

This we firmly believe is the most emphatic of all the arguments for missions, and the all-sufficient compensation for the self-sacrifices which a true missionary life always and necessarily implies and involves. It is, however, a truth that belongs to the highest altitude both of divine teaching and human experience, that there is but one way for man to command the supernatural, and that way lies through the closet. Real prayer is a divine inbreathing and therefore has a divine outreaching; it is of the essence of the miraculous, and works essentially miraculous results. •

The power of prayer is the perpetual sign of God's working in the human soul and among men. It is the standing miracle of the ages. Upon no one thing does the word of God so frequently and so heavily lay the tress of both injunction and invitation; to no one agency or instrumentality are effects so marvelous both assured and attributed. Nothing marks the decline from primitive piety, and the virtual apostasy of the modern church, more than the secondary place assigned to prayer both in the individual life and in public worship, and the formalism that substitutes liturgical, or, still worse, mechanically tame, stale, lifeless saying of prayers, for prayers found first of all in the suppliant's heart.

We have affirmed that prayer can be interpreted only by conceding a superhuman element. Much of the benefit and blessing that comes to praying souls may doubtless be traced to natural and secondary causes, but in numberless other cases we are compelled either to deny the fact of the answer or else to admit a supernatural factor. If we deny divine interposition, there are events and experience in the actual history of every praying soul which, without that interposition, would be as inexplicable as the deliverance of the three holy children from the furnace, or of Daniel from the den of lions.

Those who are familiar with the biography of Jonathan Edwards must have been struck with the fact that he lived on the verge of the unseen world, and was in peculiar contact and communication with it. From ten years of age, his prayers were simply astonishing, alike for the faith they exhibited and the effects which they wrought or secured. The intellect of Edwards reminds us of a cherub, and his heart, of a seraph. And, therefore, we can distrust neither his self-knowledge nor his candor. His communion with God was neither a dream of an excited fancy nor an invention of an impostor. Yet it was so rapt and rapturous, that the extraordinary views which he obtained of the glory, love and grace of the Son of God so overcome him that for an hour he would be flooded with tears, weeping aloud. Such prayer brought power not less wonderful than that of Peter at Pentecost. His sermon at Enfield on "Sinners in the hands of an angry God," terrible as it was, and delivered without a gesture, was clothed with such unction that it produced effects almost unparalleled. Persons in the audience leaped to their feet and clasped the pillars of the meeting-house, as if they literally felt their feet sliding into ruin.

God chose that one man, in the midst of an apostasy from God that well-nigh wrecked religious society in England and America, to turn, by his prayers, the entire tide of church-life from channels of worldliness and wickedness into a new course of evangelistic and missionary activity. In 1747, Jonathan Edwards pealed out his trumpet call, summoning the whole Christian Church to prayer. In his remarkable tract in which he pleads for a "visible union of God's people in an extraordinary prayer," he refers to the day of fasting and prayer observed the year previous at Northampton, and which was

followed that same night by the utter dispersion of the French Armada, under the Duke d'Anville; and Edward adds, "This is the nearest parallel with God's wonderful work of old in times of Moses, Joshua and Hezekiah; of any that have been in these latter ages of the world."

That trumpet peal to universal prayer, one hundred and forty-two years ago, marks a turning point in modern history, and especially in modern missions. Edwards felt that only direct divine interposition would meet the emergency, and his whole tract shows that he expected such divine working in answer to believing prayer. The results that followed reveal anew the fact of which we need to be practically convinced beyond a doubt, that, if the Church of God will but pray as she ought, every other needed blessing and enlargement will come to her missionary work.

To emphasize this truth is the sole purpose of this article, and to impart that needed emphasis we must go back to Edwards' day and get a sufficiently high point of prospect to command the whole horizon. Only an intelligent survey of the state of the world and the church a hundred and fifty years ago, would reveal the desperate darkness that drove disciples to the mountain tops for communion with God, and keep them on their knees till the light broke forth as the morning.

At the opening of the eighteenth century spiritual declination was so widespread, that a prospect more hopelessly dreary has not alarmed true disciples since the dark ages. Hume, Gibbon, Bolingbroke, the giants of infidelity, were acknowledged leaders in English society. In France, Voltaire, Rousseau and Madame de Pompadour ruled at the royal court, and at the tribune of the people. In Germany, Frederick the Great, the friend and companion of Voltaire, flaunted his deistic opinions and dealt out to his antagonists kicks with his thick boots. "Flippancy and frivolity in the church, doism in theology, lasciviousness in the novel and the drama," these were the conditions that prevailed in England, which Isaac Taylor declared was "in a condition of virtual heathenism," while Samuel Blair affirmed that in America "religion lay a-dying."

And what was the pulpit of those days doing to offset this awful condition of apostasy? Nothing! Natural theology without a single distinctive doctrine of Christianity; cold, formal morality or barren orthodoxy constituted the staple teaching both in the established church and the dissenting chapel. The best sermons, so-called, were only ethical essays, a thousand of which held not enough gospel truth to guide one soul to the Saviour of sinners. There seemed to be a tacit agreement to let the devil alone; instead of Satan being chained so that he could work no damage, it was the church that was in bonds so that she could work no deliverance. The grand and weighty truths for whose sake Hooper and Latimer dared the stake, and Baxter and Bunyan went to jail, seemed like the relics of a remote past, curiosities of archeology and palontology. A flood of irreligion, immorality, infidelity, flooded the very domain of Christendom. Collins and Tindall stigmatized Christianity as a system of priestcraft. Woolston declared the miracles of the Bible to be allegories and myths, and Whiston denounced them as imposition and frauds. By Clark and Priestly, Arianism and Socinianism were openly taught, and to heresy was thus given the currency of fashionable sanction. Blackstone, the legal commentator, went the rounds from church to church till he had heard every clergyman of note in London; and his melancholy testimony was that not one discourse had he heard among them all which had in it more Christianity than the writ-