire his interest first, and in this order, (1.) His glory, (2.) His kingdom, (3.) Obedience to his laws. II. To make the public good of the world and the church, our next end as being the noblest means. III. To include our own interest in and under this, as the least of all; professing first our own consent to that which we desire first for others.

1. For the support of our nature by necessary means: 'GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD:' this being God's first gift, presupposed both to grace and glory. 'GIVE,' signifieth our dependance on God for all. 'US,' our charity, that we desire relief for ourselves and others. 'DAILY' (or substantial) 'BREAD,' our moderation; that we desire not unnecessary or superfluities. 'THIS DAY,' the constancy of our dependance, and that we desire not, or care too much for the future, and promise not ourselves long life.

2. For clearing us from the guilt of all sin past (repentance and faith being here presupposed); where is (1.) The Petition: 'AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS' (trespasses or sins). (2.) The motive from our qualification for forgiveness: 'AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS.' Without which God will not forgive us.

3. For future preservation: (1.) From the means, 'LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION:' that is, though thou mayst justly try us, yet pity our frailty, and neither cause or permit us so to be tried, as may tempt us to sin and ruin. (2.) From the end, 'BUT DELIVER US FROM THE EVIL:' that is, 1. The Evil One, Satan (and his instruments). 2. The evil thing: 1. Sin. 2. Misery, which are Satan's end. He that would be saved from hell and misery, must be saved from sin; and he that would be saved from both, must be saved from satan and from temptation. *Quest.* But where are the requests for positive holiness, grace and heaven? *Answ.* 1. Repentance and faith are supposed in the petitioner. 2. What he wanteth is asked in the three petitions of the first Part, that we with others may sanctify God's name, and be the subjects of his kingdom, and do his will, &c. Christ and a state of grace, are finally in the first petition, formally in the second, and expressly in the third.

III. The conclusion: the reason and termination of our desires, in their ultimate end: here praised: beginning at the lowest, and ascending to the highest: containing,	}	I. What we praise; or the matter; or interest of God:	1. His universal reign, 'FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM,' administered variously, agreeably to the subjects: all owe this absolute obedience: who commandest and executest what thou wilt. 2. His own perfections, 'THE POWER:' both right and all-sufficiency: including his omniscience and goodness, as well as omnipotence. 3. His incomprehensible excellency and blessedness, as he is the ultimate end of us and all things; 'AND THE GLORY.' Rom. xi. 36. 1 Cor. x. 31.
		II. Whom we praise:	GOD, in the word 'THINE:' in him, the first efficient cause of all things, we begin: his help as the dirigent cause, we seek: and in him as the final cause, we terminate.
		III. The duration:	'FOR EVER AND EVER,' to eternity: and 'AMEN' is the expression of our consent. For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things: to Him be glory for ever, Amen. Rom. ix. 36.

So that it is apparent that the method of the Lord's prayer is circular, partly analytical, and partly synthetical: beginning with God, and ending in God: beginning with such acknowledgments as are prerequisite to petition, and ending in those praises which petition and grace bestowed tend to: beginning our petitions for God's interest and the public good, according to the order of estimation and intention, till we come to the mere means, and then beginning at the lowest, and ascending according to the order of execution. As the blood passing from the greater to the smaller numerous vessels, is there received by the like, and repaseth to its fountain; such a circular method hath mercy and duty, and consequently our desires.

*Tit. 2. Some Questions about Prayer answered.*

The rest of the general questions about prayer, I think will be best contrived into the resolving of these following doubts.

*Quest. 1.* 'Is the Lord's prayer a directory only, or a form of words to be used by us in prayer?'

*Answ. 1.* It is principally the rule to guide our inward desires, and outward expressions of them; both for the matter, what we must desire, and for the order, which we must desire first and most. 2. But this rule is given in a form of words, most apt to express the said matter and order. 3. And this form may fitly be used in due season by all, and more necessarily by some. 4. But it was never in-

tended to be the only words which we must use, no more than the creed is the only words that we must use to express the doctrine of faith, or the decalogue the only words to express our duty by<sup>m</sup>.

*Quest.* 11. 'What need is there of any other form of prayer, if the Lord's prayer be perfect?'

*Answ.* Because it is only a perfect summary, containing but the general heads: and it is needful to be more particular in our desires; for universals exist in particulars; and he that only nameth the general, and then another and another general, doth remember but few of the particulars. He that shall say, "I have sinned, and broken all thy commandments," doth generally confess every sin; but it is not true repentance, if it be not particular, for this, and that, and the other sin; at least as to the greater which may be remembered. He that shall say, "I believe all the Word of God, or I believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," may know little what is in the Word of God, or what these generals signify, and therefore our faith must be more particular. So must desires after grace be particular also: otherwise it were enough to ask for mercy in the general. If you say, that God knoweth what those general words signify, though we do not; I answer, this is the Papists' silly argument for Latin prayers, God knoweth our desires without any expressions or prayers at all, and he knoweth our wants without our desires. But it followeth not that prayers or desires are unnecessary. The exercise of our own repentance and desire doth make us persons fit to receive forgiveness, and the grace desired; when the impenitent and those that desire it not are unfit. And it is no true repentance, when you say, "I am sorry that I have sinned," but you know not, or remember not, wherein you have sinned, nor what your sin is; and so repent not indeed of any one sin at all. And so it is no true desire, that reacheth not to the particular, necessary graces, which we must desire; though I know some few very quick, comprehensive minds

<sup>m</sup> Selden in Eutychii Alexandr. Orig. p. 42, 43. sheweth that before Ezra the Jews prayed without forms, and that Ezra and the elders with him, composed them a form which had eighteen benedictions and petitions, that is, the three first and the three last for the glorifying God, and the rest intermediate for personal and public benefits. And page 48. That they might omit none of these, but might add others.

can in a moment think of many particulars, when they use but general words : and I know that some smaller, less necessary things, may be generally passed over ; and greater matters in a time of haste, or when we, besides those generals, do also use particular requests.

*Quest. III.* ' Is it lawful to pray in a set form of words ?

*Ans.* Nothing but very great ignorance can make you really doubt of it<sup>n</sup>. Hath God any where forbid it ? You will say, that it is enough that he hath not commanded it. I answer, That in general he hath commanded it to all whose edification it tendeth to, when he commandeth you, that all be done to edification ; but he hath given no particular command, nor prohibition. No more he hath commanded you to pray in English, French, or Latin ; nor to sing psalms in this tune or that ; nor after this or that version or translation ; nor to preach in this method particularly or that ; nor always to preach upon a text ; nor to use written notes ; nor to compose a form of words, and learn them, and preach them after they are composed, with a hundred suchlike, which are undoubtedly lawful ; yea, and needful to some, though not to others. If you make up all your prayer of Scripture sentences, this is to pray in a form of prescribed words, and yet as lawful and fit as any of your own. The psalms are most of them forms of prayer or praise, which the Spirit of God indited for the use of the church, and of particular persons. It would be easy to fill many pages with larger reasonings, and answers to all the fallacious objections that are brought against this ; but I will not so far weary the reader and myself.

*Quest. IV.* ' But are those forms lawful which are prescribed by others, and not by God ?

*Ans.* Yea ; or else it would be unlawful for a child or scholar to use a form prescribed by his parents or master. And to think that a thing lawful doth presently become unlawful, because a parent, master, pastor, or prince doth prescribe it or command it, is a conceit that I will not wrong my reader so far, as to suppose him guilty of. Indeed if an usurper, that hath no authority over us in such matters,

<sup>n</sup> See Selden ubi supra, proving that the Jews had a form of prayer since Ezra's time ; therefore it was in Christ's time. Yet he and his apostles joined with them, and never contradicted or blamed them for forms.

do prescribe it, we are not bound to formal obedience, that is, to do it therefore because he commandeth it; but yet I may be bound to it on some other accounts; and though his command do not bind me, yet it maketh not the thing itself unlawful.

*Quest. v.* ' But is it lawful to pray extempore without a premeditated form of words?'

*Ans.* No Christian of competent understanding doubteth of it. We must premeditate on our wants, and sins, and the graces and mercies we desire, and the God we speak to; and we must be able to express these things without any loathsome and unfit expressions. But whether the words are fore-contrived or not, is a thing that God hath no more bound you to by any law, than whether the speaker or hearers shall use sermon-notes, or whether your Bibles shall be written or in print.

*Quest. vi.* ' If both ways be lawful, which is better?'

*Ans.* If you are to join with others in the church, that is better to you which the pastor then useth: for it is his office and not yours to word the prayers which he puts up to God. And if he choose a form, (whether it be as most agreeable to his parts, or to his people, or for concord with other churches, or for obedience to governors, or to avoid some greater inconvenience,) you must join with him, or not join there at all°. But if it be in private, where you are the speaker yourself, you must take that way that is most to your own edification, (and to others, if you have auditors joining with you). One man is so unused to prayer (being ignorantly bred,) or of such unready memory or expression, that he cannot remember the tenth part so much of his particular wants, without the help of a form, as with it; nor can he express it so affectingly for himself or others: nay, perhaps not in tolerable words. And a form to such a man may be a duty; as to a dim-sighted man to read by spectacles, or to an unready preacher to use prepared words and notes. And another man may have need of no such helps; nay, when he is habituated in the understanding and feeling of his sins and wants, and hath a tongue that is used to ex-

° Three or four of these cases as to church-prayers are more largely answered afterward, Part iii. Socrates alius Cous deorum precatones, invocationesque conscripsit. Diog. Laert. in Socrate. lib. ii. sect. 47. p. 109.

press his mind even in these matters, with readiness and facility, it will greatly hinder the fervor of such a man's affections, to tie himself to premeditated words : to say the contrary, is to speak against the common sense and experience of such speakers and their hearers. And let them that yet deride this as uncertain and inconsiderate praying, but mark themselves, whether they cannot if they be hungry beg for bread, or ask help of their physician, or lawyer, or landlord, or any other, as well without a learned or studied form, as with it? Who knoweth not that it is true which the new philosopher saith ; Cartes. de Passion. part i. art. 44. ' Et cum inter loquendum solum cogitamus de sensu illius rei, quam dicere volumus, id facit ut moveamus linguam et labra celerius et melius, quam si cogitaremus ea movere omnibus modis requisitis ad proferenda eadem verba ; quia habitus quem acquisivimus cum disceremus loqui, &c. Turning the thoughts too solicitously from the matter to the words, doth not only mortify the prayers of many, and turn them into a dead form, but also maketh them more dry and barren even as to the words themselves. The heavy charge and bitter, scornful words which have been too common in this age, against praying without a set form by some, and against praying with a book or form by others, is so dishonourable a symptom or diagnostic of the church's sickness, as must needs be matter of shame and sorrow to the sounder, understanding part. For it cannot be denied, but it proveth men's understandings and charity to be both extremely low.

*Quest.* VII. ' Must we always pray according to the method of the Lord's prayer, and is it a sin to do otherwise?'

*Ans.* 1. The Lord's prayer is first a rule for your desires : and it is a sin, if your desires follow not that method. If you do not begin in your desires with God, as your ultimate end, and if you first desire not his glory, and then the flourishing of his kingdom, and then the obeying of his laws, and herein the public welfare of the world, before and above your particular benefit. And it is a sin if you desire not your daily bread (or necessary support of nature), as a lower mercy in order to your higher spiritual mercies ; and if you desire not pardon of sin, as a means to your future sanctity, duty, and felicity ; and if you desire not these, as a means to the glory of God, and take

not his praises as the highest part of your prayers. But for the expressing of these desires, particular occasions may warrant you oftentimes to begin in another order; as when you pray for the sick, or pray for directions, or a blessing before a sermon or some particular work, you may begin and end with the subject that is before you, as the prayers of holy men in all ages have done. 2. You must distinguish also, as between desires and expressions, so between an universal and a particular prayer. The one containeth all the parts of prayer, and the other is but about some one subject or part, or but some few; this last being but one or few, particular petitions cannot possibly be uttered in the method of an universal prayer which hath all the parts. There is no one petition in the Lord's prayer, but may be made a prayer itself; and then it cannot have the other petitions as parts. 3. And you must distinguish between the even and ordinary case of a Christian, and his extraordinary case, when some special reason, affection, or accident calleth him to look most to some one particular. In his even and ordinary case, every universal prayer should be expressed in the method of the Lord's prayer; but in cases of special reason and inducement it may be otherwise.

*Quest. VIII.* 'Must we pray always when the Spirit moveth us, and only then, or as reason guideth us?'

*Ans.* There are two sorts of the Spirit's motions; the one is by extraordinary inspiration or impulse, as he moved the prophets and apostles, to reveal new laws, or precepts, or events, or to do some actions without respect to any other command than the inspiration itself. This Christians are not now to expect, because experience telleth us that it is ceased; or if any should pretend to it as not yet ceased, in the prediction of events, and direction in some things otherwise indifferent, yet it is most certain that it is ceased as to legislation; for the Spirit itself hath already given us those laws, which he hath declared to be perfect, and unchangeable till the end of the world. The other sort of the Spirit's working, is not to make new laws or duties, but to guide and quicken us in the doing of that which is our duty before by the laws already made. And these are the motions that all true Christians must now expect. By which you may see, that the Spirit and reason are not to be here disjoined, much

less opposed. As reason sufficeth not without the Spirit, being dark and asleep; so the Spirit worketh not on the will but by the reason: he moveth not a man as a beast or stone, to do a thing he knoweth not why, but by illumination giveth him the soundest reason for the doing of it. And duty is first duty before we do it; and when by our own sin we forfeit the special motions or help of the Spirit, duty doth not thereby cease to be duty, nor our omission to be sin. If the Spirit of God teach you to discern the meetest season for prayer, by considering your affairs, and when you are most free, this is not to be denied to be the work of the Spirit, because it is rational, (as fanatic enthusiasts imagine). And if you are moved to pray in a crowd of business, or at any time when reason can prove that it is not your duty but your sin, the same reason proveth that it was not the Spirit of God that moved you to it: for the Spirit in the heart is not contrary to the Spirit in the Scripture. Set upon the duty which the Spirit in the Scripture commandeth you, and then you may be sure that you obey the Spirit: otherwise you disobey it. Yea, if your hearts be cold, prayer is a more likely means to warm them, than the omission of it. To ask whether you may pray while your hearts are cold and backward, is as to ask whether you may labour or come to the fire before you are warm. God's Spirit is more likely to help you in duty, than in the neglect of it.

*Quest. ix.* 'May a man pray that hath no desire at all of the grace which he prayeth for?'

*Answ.* No; because it is no prayer but dissembling; and dissembling is no duty. He that asketh for that which he would not have, doth lie to God in his hypocrisy. But if a man have but cold and common desires (though they reach not to that which will prove them evidences of true grace), he may pray and express those desires which he hath.

*Quest. x.* 'May a man pray that doubteth of his interest in God, and dare not call him father as his child?'

*Answ.* I. There is a common interest in God, which all mankind have, as he is good to all, and as his mercy through Christ is offered to all: and thus those that are not regenerate are his children by creation, and by participation of his mercy; and they may both call him father and pray to

himself, though yet they are unregenerate<sup>p</sup>. 2. God hath an interest in you, when you have no special interest in him: therefore his command must be obeyed, which bids you pray. 3. Groundless doubts will not disoblige you from your duty; else men might free themselves from almost all their obedience.

*Quest. xi.* 'May a wicked or unregenerate man pray, and is he accepted? Or is not his prayer abominable to God?'

*Answ.* 1. A wicked man as a wicked man, can pray no how but wickedly, that is, he asketh only for things unlawful to be asked, or for lawful things to unlawful ends; and this is still abominable to God<sup>q</sup>. 2. A wicked man may have in him some good that proceedeth from common grace, and this he may be obliged to exercise; and so by prayer to express his desires so far as they are good. 3. A wicked man's wicked prayers are never accepted; but a wicked man's prayers which are for good things, from common grace, are so far accepted as that they are some means conducing to his reformation, and though his person be still unjustified, and these prayers sinful, yet the total omission of them is a greater sin. 4. A wicked man is bound at once to repent and pray<sup>r</sup>. And whenever God bids him ask for grace, he bids him desire grace; and to bid him pray, is to bid him repent and be of a better mind: therefore those that reprove ministers for persuading wicked men to pray, reprove them for persuading them to repentance and good desires. But if they pray without that repentance which God and man exhort them to, the sin is theirs: but all their labour is not lost if their desires fall short of saving sincerity; they are under obligations to many duties, which tend to bring them nearer Christ, and which they may do without special, saving grace.

*Quest. xii.* 'May a wicked man pray the Lord's prayer, or be exhorted to use it?'

*Answ.* 1. The Lord's prayer in its full and proper sense, must be spoken by a penitent, believing, justified person<sup>s</sup>;

<sup>p</sup> Psal. xlii. 9. xxii. 1. John ii. 4. Jer. xxxi. 9. Luke xv. 12. 17. 19. Mat. ii. 10.

<sup>q</sup> Acts xv. 17. xvii. 17. viii. 22. Psal. xiv. 4.

<sup>r</sup> Acts viii. 22. Isa. lv. 6, 7.

<sup>s</sup> Heb. xi. 6. Rom. x. 14.

for in the full sense no one else can call him 'Our Father,' (though in a limited sense the wicked may): and they cannot desire the glory of God, and the coming of his kingdom, nor the doing of his will on earth as it is in heaven, and this sincerely, without true grace: (especially those enemies of holiness, that think it too much strictness to do God's will on earth, ten thousand degrees lower than it is done in heaven). Nor can they put up one petition of that prayer sincerely according to the proper sense; no not to pray for their daily bread, as a means of their support while they are doing the will of God, and seeking first his glory and his kingdom. But yet it is possible for them to speak these words from such common desires as are not so bad as none at all.

*Quest.* XIII. 'Is it idolatry to pray to saints or angels? or is it always sinful?'

*Ans.* I love not to be too quarrelsome with other men's devotions; but 1. I see not how praying to an angel or a departed saint can be excused from sin<sup>1</sup>. Because it supposeth them to be every where present, or to be omniscient, and to know the heart, yea to know at once the hearts of all men; or else the speaker pretendeth to know when the saint or angel is present and heareth him, and when not: and because the Scripture doth no where signify that God would have us pray to any such saints or angels; but signifieth enough to satisfy us to the contrary. 2. But all prayer to them is not idolatry, but some is, and therefore we must distinguish, if we will judge righteously. (1.) To pray to saints or angels as supposed omnipresent, omniscient, or omnipotent, is flat idolatry. (2.) To pray to them to forgive us our sins against God, or to justify, or sanctify, or redeem, or save us from hell, or any thing which belongeth to God only to do, is no better than idolatry. (3.) But to pray to them only to do that which belongeth to the guardian, or charitable office that is committed to them, and to think that though they are not omnipresent nor omniscient, nor you know not whether they hear you at this time or not, yet you will venture your prayers at uncertainty, it being but so much labour lost; this I take to be

<sup>1</sup> Psal. lxxv. 2. Isa. lxiii. 16. Psal. cxlv. 18. 1 Kings viii. 39. Acts i. 24. Rom. viii. 27. x. 14. Psal. lxii. 8. Matt. iv. 9.

sinfully superstitious, but not idolatry<sup>u</sup>. (4.) But to pray to living saints or sinners, for that which belongeth to them to give, is no sin at all.

*Quest.* xiv. 'Is a man bound to pray ordinarily in his family?'

*Ans.* I have answered this affirmatively before, and proved it; one grain of grace would answer it better than arguments can do.

*Quest.* xv. 'Must the same man pray secretly that hath prayed with his family or with others?'

*Ans.* 1. Distinguish between those that were the speakers, and those that were not; and 2. Between those that have leisure from greater or more urgent duties, and those that have not. And so, (1.) Those that are free from the urgency of all other duties, which at that time are greater, should pray both in the family and in secret; especially if they were not themselves the speakers, usually they will have the more need of secret prayer; because their hearts in public may more easily flag, and much of their case may be omitted. (2.) But those that have more urgent, greater duties, may take up at that time<sup>x</sup> with family-prayer alone (with secret ejaculations; especially if they were the speakers): having there put up the same requests as they would do in secret.

*Quest.* xvi. 'Is it best to keep set hours for prayer, or to take the time which is fittest at present?'

*Ans.* Ordinarily set times will prove the fittest times; and to leave the time undetermined and uncertain, will put all out of order, and multiply impediments, and hinder duty. But yet when extraordinary cases make the ordinary time unfit, a fitter time must be taken.

*Quest.* xvii. 'Is it lawful to join in family (or church) prayers with ungodly men?'

*Ans.* I join both together, because the cases little differ; for the pastor hath the government of the people in church-worship, as the master of the family hath in family-worship: you may choose at first whether you will be a member of the church or family (if you were not born to it as your privilege). But when you are a member of either, you must be governed as members. And to the case, 1.

<sup>u</sup> Rev. xxii. 8, 9. Col. ii. 18.

<sup>x</sup> Mark that I say but ' at that time.'

You must distinguish between professed wicked men, and those that sin against the profession. 2. And between a family (or church) that is totally wicked, and that which is mixed of good and bad. 3. And between those wicked men whose presence is your sin, because you have power to remove them, and those whose presence is not your sin, nor the matter in your power. 4. And between one that may yet choose of what family he will be, and one that may not. And so I answer, (1.) If it be the fault of the master of the family (or the pastors of the church) that such wicked men are there, and not cast out, then it is their sin to join with them, because it is their duty to remove them; but that is not the case of the fellow-servants (or people), that have no power. (2.) If that wicked men profess their wickedness, after sufficient admonition, you must professedly disown communion with them; and then you are morally separated and discharged, when you have no power locally to separate. (3.) It is your sin to fly from your duty, because a wicked man is there, whom you have no power to remove. (4.) There are many prayers that a wicked man is bound to put up to God; and you must not omit your duty, because he performeth his, though faultily: methinks you should more scruple joining or conversing with one that forsaketh prayer (which is the greater sin) than with one that prayeth. (5.) But if you are free to choose, you are to be blamed if you will not choose a better family (or church) (other things being equal): especially if all the company be wicked.

*Quest.* XVIII. 'But what if the master of a family (or pastor) be a heretic or ungodly?'

*Ans.* You must distinguish between his personal faults, and the faults of his performance or worship. His personal faults (such as swearing or drunkenness, &c.) you must disown, and must not choose a master (or pastor) that is such, while you have your choice, and may have better: but otherwise it is lawful to join with him in doing good, though not in evil. But if the fault of his duty itself be intolerable you must not join with him: now it is intolerable in these cases. 1. In case he be utterly unable to express a prayer, and so make it no prayer. 2. In case he bend his prayers against godliness, and known truth, and charity, and peace,

and so make his prayers but the instruments of mischief, to vent heresy, or malice, and do more hurt than good to others.

*Quest. XIX.* 'May we pray absolutely for outward mercies, or only conditionally?'

*Ans.* You must distinguish, 1. Between a condition spoken of the subject, when we are uncertain whether it be a mercy or not, and an extrinsic condition of the grant. 2. Between a condition of prayer, and a condition of expectation. 3. Between submission to God's will, and a conditional desire or prayer. And so I answer, (1.) It is necessary when we are uncertain whether the thing itself be good or not, that we pray with a subjective conditionality. 'Grant this if it be good:' or 'If it be not good I do not pray for it.' For it is presupposed in prayer that we know the thing prayed for to be good. (2.) But when we know the thing to be a mercy and good, we may pray for it absolutely. (3.) But we may not believe that we shall receive all with an absolute expectation, which we absolutely pray for. For prayer being the expression of desire, that which may be absolutely desired, though not absolutely promised, may be absolutely prayed for. (As our increase or strength of grace, or the conversion of our relations, &c.) (4.) But yet all such must be asked with a submission to the will of God: but that maketh it not properly a conditional form of praying; for when the nature of prayer is as it were to move the will of God, it is not so proper to say, 'Lord, do this if it be thy will already;' or 'Lord, be pleased to do this if it be thy pleasure,' as to say, 'Lord, grant this mercy; but if thou deny it, it is my duty to submit.' So Christ mentioneth both the subjective conditionality and the submission of his will. "If it be possible let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt". As if he had said, Nature requireth me with a simple nolition to be unwilling of the suffering, and if it be consistent with the desired end of my mediatorship, to be desirous to avoid it: but seeing that cannot be, my comparing will commandeth this simple will of self-preservation to submit to thy most perfect will. But if any call this (submission) a condition, the matter is not great.

7 Matt. xxvi. 39.

*Quest. xx.* 'May we pray for all that we may lawfully desire?'

*Ans.* No: for prayer is not only an expression of desire, but also a means to attain the thing desired. And some things may be lawfully desired (at least with a simple velleity), which may not be sought, because they must not be hoped for, where God hath said that he will not grant them. For it is vain to seek that which you have no hope to find: as to desire to see the conversion of the whole world, or to pass to heaven as Enoch without dying, are lawful (by a simple velleity): but all things compared, it is not lawful peremptorily to desire it, without submission; and therefore not to ask it. It is the expression of a compare, determinate desire, which is properly called prayer, being the use of means for the obtaining of that desire; and whatsoever I may so desire, I may pray for; for if there be no hope of it, I may not so desire it. But the desire by way of simple velleity may not be put into a proper prayer, when there is no hope. I must have a simple desire (with submission) to attain a sinless perfection here, even this hour; but because there is no hope, I may not let it proceed to a determinate peremptory desire upon a comparing judgment, nor into a proper prayer. And yet these velleities may be expressed in prayer, though they have not the full nature of a prayer. *Object.* 'But was not Christ's a prayer?' *Ans.* Either Christ as a man was certain that the cup must not pass from him, or uncertain. If you could prove him uncertain, then it is a proper prayer (with submission to his Father's will;) but if he was certain that it was not to pass from him, then it was analogically only a prayer, it being but a representing of his velleity, to his Father, and not of his determinate will, nor was any means to attain that end: and indeed such it was, as if he had said, Father if it had stood with the ends of my office and thy will, I would have asked this of thee; but because it doth not, I submit. And this much we may do.

*Quest. xxi.* 'How then can we pray for the salvation of all the world? must it be for all men collectively? or only for some, excluding no numerical denominate person?'

*Ans.* Just as Christ prayed here in this text, we must express our simple velleity of it to God, as a thing that in

itself is most desirable (as the passing of the cup was unto Christ): but we cannot express a determinate volition, by a full prayer, such as has any tendency as a means to attain that end; because we are certain that God's will is against it, or that it will not be.

*Quest.* xxii. 'May we pray for the conversion of all the nations of the world to Christianity, with a hopeful prayer?'

*Answ.* Yes: For we are not certain that every nation shall not be so converted, though it be improbable.

*Quest.* xxiii. 'May we pray in hope of a proper prayer (as a means to obtain it) that a whole kingdom may be all truly converted and saved?'

*Answ.* Yes: for God hath no way told us that it shall not be; though it be a thing improbable, it is not impossible; and therefore being greatly desirable may be prayed for. Though Christ has told us that his flock is little, and few find the way of life, yet that may stand with the salvation of a kingdom.

*Quest.* xxiv. 'May we pray for the destruction of the enemies of Christ, or of the Gospel, or of the king?'

*Answ.* Not with respect to that which is called God's antecedent will, for so we ought first to pray for their conversion (and restraint till then); but with respect to that called his consequent will we may; that is, we must first pray that they may be restrained and converted, and secondly, that if not, they may be destroyed.

*Quest.* xxv. 'What is to be thought of that which some call a particular faith in prayer? If I can firmly believe that a lawful prayer shall be granted in kind, may I not be sure by a divine faith that it shall be so?'

*Answ.* Belief hath relation to a testimony or revelation. Prayer may be warranted as lawful, if the thing be desirable, and there be any possibility of obtaining it, though there be no certainty, or flat promise; but faith or expectation must be warranted by the promise. If God have promised you the thing prayed for, you may believe that you shall receive it: otherwise your particular faith is a fancy, or a believing of yourselves, and not a believing God that never promised you the thing. *Object.* Matt. xxi. 22. "And all things whatsoever you ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

*Ans.* There are two sorts of faith: the one a belief that is ordinary, having respect to ordinary promises and mercies: the text can be understood of this in no other sense than this: 'All things which I have promised you, you shall receive, if you ask them believingly.' But this is nothing to that which is not promised. The other faith was extraordinary, in order to the working of miracles: and this faith was a potent inward confidence, which was not in the power of the person when he pleased, but was given like an inspiration by the Spirit of God, when a miracle was to be wrought; and this seemeth to be it that is spoken of in the text. And this was built on this extraordinary promise, which was made not to all men in all ages, but to those times when the Gospel was to be sealed and delivered by miracles; and especially to the apostles. So that in these times, there is neither such a promise of our working miracles as they had to believe, nor yet a power to exercise that sort of extraordinary faith. Therefore a strong conceit (though it come in a fervent prayer) that any thing shall come to pass, which we cannot prove by any promise or prophecy, is not to be called any act of divine faith at all, nor to be trusted to.

*Quest.* xxvi. 'But must we not believe that every lawful prayer is accepted and heard of God?'

*Ans.* Yes: but not that it should be granted in the very thing, unless so promised: but you may believe that your prayer is not lost, and that it shall be a means of that which tendeth to your good<sup>a</sup>.

*Quest.* xxvii. 'With what faith must I pray for the souls or bodies of other men; for their conversion or their lives?'

*Ans.* A godly man may pray for wicked relations or others, with more hope than they can pray for themselves, while they remain ungodly: but yet not with any certainty of prevailing for the thing he asketh; for it is not peremptorily promised him. Otherwise Samuel had prevailed for Saul, and Isaac for Esau, and David for Absalom, and the good people for all the wicked; and then no godly parents would have their children lost; no nor any in the world would perish, for godly persons pray for them all. But those prayers are not lost to him that puts them up.

<sup>a</sup> Rom. viii. 28. Isa. xlv. 19.

*Quest. xxviii.* 'With what faith may we pray for the continuance of the church and Gospel to any nation?'

*Answ.* The former answer serveth to this; our hope may be according to the degrees of probability: but we cannot believe it as a certainty by divine faith, because it is not promised by God.

*Quest. xxix.* 'How may we know when our prayers are heard of God, and when not?'

*Answ.* Two ways: sometimes by experience, when the thing itself is actually given us; and always by the promise: when we ask for that which God commandeth us to ask, or promiseth to grant; for we are sure God's promises are all fulfilled. If we ask for the objects of sense (as food, or raiment, or health, &c.), sense will tell us whether our prayers be granted in the same kind that we asked for; but if the questions be of the objects of faith, it is faith that must tell you that your prayers are granted; but yet faith and reason make use of evidences or signs: as if I pray for pardon of sin, and salvation, the promise assureth me that this prayer is granted, if I be a penitent, believing, regenerate person, otherwise not; therefore faith only assureth me that such prayers are granted, supposing that I discern the evidence of my regeneration, repentance, and faith in Christ. So if the question be, whether my prayer for others, or for temporal mercies, be answered in some other kind, and conduce to my good some other way, faith only must tell you this from the promise, by the help of evidences: there are millions of prayers that will all be found answered at death and judgment, which we knew not to be answered any way but by believing it.

*Quest. xxx.* 'What should a Christian of weak parts do, that is dry and barren of matter, and can scarce tell what to say in prayer, but is ready to rise off his knees almost as soon as he hath begun?'

*Answ.* 1. He must not be a stranger to himself, but study well his heart and life; and then he will find such a multitude of inward corruptions to lament, and such a multitude of wants to be supplied, and weaknesses to be strengthened, and disorders to be rectified, and actual sins to be forgiven, that may find him work enough for confessions, complaints, and petitions many days together, if ex-

pression be but as ready as matter. 2. Let him study God, and get the knowledge of his nature, attributes, and works, and then he will find matter enough to aggravate his sin, and to furnish him with the holy praise of God from day to day. As he that is acquainted with all that is in any book, can copiously discourse of it, when he that knoweth not what is in it, hath little to say of it: so he that knoweth God and his works, and himself, and his sins and wants, is acquainted with the best prayer book; and hath always a full heap of matter before him, whenever he cometh to speak to God. 3. Let him study the mystery of man's redemption, and the person, and office, and covenant, and grace of Christ; and he need not want matter for prayer or praise. A very child if he sees but a pedlar's pack opened, where there are abundance of things which he desireth, will learn without book to say, 'O father, buy me this, and give me that, &c.' So will the soul that seeth the treasures and riches of Christ<sup>a</sup>. 4. Let him know the extent of the law of God, and the meaning of the Ten Commandments: if he know but what sins are forbidden in each commandment, and what duties are required, he may find matter enough for confession and petition: and therefore the view of such a brief exposition of the commandment, as you may find in "Mr. Brinsley's True Watch," and in "Dr. Downam's" and "Mr. Whateley's Tables," will be a present furniture for such a use, especially in days of humiliation. So it will also have a particular understanding of the Creed and the Lord's prayer, which will furnish you with much matter. 5. Study well the temptations which you carry about you in your flesh, and meet with in the world, and are suggested by the tempter; and think of the many duties you have to do, and the many dangers and sufferings to undergo, and you will never be unfurnished for matter for your prayers. 6. Observe the daily passages of providence, to yourselves and others: mark how things go with your souls every day, and hearken how it goeth with the church of God, and mark also how it goeth with your neighbours, and sure you will find matter enough for prayer. 7. Think of the heavenly joys that you are going to, and the streets of the New Jerusalem will be large enough for faith to walk in. 8. For words, be ac-

<sup>a</sup> Rev. iii. 17, 18.

quainted with the phrase of Scripture, and you will find provisions for all occasions. Read Dr. Wilkins' book, called "The Gift of Prayer," or "Mr. Brinsley's Watch," or "Mr. E. Parr's Abba Father." 9. Keep up the heart in a reverent, serious, lively frame, and it will be a continual spring to furnish you with matter: when a dead and barren heart hath a dry and sleepy tongue. 10. Join as oft as you can with those that are full and copious in prayer; for example and use will be very great helps. 11. Quench not the Spirit of God that must assist you. 12. In case of necessity, use those books or forms which are more full than you can be yourselves till you come to ability to do better without them. Read further the Directions Part i. Chap. 6. Tit. 2. for more.

*Quest. xxxi.* 'How should a Christian keep up an ordinary fervency in prayer?'

*Answ.* 1. See that knowledge and faith provide you matter: for as the fire will go out if there be not fuel, so fervency will decay, when you are dry, and scarce know what to say; or do not well believe what you understand. 2. Clog not the body either with overmuch eating and drinking, or over-tiring labours: for an active body helpeth much the activity of the mind: and the holiest person will be able but poorly to exercise his fervency, under a dull or languishing body. 3. Rush not suddenly upon prayer, out of a crowd of other businesses, or before your last worldly cares or discourses be washed clean out of your minds. In study and prayer how certain a truth is it, that 'Non bene fit quod occupato animo fit.' Hieron. Epist. 143. ad Paulin. That work is not well done, which is done with a mind that is prepossessed, or busied about other matters: that mind must be wholly free from all other present thoughts or business, that will either pray or study well. 4. Keep a tender heart and conscience that is not senseless of your own concerns; for all your prayers must needs be sleepy, if the heart and conscience be once hardened, seared, or fallen asleep. 5. Take more pains with your hearts than with your tongues. Remember that the success of your work lieth most on them. Bear not with their sluggishness; do by them as you would do by your child or servant that sleepeth by you at prayer; you will not let them snort on, but jog them till you have awakened them.

So do by your hearts when you find them dull. 6. Live as in the continual presence of God ; but labour to apprehend his special presence when you are about to speak to him : ask your hearts how they would behave themselves, if they saw the Lord, or but the lowest of his holy angels? 7. Let faith be called up to see heaven and hell as open all the while before you ; and such a sight will surely keep you serious. 8. Keep death and judgment in your continual remembrance and expectation : remember how all your prayers will be looked back upon. Look not for long life : remember that this prayer for ought you know may be your last ; but certainly you have not long to pray : pray therefore as a dying man should do. 9. Study well the unspeakable necessity of your souls. If you prevail not for pardon, and grace, and preservation, you are undone and lost for ever. Remember that necessity is upon you, and heaven or hell are at the end, and you are praying for more than a thousand lives. 10. Study well the unspeakable excellency of those mercies which you pray for : O think how blessed a life it would be, if you could know God more, and love him more, and live a blameless, heavenly life, and then live with Christ in heaven for ever ! Study these mercies till the flames of love put life into your prayers. 11. Study well the exceeding encouragements that you have to pray and hope : if your hope decay your fervour will decay. Think of the inconceivable love of God, the astonishing mercy shewed to you in your Redeemer, and in the helps of the Holy Spirit, and how Christ is now interceding for you. Think of these till faith make glad your heart ; and in this gladness, let praise and thanksgiving have ordinarily no small share in your prayers ; for it will tire out the heart to be always poring on its own distempers, and discourage it to look on nothing but its infirmities : and then, a sad, discouraged temper will not be so lively a temper, as a thankful, praiseful, joyful temper is : for *‘ Lætitia loquax res est, atque ostentatrix sui : ’* Gladness is a very expressive thing, and apt to shew itself<sup>b</sup>. But *‘ tristes non eloquentes sunt : maxime si ad ægritudinem animi accedat corporis ægritudo. ’* Hieron. Epist. 31. ad Theoph. Alexand. ‘ Sad men are seldom eloquent : especially if the body be sick as well as the

<sup>b</sup> Symmach. Epist. 31. lib. 1. ad Auson.

mind.' 12. Let the image of a praying and a bleeding Christ, and of his praying saints be (not on a wall before your eyes, but) engraven on your minds : is it not desirable to be conformed to them? Had they more need to pray importunately than you? 13. Be very cautelous in the use of forms, lest you grow dull and customary, and before you are aware your tongues use to go without your hearts. The heart is apt to take its ease when it feeleth not some urgent instigation. And though the presence of God should serve the turn without the regard of man, yet with imperfect men the heart is best held to its duty when both concur. And therefore most are more cautelous of their words, than of their thoughts : as children will learn their lesson better, when they know their masters will hear them it, than when they think he will not. Now in the use of a form of prayer, a sleepy heart is not at all discerned by man, but by God only ; for the words are all brought to your hand, and may be said by the most dull and careless mind ; but when you are put to express your own desire, without such helps, you are necessitated to be so mindful of what you do, as to form your desires into apt expressions, or else your dulness or inattentiveness will be observed even by men ; and you will be like one that hath his coach, or horse, or crutches taken off him, that if he have legs must use them, or else lie still. And to them that are able, it is often a great benefit to be necessitated to use the ability they have ; though to others it is a loss to be deprived of their helps<sup>c</sup>. I speak not this against the lawfulness of a form of prayer ; but to warn you of the temptations which are in that way. 14. Join oft with the most serious, fervent Christians ; for their fervour will help your hearts to burn, and carry you along with them. 15. Destroy not fervency by adulterating it, and turning it into an affected earnestness of speech, and loudness of voice, when it is but an hypocritical cover for a frozen, empty heart.

*Quest.* xxxii. ' May we look to speed ever the better for any thing in ourselves, or in our prayers? Is not that to trust in them, when we should trust on Christ alone?'

*Answ.* We must not trust in them for any thing that is Christ's part and not their's : but for their own part it is a

<sup>c</sup> See Mr. Mayo's Directions on this case.

duty to trust in them, (however quarrelsome persons may abuse or cavil at the words :) and he that distrusteth prayer in that which is its proper office, will pray to little purpose : and he that thinks that faithful, fervent, importunate, understanding prayer, is no more effectual with God for mercy, than the babbling of the hypocrite, or the ignorant, careless, unbelieving, sleepy prayers of the negligent, will either not care how he prayeth, or whether he prayeth at all or not. Though our persons and prayers have nothing that is meritorious with God, in point of commutative justice, nor as is co-ordinate with the merits of Christ, yet have they conditions without which God will not accept them, and are meritorious in subordination to the merit of Christ, in point of paternal governing justice according to the covenant of grace ; as an obedient child deserveth more love, and praise, and reward from his father than the disobedient : as the ancient fathers commonly used the word merit <sup>d</sup>.

*Quest. xxxiii.* ‘ How must that person and prayer be qualified that shall be accepted of God ?’

*Ans.* There are several degrees of God’s acceptance. I. That which is but from common grace, may be accepted as better than none at all. II. That which hath a promise of some success, especially as to pardon and salvation must be, 1. From a penitent, believing, holy person. 2. It must proceed from true desire, and be sincere ; and have renewed faith and repentance in some measure. 3. It must be put up in confidence on the merit and intercession of Christ. 4. It must be only for things lawful. 5. And to a lawful end. III. That which is extraordinarily accepted and successful, must be extraordinary in all these respects ; in the person’s holiness, and in renewed faith and fervent importunity, and holy love.

*Tit. 3. Special Directions for Family Prayer.*

*Direct. 1.* ‘ Let it be done rather by the master of the family himself than any other, if he be competently able, though others be more able ; but if he be utterly unfit, let it rather be done by another than not at all.’ And by such

<sup>d</sup> See my “ Confession ” of this at large.

an one as is most acceptable to the rest, and like to do most good.

*Direct. II.* ' Let prayer be suited to the case of those that join in it, and to the condition of the family : ' and not a few general words spoken by rote, that serve all times and persons alike.

*Direct. III.* ' Let it neither be so short as to end before their hearts can be warm and their wants expressed (as if you had an unwilling task to slubber over, and would fain have done); nor yet so tedious as to make it an ungrateful burden to the family.'

*Direct. IV.* ' Let not the coldness and dulness of the speaker rock the family asleep : ' but keep awake your own heart, that you may keep the rest awake, and force them to attention.

*Direct. V.* ' Pray at such hours as the family may be least distracted, sleepy, tired, or out of the way.'

*Direct. VI.* ' Let other duties concur, as oft as may be, to assist in prayer : ' as reading, and singing psalms.

*Direct. VII.* ' Do all with the greatest reverence of God that possibly you can : ' not seeming reverence, but real ; that so more of God than of man may appear in every word you speak.

*Direct. VIII.* ' The more the hearers are concerned in it, the more regard you must have to the fitness of your expressions : ' for before others, words must be regarded, lest they be scandalized, and God and prayer be dishonoured. And if you cannot do it competently without, use a well composed form.

*Direct. IX.* ' Let not family prayer be used at the time of public prayer in the church,' nor preferred before it, but prefer public prayer, though the manner were more imperfect than your own.

*Direct. X.* ' Teach your children and servants how to pray themselves,' that they may not be prayerless when they come among those that cannot pray. John and Christ taught their disciples to pray.

*Tit. 4. Special Directions for Secret Prayer.*

*Direct. i.* ' Let it be in as secret a place as conveniently you can ; that you may not be disturbed.' Let it be done so that others may not be witnesses of it, if you can avoid it ; and yet take it not for your duty, to keep it unknown that you pray secretly at all : for that will be a snare and scandal to them.

*Direct. ii.* ' Let your voice be suited to your own help and benefit, if none else hear you.' If it be needful to the orderly proceeding of your own thoughts, or to the warming of your own affections, you may use a voice ; but if others be within hearing, it is very unfit.

*Direct. iii.* ' In secret let the matter of your prayers be that which is most peculiarly your own concernment, or those secret things that are not fit for public prayer, or are there passed by ;' yet never forgetting the highest interest of Christ, and the Gospel, and the world and church.

*Direct. iv.* ' Be less solicitous about words in secret than with others, and lay out your care about the heart.' For that is it that God most esteemeth in your prayers.

*Direct. v.* ' Do not through carnal unwillingness grow into a neglect of secret prayer, when you have time : nor yet do not superstitiously tie yourselves to just so long time, whether you are fit, or at leisure from greater duties or not.' But be the longer when you are most fit and vacant, and the shorter when you are not. To give way to every carnal backwardness, is the sin on one side ; and to resolve to spend so long time, when you do but tire yourselves, and sleep, or business, or distemper maketh it a lifeless thing, is a sin on the other side. Avoid them both.

*Direct. vi.* ' A melancholy person who is unfit for much solitariness and heart-searchings, must be much shorter, if not also seldomer in secret prayers, than other Christians that are capable of bearing it :' and they must instead of that which they cannot do, be the more in that which they can do ; as in joining with others, and in shorter ejaculations, besides other duties ; but not abating their piety in the main upon any pretence of curing melancholy.