

oppressed. Thus all classes may be glad and together rejoice, and the sweet incense of thanksgiving ascend from every home. Thus He who gives life to the dead, and who has established a kingdom that shall never be moved, will receive that homage which is His due ; it is His right to reign in every heart, and surely all mankind with reverence, gratitude and praise, should acknowledge, worship and adore Him.

Some one has said that a prayerless Christian is as great an impossibility as a pulseless man. In view of this truth, it is manifestly an inadequate conception to regard prayer solely in the light of a duty, or even as a privilege merely. It is a necessity on which depends the very life of the soul. No more can the body thrive without food than the soul can grow in grace without constant intercourse with heaven.

The question naturally arises, what is the peculiar element in prayer which renders it so essential to advancement in the divine life ? This is a question to which our own spiritual consciousness, if properly developed, ought to render an immediate solution. But is it not sadly true that many of us have hitherto come very far short of attaining to that stage in the Christian course where we feel it a necessity of our frail human nature to pray ? In justice to our own consciences are we not compelled to make the confession that we are oft times impelled to our knees from the force of habit or from a cold sense of duty, rather than from a sense of need or a thirsting after God ? Such a condition as this is very much to be deplored ; for just as a lost appetite is a sure sign of physical derangement, so indifference or formality in prayer is a no less certain indication of spiritual disease and declension. This, however, is no new fact. Bitter experience brings it home to our hearts almost every day of our lives. We know the coldness and insipidity which characterizes our most heartfelt petitions. We have even striven after the attainment of deeper earnestness in our devotions, but have failed to realize the sacred warmth which we would expect to experience as the result of closer communion with God. What, then, it might be asked, is the cause of this spiritual imbecility ? How comes it that despite our most sincere efforts after a closer walk with God, we are constantly burdened with a painful sense of our alienation from him, conscious that we are indeed following afar off ? To my mind one reason for this lack of progress is to be found in the unworthy views which we are so apt to take of prayer, its proper object and its true efficacy. There is such a thing as desiring blessings, good in themselves, not for the sake of rendering ourselves more pleasing to God, but in order that we may become more commendable in our own eyes. Our very aspirations after holiness, if not carefully directed, may thus become serious barriers to our spiritual progress.