

partially fulfilled before. Whatever may be the full extent of the practical results of this season of united prayer, it must certainly gladden the hearts and refresh the spirit of God's people, to witness such a public manifestation of Christian unity, an exhibition that presents to the world a oneness of faith, at once *overtopping* and *underlying* all differences in denominational opinion, and which should inspire us with a readier trust in the extension of Christ's kingdom. Christians throughout the world have thus given formal and public expression to the need and efficacy of prayer, and surely, as the need of the human heart is constant, and the efficacy of prayer unchanged, we ought not to allow ourselves, in retiring from this delightful season, either to forget the hourly pressure of the one, nor fail to shew our intelligent appreciation of the other. It is to be feared that many, though taught the *propriety* of prayer, may lack intelligence, in order to the profitable enjoyment of that duty.

That we may pray aright we must entertain correct conceptions of the character of Him to whom we pray. "He that cometh unto God must believe that God is,"—not merely that there is a God, nor that the Being we worship possesses the character our wayward fancies may assign Him. This the pagan does when he attributes human passions to his divinity, and subjects him equally with the worshipper to the influences of ever-changing circumstances. We must believe that *God is as the Bible reveals Him,—just and righteous, certainly; but kind and merciful in dealing with His creatures.* Let us not come burdened with the dread of slavish fear, trembling lest God, anxious to punish, should smite; but with the confidence of children, humbled beneath the thought of our own unworthiness, and yet inspired by the assurance of a loving Father's readiness to forgive. Even without the Bible man could not rid himself of the thought of God; but that thought would receive its complexion from man's ignorance of the Divine character. Christ came to reveal God as a Father grieved at the waywardness of his prodigal children, but yearning in tender solicitude for their return to a consciousness of his love. True prayer recognises the Divine Being in this relationship, and consequently the burdened heart can come to the mercy-seat confident of relief. God is the hearer of prayer. Of this we must feel assured, while we lay our petitions before him. Infidelity may sneer at the Christian on his knees; and the sceptic, wise in his own conceits, may raise theoretical difficulties, but an appeal to a believer's experience, or an examination of the history of the Church, proves beyond the possibility of doubt, that the God whom we worship, and whom the Holy Spirit has taught us in the language of adoption to address as our Father, does hear the prayer of a trusting heart. Not occasionally, at stated periods, are our petitions received. God has not appointed certain set hours specially devoted to an audience with his creatures, so that unless we come at such times we find no access to the Divine presence. This world is not the enlargement of the sad picture of which the pool of Bethesda is the centre. True, in the multitude "of impotent folk," burdened with their own weakness, helpless in their spiritual paralysis, each one with his peculiar ailment, this world presents a spectacle intensely interesting on account of its wretchedness; but the afflicted are not told that the efficacy of healing mercy is periodical, and that unless they watch their opportunity, and apply for remedy at those stated periods, they must be like the "impotent man" in helpless affliction. Such an arrangement would subject the Divine Being to the suspicion of despotism, impotence or indifference,—*despotism*, inasmuch as His mercy is moved only when His own absolute will may determine,—*impotence*, seeing that the efficacy of that mercy is limited, and