





Liberal thought is often seen to be too marginal a concept. The reality, the pervasiveness, and seriousness of sin cannot be overstated, but needs to be stated in a context which relates it to our total psychic life: Sin and finiteness; guilt and feeling guilty; forgiveness, human and divine.

## **Chapter 13: Prayer and the Peace of the World**

Praying for peace: The requirements for peace; prayer and works of good will. Of all the many things the world now needs, none is more needed than an upsurge of vital, God-centered, intelligently-grounded prayer.











grief, and guilt are canvassed. Since the problem of peace is not only within man but in proportions of terrible seriousness within nations, the final chapter surveys the requirements of world peace and suggests what prayer can contribute to the peace of the world.

That these three main approaches needed to be made I have felt no doubt. It is at these points that Christians, and particularly laymen, have been baffled in their attempts to pray within the conditions of the common life. There are more manuals for cloisters than for the common day -- and most of us do not live in cloisters. But in what order should the theology, the methodology, and the psychology be placed? Most people are more concerned with their own troubles than with Christian faith, more eager to know what to do than what to believe particularly if the believing requires rigorous thinking. Would it not be best, then, to begin where people are?

Perhaps so. And perhaps it is my theological bias that has determined the order as it now stands. Nevertheless, there is a reason, psychological as well as logical, for putting the foundations first. A great many people have tried to get the fruits of prayer without the roots, and as a result have missed both. There is nothing to hinder anyone who wants to from beginning in the middle or at the end of the book. But if he does, I cherish the hope that he will then read backward to the beginning.















































































































Still, still with Thee, when purple morning breaketh,  
When the bird waketh, and the shadows flee.

or

Come, my soul, thou must be waking;  
Now is breaking  
O'er the earth another day:  
Come to Him who made this splendor;  
See thou render  
All thy feeble strength can pay.

Or one may simply, in a few brief words, commend himself and those he loves to God and ask God's blessing on the day's work. This morning prayer of orientation, sometimes called in writings of the Christian mystics "the prayer of intention," is a vital setting of the keynote for the day. If one wakes up tired, cross, and blue, or if the day outside is cheerless and drab, there is no better way to get sunshine in one's soul. If pricks from the day before still rankle and one feels harsh toward a member of the family, one's roommate, or one's employer, a prayer to let such stings be forgotten in loving understanding can amazingly make the mood over. If one is hurried and tense at the thought of the number of things to be done, there is no better channel to relaxation. It may be that it was our own feverishness, not God's intention, that made us think we had to do so much all at once! In any case, if it has to be done, God will see us through it. Such prayer thoughts ought not to be engaged in simply for their therapeutic value, but they bring the best kind of therapy.

This time of morning orientation is not to be confused with the traditional "morning watch" or "quiet hour." The latter is not a feasible possibility in many homes where breakfast must immediately be got, served, and eaten, clean clothes found for this or that member of the family, the children packed off to school, trains or buses caught, a host of other immediacies attended to. This is not to decry the practice of taking an unhurried hour or half-hour for morning devotions. Some individuals and fewer families -- mainly childless ones -- succeed in doing it, and give witness to its worth. However, to advocate it as a prime essential for all is to speak words that have no ring of realism within the conditions of most modern families, and this fact should be admitted. What has been suggested here is a brief, silent but very vital placing of the soul before God as the first act of the day. This is something which anybody can do under any circumstances.

### **At Bedtime**

For most persons bedtime, in spite of fatigue, is a time of greater relaxation and leisure, and thus offers more opportunity for unhurried communion with God. Society tells us what we have to do next when the alarm clock rings; most adults can fix their own time of going to bed. It is,

of course, always possible to go to bed earlier, get up earlier, and thus make time in the morning for unhurried prayer. But the answer to this possibility is that few people do it or seem likely to! If prayer is to be effective in the common life, it must reckon with the common life as it is.

Prayer at bedtime has advantages which may well make it one's time of extended personal devotions. But whether this is done or not, some things of a distinctive nature belong in evening prayer.

Bedtime is a proper time for thanking God for all the joys, opportunities, and even the duties of the day. Modern Christianity is apt to look back upon the religion of Puritan days as joyless; yet as we have earlier suggested it may be questioned whether there is not a greater lack of joy in modern religion, with so many of its exponents tied up in nervous knots. Whether one says with the psalmist, "I will rejoice in the God of my salvation," or with Paul in prison, "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I will say, Rejoice," one needs to take time to think of the many things one has to rejoice in. There is no better time than at the end of a hard day, when otherwise one may go to bed to think of one's troubles and toss all night in restless agitation.

Likewise, bedtime is the best time to take unhurried account of one's shortcomings, *provided* one leaves them with God and his understanding mercy. To think in an agony of remorse of all one has done wrong, whether with sinful intention or errors of judgment, and to be inwardly upset over the good works one meant to get done and failed to do, is a poor frame of mind in which to try to go to sleep. It sets a train of thoughts going in which self-pity, self-accusation, unhappy memories, harsh thoughts about those nearest, and a buzz of intentions for the next day are mixed in an uneasy jumble. In this state of mind sleep either fails to come or gives so little refreshment that one wakes up worn out. Whether one is overwhelmed with fears, anxieties, angers, thoughts of one's own hard lot, or weighed down with remorse, the best curative is to lay both one's troubles and one's sins before God, *and leave them there*.

What is actually done far more often, and far less effectively, is to get to sleep by taking a sedative. Temporarily this seems to take care of the matter of uneasy thoughts. But indulged in more and more frequently, it induces sleep by dulling one's mental agility, and thus one's general capacity for good work. Being by nature a depressant, it depresses the spirits until one is cross and blue next day without knowing why, and this sets up a new chain of unhappy thoughts. Quiet bedtime surrender of the soul to God would in most cases make all this unnecessary. A modern poet, Margaret Widdemer, has put these arresting, words on the lips of a girl desperate for peace of mind.

Luminal is what you take  
 For heartbreak.  
 That is all,  
 Except sometimes allonal  
 Or veronal.

Prayer was used, so we hear say,  
In a sentimental day;  
You arose from kneeling, sure  
God and you'd somehow endure.

But such gestures are for us,  
One would say, ridiculous;  
Out of date  
For the young sophisticate. . . .

"Take it with a little water,"  
Says the specialist, "my daughter,  
One at night and three a day,  
It will wash your griefs away."

Saints who suffered long, help me! . . .

Now we have a drug store god

With glass tubelets for His rod.

Three along your business day,  
One the hour girls used to pray,  
Count them for a rosary,  
Three and one: one and three:  
Luminal. Allonal. Veronal.

That is all. (From "Modern Hymn for Grief" from *Hill Garden*. Copyright 1936 by Margaret Widdemer, and reprinted by permission of Rinehart & Co., Inc.)

Brother Lawrence, knowing no formal psychology, showed himself a prime discerner of the power of the subconscious when he wrote, "Those whose spirits are stirred by the breath of the Holy Spirit go forward even in sleep." Bedtime prayer with its commitment to God of one's total self and one's loved ones is good religion, and ought to be engaged in as an act of religious faith. It is also good psychology, and good medicine for many of the ills that beset our nervous, fevered age.

Just as the first thought in the morning ought to be of God, so the last thought should be of him. There are various ways to do this. After one has made whatever personal inventory and commitment one desires, it may be helpful to repeat in a relaxed mood some short, meaningful phrase such as "God is love," or "In thee I rest," or "Be of good cheer," or "The peace of God,

which passeth all understanding," or "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Or one may wish to repeat a line or two from a familiar hymn, such as

Drop Thy still dewes of quietness,  
Till all our strivings cease,

or

O Love that wilt not let me go,  
I rest my weary soul in Thee.

Others fortunate enough to have the memory stored with great Bible passages may well repeat one of them. Unfortunately there has been so little memorizing of the Bible during the past generation that few are equipped to do this. However, the Twenty-third Psalm, probably known to more persons than any part of the Bible except the Lord's Prayer, is ideal for this purpose. Whatever is used ought to be familiar and simple enough so that strain on the memory will not thwart relaxation or banish the mood of prayer.

To others, any such procedures seem artificial. The thing to do is to pray from the heart and let it go at that! Prayer ought certainly to be from the heart. Some can do this better without any patterns, and any repetition of words may seem like autosuggestion. Others are greatly helped by such channeling of thought. Only experience can determine how to do it most vitally.

### **Grace Before Meals**

Some observations about grace at meals were made in the preceding chapter. There are good reasons why this practice ought to be maintained if it possibly can be without artificiality and tension. In a sense it is a sacramental act, imparting to every common meal a touch of divine dignity. Eating is the most communal of all human activities. To eat together is not merely to satisfy jointly the biological urge to be fed, or even to engage in a common cultural pursuit. To eat together is to cement human bonds of fellowship, and these can best be made firm and deep when God is recognized as present in the process. This makes the saying of grace important from the human angle. There is, of course, beyond this the religious obligation to give thanks to God for his provision for our need. The procuring, preparation, and consumption of food would be less of a taken-for-granted routine if prayers of gratitude came more naturally from the soul.

Some questions of method are likely to arise. Shall one teach and encourage the children to say grace? Yes, if this is not an evasion on the part of their more self-conscious parents. A child's grace with true theology in it to which adults can respond is the familiar quatrain,

God is great and God is good,

And we thank Him for this food;  
By His hand we all are fed,  
Give us, Lord, our daily bread.

Shall one use one's own words or a set form of prayer? Both, on occasion. The most familiar of all graces is "Bless, O Lord, this food to our use, and us in thy service." It would be unfortunate never to use this, and equally unfortunate never to use anything more spontaneous. Shall grace be silent? Sometimes, when members of the group are mature enough to know what to do with the silence. But silence ought not to be the cover for an embarrassed vacuum. Shall grace be sung? Sometimes. John Wesley's grace is admirable for family as well as for larger group singing,

Be present at our table, Lord;  
Be here and everywhere adored.  
Thy mercies bless, and grant that we  
May feast in fellowship with thee. (The original version reads "Shall feast in Paradise with thee." In spite of Wesley's injunction not to tinker with his poetry, fellowship with God is to most persons a more congenial spiritual note than feasting in Paradise).

Shall one say grace when eating alone? The tendency is not to--but is there not some gratitude to be expressed even by oneself? Shall one bow his head for silent grace when eating in public? Circumstances and one's own sense of fitness must determine.

The saying of grace ought to be the occasion, not only for personal and family expression of gratitude but for a wider outreach of spirit. To thank God for his bountiful provision for our needs with no thought of the many who suffer is a form of self-centeredness contrary to the mood of true prayer. Yet here, again, there must be variety and naturalness. To pray vocally for the hungry at every meal is apt to mechanize this prayer into a routine. The best forms of grace are those that come from the deep concerns of the heart with infinite variety of expression.

### *"Pray Without Ceasing"*

Paul's injunction to "pray without ceasing" has been a puzzle to many minds. To pray obviously requires some direction of attention toward God. But if one's attention were always on God how could one have any mind left for the things that have to be done?

What Paul probably meant was to be always in a state of receptivity toward God. To live a life always open and responsive to God is what Jesus did, and what every Christian ought to try to do.

What this means for prayer is not that we should attempt the psychological impossibility of

giving at the same time full attention to God and equally full attention to the matters at hand. Nor does it mean divided attention, such as ensues when one goes ahead doing his work but with part of his mind on pains in his body or haunting worries. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," is from the Old Testament but it is also an injunction to the Christian to be placed alongside of "pray without ceasing."

How, then, shall we do it? Again Brother Lawrence is an excellent teacher. There is no evidence in his *Practice of the Presence of God* that he found it possible to think consciously of God all the time. What he did was to be always responsive to God's "inward drawings," and to think about God so many times during the day in the midst of his work that he felt a calm assurance of God's presence. A passage in one of the letters written about him describes this admirably:

If sometimes he is a little too much absent from the *Divine Presence*, which happens often when he is engaged in his outward business, God presently makes Himself felt in his soul to recall him. He answers with exact fidelity to these inward drawings, either by an elevation of his heart toward God, or by a meek and loving regard to Him; or by such words as love forms upon these occasions, as for instance, *My God, behold me, wholly Thine: Lord, make me according to Thy heart*. And then it seems to him (as in effect he feels it) that this God of love, satisfied with such few words, reposes again, and rests in the depth and center of his soul. The experience of these things gives him such an assurance that God is always deep within his soul, that no doubt of it can arise, whatever may betide.

There is nothing in this that any Christian might not do. To do it would mean not only a great deepening of the spiritual life, but by the release of tension a great increase in the effectiveness of one's work. Little prayers of a single sentence in the midst of things -- petitions for help to do the work right, joyous thanksgiving, a plea for forgiveness, commitment to God to go forward without worrying over what is ahead or what has already happened -- such prayers can make the day over from monotony or defeat to triumph. Add to these prayers for oneself a word asking the blessing of God on one's associates, and one may be surprised to find how God gives grace to work with even the most difficult.

Traditionally these have been called "ejaculatory" prayers. This does not mean that they need to be said audibly, though there are times and seasons for a good "Hallelujah." (This means "Praise the Lord!") An ejaculation is something "thrust out," and little silent thrusts of prayer throughout the waking hours, in work or leisure, can so shape the tenor of one's spirit that it is possible to live serenely and zestfully in the midst of whatever comes. The great Christians one knows, though they probably do not talk much about it, are almost certainly those who in this sense pray without ceasing.

We are not finished. What is most often meant by private prayer, the time of extended personal devotions, is yet to be discussed. However, this large field can be better handled in a separate

chapter.

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# Prayer and the Common Life by Georgia Harkness

## Part 2: Methods of Prayer

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## Chapter 8: Private Devotions

The occasions of prayer discussed in the preceding chapter require very little extra time in the day's work. They can be engaged in helpfully by persons of any degree of spiritual maturity -- from the person who has never prayed in his life but wants to begin to the saint of ripe experience. I have emphasized them because if prayer is to be effective in the common life, it must become a feasible possibility to people where they are, not merely a recommendation as to what might well be done in some other state.

### **The Period of Private Devotions**

However, we must now give more particular attention to what is generally the theme in discussions of private prayer -- the time of extended personal devotions. In enumerating the principal occasions of prayer it was said that there ought to be a period of regular, unhurried communion with God, planned for and not left to the mercy of circumstances. This I repeat, for some things I shall say about it are unorthodox. It is often urged that an hour a day, or a minimum of a half-hour, be set aside for this purpose. Some who are masters in the art of prayer seem to imply that no one can really maintain a well-fertilized prayer life without giving this amount of time to it. One ought to take time, it is said, to pass beyond any conscious thought to a joyous sense of the divine Presence, and dwell in this mood until life is reoriented.

With this view I agree in part, but only in part. One ought to take time -- whatever the time required -- to relax, to direct attention from self to God, to pray to God in a receptive mood, to feel spiritual refreshment and direction from God's presence. This can come in five minutes, in ten, in thirty, in sixty -- or it may not come at all from any length of time. To sit or kneel day-

dreaming for thirty or sixty minutes is less likely to lead to spiritual power than a few minutes of vital fellowship. Where there is true love between human persons, it does not take long to establish rapport and companionship again after the absence of one of them. If one seeks to live continually in God's presence, the time of special prayer is simply a further advance along channels already open.

It is hoped that no one will take the above paragraph as an alibi for not bothering to have an unhurried time of personal prayer! It is easy to let "the care of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches," that is, our many economic and material interests, "choke the word." It is against this danger, probably, that the advice is given, "Pray by the clock if you cannot pray by the heartbeat." (In E. Stanley Jones' pamphlet *How to Pray*. In spite of a minor difference of opinion at this point, I commend it highly for its many practical and spiritually vital suggestions.) Nevertheless, I doubt that prayer by the clock is ever effective unless it has in its content that which makes the clock unnecessary.

The selection of a time for this unhurried period depends wholly on the circumstances of the individual. The only essential principle is that it must be a time of leisure and freedom from interruption. A morning hour is generally advocated, and for ministers and others relatively free to fix their own schedules this is probably the best time. A period early in the day gives opportunity to gather resources and get orientation for the day's demands. Yet for many persons, as was noted earlier, the social situation makes this -- if not impossible -- at least so difficult that another time had better be chosen. For those in school or business, there may be a near-by church or chapel where one can go sometime during the day to be alone, and by slowing down from the usual rush, gain physical as well as spiritual refreshment. For others, the only free time in the day is the evening -- perhaps late in the evening. However complicated one's existence, there is nobody who cannot find a few minutes somewhere in the day to be set aside regularly for this purpose.

What shall be done in this period? I venture to outline a plan, not because there is only one way of doing, but because many people are frankly at a loss to know what to do with a time of private prayer if they set it aside. They can, of course, read a page in *The Upper Room* or some other devotional manual -- but beyond that, what? What is proposed here is only suggestive, but may offer some direction. There seem to me four essential steps.

## **Relaxation**

The first is *relaxation*. This means one ought to get as comfortable as possible without going to sleep. To pray very long on one's knees may make one, not God-conscious, but knee-conscious! For this reason it is usually better to sit in a comfortable chair or lie on one's back, with the weight as evenly distributed as possible. Then relax the body's tense muscles. Most people do not realize how tense they are until they stop to think of it. This is a good time to think of it, and physical relaxation is an important introduction to spiritual composure. There

are techniques for physical relaxation, (For an account of such techniques see Hornell Hart, *Living Religion*, David Fink, *Release from Nervous Tension*, Edmund Jacobson, *You Must Relax*, or Josephine Rathbone, *Relaxation*. but even without explicit knowledge of such techniques a great deal can be accomplished if one will simply sit or lie quietly and "go limp." There is good psychotherapy in the oft-quoted remark of the Negro mammy who said, "When I works, I works hard. When I sets, I sets loose."

With the body as relaxed as you can make it, relax the mind. This does not mean that one should get tense again trying to think of nothing! God does not require of us empty minds. It means, rather, that one should as far as possible put away extraneous thoughts and settle down to the matter at hand. The reason for selecting a time of leisure is that if one tries to do this with a host of duties demanding immediate attention, very few people can exercise enough self-discipline to still the mind before God.

In order to divert the mind from all that one has just been doing or must presently do, it is necessary to put something positive in the place of these clamorous thoughts. Just as a church service usually begins with a call to worship, one may well make for himself a private call to worship. This can be a simple, "Lord, here am I; fill me with thy Spirit," or Samuel's "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth," or the words of a familiar hymn such , as

Spirit of God, descend upon my heart,

or

Lord, speak to me, that I may speak  
In living echoes of Thy tone.

Whatever one says at this point ought to be the natural, unforced opening up of the soul to God. Some can do this without words. For others such a brief inward but verbal prayer is an aid to relaxation and a helpful approach to what lies ahead.

### **Meditation and Devotional Aids**

The next step is meditation. We said a moment ago that God does not expect us to approach him with an empty mind. There are extremes to be avoided, for God does not make himself known best either in a vacuum or in a welter of our own or another's thoughts. One discovers God and His will by patient, quiet focusing of attention in this direction. The purpose of meditation is not merely to make one think. Thinking in the speculative or problem-solving sense may well recede at this point. To meditate upon God is to think about God and his great goodness, his neverfailing care, our place in his Kingdom, what he requires of us. Without such meditation prayer is apt to degenerate either into self-centered clamorous petition or into a

vague form of aimless, comfortable musing.

Some persons of long experience in silent worship can move to meditation upon God and communion with the divine Spirit without any external devotional aids. For most persons less mature, and for many of us who have prayed for years, there is need of something concrete and tangible to direct one's thought and keep it from running out into frayed ends. The Catholic at this point has the advantage of a rosary which tells him what prayers to say and how many. Though this may become mechanical, there is a concreteness about it which most Protestant private worship lacks.

For the Protestant the most indispensable aid is the Bible. There are various systems of Bible reading to follow. The best plan is either a consecutive reading in one book a few verses at a time, or the passage for the day indicated in some form of devotional guide. There are many convenient guides, such as the references in *The Upper Room*, the readings for the week often listed in church school quarterlies, the seasonal readings announced by the American Bible Society. It does not matter greatly which system is followed provided there is regularity. I have heard a great religious leader say that for years he has followed the practice in his private devotions of opening the Bible at random to see what it would say to him. If one is mature enough not to put wrong interpretations on passages out of their context this can be done -- otherwise, something more systematic is better. (This practice is generally frowned upon, and it can run into magic. However, this was an important step in Augustine's conversion. [*Confessions*, Book VIII, 29.] God can use any method if we are open to his leading.)

In any case, instead of trying to read a long passage at a time it is best to read one brief unit of thought and let one's mind and spirit catch the message in it. There should be other times for extended, closely reasoned study of the Bible to uncover its meaning in its historical setting. (Among the best guides for this purpose are Julian P. Love, *How to Read the Bible* and Edgar J. Goodspeed's book by the same title.) In private devotions a useful principle is to read it as one might a letter from a friend, not fussing about each word but letting God speak through it. Although some parts are of greater devotional value than others -- especially the psalms, the gospels and Paul's letters -- there are amazingly few passages in the Bible that do not have some living truth that is waiting to kindle the spirit.

In reading the Bible for devotional purposes, fresh meaning leaps out from it if one asks himself two questions. What did this mean to the person who wrote it? What does it say to me? The first question calls forward from the back of one's mind all that one knows of the setting of the passage. The more one can picture imaginatively the Hebrews in exile in Babylon or singing psalms of joy in the temple rebuilt on their return, the early church guarding carefully the precious fragments that told the story of Jesus, Paul among the churches or in prison writing to nourish and admonish those new in the faith, the more one can gather meaning from the words. But even without such knowledge, the Bible has such a universal and timeless message that always one may ask, what does it say to me?

Nothing is an adequate substitute for the Bible. Yet in our time the form of devotional aid most widely used is probably *The Upper Room, Today, Forward*, or some other serial publication in pamphlet form. This can be very helpful if rightly used. It is often misused. Letting one's eye race across the page is not meditation or devotion. The Bible passage, whether a single verse or a longer reference, should be read in full and its meaning thought about. The printed meditation, the thought for the day and the prayer must become the reader's own, else the reading is not devotion but a substitute for it. The human wisdom there stated is less important than what God suggests to you, and your own thoughts may be better than those of the printed page! In any case, for real meditation they must become your thoughts even if they come secondhand.

Many other aids to meditation are available. E. Stanley Jones's *Abundant Living* has had the phenomenal sale of over a million copies, and therefore presumably has very wide use. (His *Victorious Living* [1936] and *The Way* [1946], all published by the Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, are also arranged for devotional use.) Thomas R. Kelly's *Testament of Devotion* though it appeared as recently as 1941, is already a classic. (Harper & Brothers. It contains a moving biographical memoir by Douglas V. Steere, who collected and edited these essays after Thomas Kelly's death.) There are such old stand-bys as à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ* and Brother Lawrence. A new anthology of Christian devotional literature, *The Fellowship of the Saints*, compiled by Thomas S. Kepler, makes available a great many treasures of the past formerly hid from view. A resource which ought to find wide use is the Methodist *Book of Worship for Church and Home*, which has a section admirably arranged for personal and family devotions as well as material for public worship. Others find help in various compilations of religious poetry.

In the matter of such devotional aids it is impossible to prescribe for another. Yet there are some principles of judgment to follow. In regard to any devotional literature one must ask, "Does it speak to me? Does it stir and refresh my spirit? Does it bring me nearer to God?" If after a fair trial it does not, discard it and try another type. Fortunately, there are many kinds available which bring the spiritual quest and achievement of the ages to our minds as worthy substance for meditation.

### **Self -examination**

The third step in the devotional sequence we are tracing is *self-examination*. Some would begin here. The purpose of meditation, however, is to set God and his holy will before us. In this light we are the better able to take stock of our acts and intentions, recognize shortcomings, form new resolves, make new commitments of the self to God. In this perspective petty hurts melt away, and praise is estimated more nearly at its worth. If one is given to feeling sorry for himself, frustration at not having what he wants, feelings of inferiority or of thinking of himself more highly than he ought to think, there is no better corrective than rigid, honest scrutiny before God.

The sins that most beset the path of cultured, respectable people are not the more overt transgressions against society but the subtler sins of worry, selfishness, pride, and prejudice. Though one may live chronically possessed by these demons and know well enough that he is unhappy, one seldom stops to look at himself and see these traits as sin until he is challenged to do so. Such a challenge comes home with greater force when put to oneself in earnest self-examination before God than it possibly could through any human moralizing.

To be unified, this aspect of the time of prayer should be related to the preceding. Suppose, for example, that one reads the story of Jesus' feeding of the five thousand. Instead of being troubled over the miraculous angle of it, one may well be prompted to ask, Have I helped those in need? Have I done what I could for the hungry in Europe and Asia? Have I made right use of my loaves and fishes? Or one reads, "He hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." (Acts 17:26, King James Version) Am I really as free from race prejudice as a Christian ought to be? Am I willing to have a Negro or a Jew live next to me? Do the Germans and the Japanese and the Russians seem to me as much like persons and children of God as the Americans around me do?

Or one reads on two verses further and finds, "for in him we live, and move, and have our being." At first glance this seems more comforting, less open to disturbing self examination. But is it? Do I really believe this? Am I sure enough of it to stop worrying and fretting? If God is right here with me, must I not relax and trust that whatever comes, he will see me through?

## Prayer

Thus far most of what has been suggested for the time of personal devotions is not, strictly speaking, prayer but the preparation for it. There is need for the quieting of body and spirit before God, the opening of the mind toward God with perhaps the discovery of a message from him through the printed page, perspective by which to see ourselves before him as we really are; Without such preparation, unless one is very mature in spiritual things he is likely to plunge in without knowing which way to go next.

The final step is *prayer*. Here all that has gone before becomes crystallized. The best course to follow in private prayer is to let God's Spirit lead, and without much regard to the form of words, voice whatever is in the heart. If the relaxation has been real, the meditation meaningful, the self-examination searching, the words will come.

Various procedures are possible. One may pray without any form or sequence, led only by inner impulses. Or one may pray according to the natural sequence outlined in chapters two through five, voicing step by step one's adoration, thanksgiving, confession, petition, intercession, commitment and assurance, seeking throughout to pray in Christ's spirit as well as in his name. For some this may seem too mechanical, too much as if the Holy Spirit were being constricted

to a pattern. To others such a form is helpful not only to understanding but to inward voicing of the moods of prayer.

Private prayer ought to be the most individual and personal matter one engages in. For this reason it ought not to be limited to the words of another. But both for beginners in the school of prayer and for the most mature, there is a proper use of memorized or printed prayers. There are many collections, ancient and modern, and prayers which have stood the test of time are likely to be full of great spiritual meaning. One can pray in the words of another if the prayer comes from the heart and not simply from the eyes or lips. To read a prayer without inwardly responding to it is no more useful to the devotional life than to read the newspaper.

Some will wish to move from verbal prayer, whether framed in one's own words or those of another, to inward, wordless communion of spirit. This can be as rich and joyous an experience as a wordless appreciation of beauty or a time of silent fellowship between understanding human spirits. However, it is not to be advocated as a norm for all. The attempt may lead, not to deeper levels of prayer, but only to a vague semiconscious reverie. Apparently by temperament and experience some can, while more cannot, pray vitally without the use of words.

When the worshiper feels that he has prayed long enough -- and nothing but his own sense of completeness can tell him how long -- the thing to do is quietly, reverently to go about whatever needs to be done next. A transition there must be, but fortified with a new inner quietness and power, one can go if necessary to the most abruptly different environment and meet its demands with tranquillity and strength.

## **Posture and Diction**

We have not stopped during our analysis to say much about such matters as posture and phraseology. This is because they are not very important matters. However, a few words may now be said about them.

The only principle to follow regarding the posture in which to pray is that it should be whatever is most conducive to reverence and receptivity. Usually one prays best in whatever position he is accustomed to associate with prayer -- whether kneeling, sitting with bowed head, or standing. Closing the eyes helps to shut out distractions as well as to induce reverence. There ought to be no excessive discomfort and no ostentation about the posture assumed. But on the other hand, one ought not to be "soft" or timid about his praying. If the circumstances require some physical discomfort or some admission to others by outward appearance that one is praying, one may well ask God for stamina to do whatever is required. In general one ought to pray as quietly, as inconspicuously, and as naturally as possible.

The same principle holds regarding diction. Shall one address the deity as "thee" and "thou" or use the "you" of ordinary address? Presumably it makes no difference to God. But it may to

you, for to get too familiar is to remove the sense of reverence. Prayer is fellowship with God, not a familiar chat with a pal. One ought to pray in whatever language seems most natural, and to some "you" seems more natural than "thou." To most persons, the opposite is true in addressing deity.

For the same reason, persons who are accustomed to use more than one language can pray best in the tongue that is most familiar. No one who has participated in a great ecumenical gathering can have failed to be moved by hearing prayers in many languages, addressed to one God, spoken with one spirit, understood not by the ear but entered into unitedly by "the fellowship of kindred minds."

### **Distractions and Wandering Thoughts**

Before leaving this discussion we ought to say something about an impediment to prayer which at one time or another besets the path of almost everybody who tries to pray. Even when praying with the best of intentions and genuine earnestness, one is apt to "come to" with the startled recognition that somewhere along the way one's mind got off the track!

There are several things to do about wandering thoughts. Perhaps the first is to recognize that it is a very common human experience about which one ought not to be too much worried. John Donne, great English preacher and dean of St. Paul's three centuries ago, makes this confession:

I throw myself down in my chamber, and I call in, and invite God, and his angels thither; and when they are there, I neglect God and his angels, for the noise of a fly, for the rattling of a coach, for the whining of a door; I talk on in the same posture of praying, eyes lifted up, knees bowed down, as if I prayed to God; and if God or his angels should ask me when I thought last of God in that prayer, I cannot tell. Sometimes I find that I had forgot what I was about, but when I began to forget it, I cannot tell. A memory of yesterday's pleasures, a fear of tomorrow's dangers, a straw under my knee, a noise in mine ear, a light in mine eye, an anything, a nothing, a fancy, a chimera in my brain, troubles me in my prayer. So certainly is there nothing, nothing in spiritual things, perfect in this world. (*Works*, Vol.III, p. 476.)

The first requirement is not to be greatly disturbed by such mind-wanderings, but to try to "overcome evil with good" by having enough positive thoughts of God in one's mind to bring back roving thoughts. One reason why we have emphasized so much in this chapter the need of content for meditation is that it is a psychological impossibility to think of nothing for very long, and if one does not think of God or one's relation to him, one is sure to think of something else.

A second need, however, is to see what is causing the mind to wander. Other factors besides spiritual laxity may be at the bottom of it. You may be too tired, or too uncomfortable, or there may not be enough ventilation in the room. You may not be sleeping enough at night to pray

alertly in the daytime. You may have undertaken too much work and screwed yourself into a tension from which you cannot let down. You may have so many other pressures from persons that God seems a long way off. Part of this you can correct by analysis and adjustment of circumstances; part of it will recede only as you *care enough* to make a time for quiet waiting before God, for relaxed receptivity in which God has a chance to capture and direct your thought.

A third procedure when distractions banish attention is to meet them head on by absorbing them into the prayer. Douglas Steere in his *Prayer and Worship* illustrates how this can be done. Outside a mother is calling her child, the wind howls against the house, the rain beats down. Instead of letting these sounds defeat the mood of prayer, one can pray the distraction in: "O God, continue to call me as the Mother does her child and I shall answer; the wind of God is always blowing, but I must hoist my sail; O God, saturate my soul with the rain of thy redeeming love. (Op.cit., p.21.)

### **The Test of Achievement**

It is possible to be concerned either too little or too much with whether one is getting anywhere in his attempts to pray. This is not just the same question as to whether one can expect an answer in an overt sense, to which we have repeatedly given attention. When no inward response seems to come, one ought to be concerned as to whether he is praying in the most fruitful way. If not, the sooner a change is made the better, and now is the time to begin. But one may be overconcerned. Not careless but earnest Christians are peculiarly prone to discouragement.

The most subtle of all sins is pride in our spiritual achievement. Not only do we like to receive recognition from others for our spiritual gifts and graces, but it is pleasant to have a comfortable glow of satisfaction at the thought that we are doing pretty well with our good works, including the works of prayer. Correspondingly, there can be intense discouragement and a sense of thwarted ego if we do not seem to make out as well as we thought we were going to. Though it is seldom analyzed, a hurt feeling as if God had snubbed us gets mixed in with a sense of frustration and shame at not being able to go through with something we had set out to do.

Prayer ought to lead to soul-searching and humility; it ought not to put us in a dither from a sense of failure. It is not Christian to be careless or indifferent in prayer. To pray in faith calls for faithfulness. But neither is it Christian to be self-centered in our earnestness. The backswing of discouragement when we think we ought to be more powerful in prayer than we are savors of egotism and of lack of faith in God. If God hears the prayer of the penitent for forgiveness, we can trustfully leave with him not only our sins but our shortcomings.

We come back, therefore, to what has been said before, that if our praying is rightly centered in God and faithfully maintained, we do not need to worry much about its effects in us. The effects

will be there whether realized or not in greater quietness and calm, greater earnestness of effort, greater stability and strength. A great Christian said the most important thing that can be said about method when he wrote, "The only way to pray is to pray, and the way to pray well is to pray much. . . . The less I pray the worse it goes."

# Prayer and the Common Life by Georgia Harkness

## Part 2: Methods of Prayer

Georgia Harkness was educated at Cornell University, Boston University School of Theology, studied at Harvard & Yale theological seminaries and at Union Theological Seminary of New York. She has taught at Elmira College, Mount Holyoke, and for twelve years was professor of applied theology at Garrett Biblical Institute. In 1950 she became professor of applied theology at the Pacific School of Religion, in Berkeley, California. Published by Abingdon Press, New York, Nashville. Copyright by Stone & Pierce 1968. The material was prepared for Religion Online by Ted & Winnie Brock.

## Chapter 9: Congregational Worship

Thus far we have kept the discussion of ways of praying to private and family prayer. Some of the problems are the same, but others quite different, in regard to prayer and worship with others in church and chapel.

To revert to what was said in chapter one, prayer and worship are not synonyms though the terms for many purposes may be used interchangeably. Worship is the total attitude and process of reverent approach to God. It is therefore a broader term than prayer, for one may worship not only through prayer but through music and song, the reverent reading or repetition of scripture and creed, the spoken word of the sermon. To these may be added -- though they are found less frequently in the Sunday-morning service drama, pageantry, pictorial representation, even the dance. We shall deal in this chapter with worship as it is most commonly found in Protestant services. Though the main focus of attention will be upon how to pray within the service of corporate worship, no sharp lines will be drawn.

### General Principles

Both as a means of bringing together what has been said in earlier chapters and as an introduction to this one, let us begin by stating certain essential principles which apply to prayer and also to worship in its larger setting.

First, worship must be *centered upon God*. It is not worship unless it is. Much that passes as worship is not worship at all, but aesthetic enjoyment, moralizing, or a more or less perfunctory doing of habitual acts.

Second, worship must be *appropriate*. This means appropriateness of form and diction, reverence and dignity both in conducting and participating in the service, a sense of fitness that God may be given "comely praise."

Third, worship must be *unhurried*. This means that it should neither drag nor be rushed along. To prolong the service too far is to impair its freshness and power by inducing restlessness and lack of attention. Yet public worship like private prayer requires time enough to relax before God, center attention upon him and upon holy things, enter into his presence without any sense of pressure.

Fourth, worship must combine *alertness and receptivity in the worshiper*. Though the service may be conducted by one person, it makes demands on everybody. In prayer God must be given a chance to speak. But God speaks only to ears that hear -- to hearts alert enough to respond.

Fifth, worship must be *intellectually sincere*. It is not primarily an intellectual matter but a form of personal approach to God. Yet this approach ought to have a frame of reference which coheres with and helps to create a Christian understanding of God, the world, and human life.

Sixth, worship must be *accompanied by active service to God and other persons*. True worship is no private luxury or evasion of life's demands. Worship ought to drive us to action, action once more to worship. Even if it were not rooted in the Bible and tradition, a rhythmical sequence in human experience would call for corporate worship at least once a week. To try either to serve God without worshipping or to worship without service is to debase and enfeeble both pursuits.

Finally, worship must be *related to the total life of commitment to God in faith*. To try to pray as a fragmentary aspect of the Christian life is to court defeat. No life is as completely integrated as Jesus' was. Yet every life can more nearly follow the pattern of Jesus by seeking a more perfect union of worship, trust, and moral obedience to the will of God.

### **Distinctive Elements In Public Worship**

We shall now attempt to apply these principles, not one at a time but jointly, to the problems that arise in regard to corporate prayer. Although we shall approach the subject mainly from the standpoint of persons in the pews, the same principles need to be observed in praying from the pulpit.

To worship reverently and vitally in church is an art that involves a good deal more than simply going to church. It is more than a matter of assuming certain customary postures, singing hymns, listening to music, prayers, and a sermon, and going home again. All of these procedures are associated with corporate worship, but it is obvious that one can do any or all of

these things without worshipping. This happens frequently, and when people say they get nothing out of it when they go to church, it may be suspected that their physical presence in church has not had a corresponding accompaniment in worship.

Church worship is the reverent, receptive opening of the soul to God in company with others of kindred intention. It is like private worship in all the attitudes of mind and spirit that are required. It is unlike it at several important points: (1) it is engaged in not alone but with other people, some and perhaps many of whom are likely to be strangers; (2) it is conducted by someone usually a minister or priest -- and is channeled through regular forms; (3) there are appeals to the eye in the sanctuary's architecture and appointments and to the ear in music and spoken word which are not usually present in private worship; and (4) in the singing of hymns and the unison repetition of prayers and responsive readings there is opportunity for corporate vocal self-expression.

Let us ask now what each of these characteristics presents by way of opportunity or problem.

### The Worshipping Community

There is great significance in the fact that in church one unites with other people who have in common the desire to worship God and declare their loyalty to Christ, yet in other respects may have very diverse interests. From its beginning Christianity has been a social enterprise. It has brought people together, not because they happened to know and to be attracted to one another but because they were seeking to be nourished by a common faith. This is not, of course, to deny the influence of other social factors in the forming of congregations. Usually in the first place family connections, then denominational affiliation, personal acquaintance with someone in the church, geographical convenience, custom, habit, curiosity, and many other matters determine who will be present on Sunday morning in any particular congregation. Yet there would be no church were it not for the fact that the worshipping congregation has its point of reference beyond any of these factors.

A community is a group of people united by a common interest. There are many forms of community in existence -- family, neighborhood, school, the people one works with or plays with, the team one plays on or cheers for, bridge clubs, political parties, labor unions, Rotary clubs, Masons, the "solid south," Florida versus California, the nation, and a host of other groupings in between. The only community which is world-wide in scope and has a perspective from which to transcend all barriers of nation, race, class, sex, language, custom, and culture, is the Christian church. Since churches are made up of people and people are fallible creatures at best, it never does this perfectly. Yet it succeeds remarkably in doing this not only on a world scale, as is evident in the very existence of the missionary and ecumenical movements, but in every local congregation where people of many private interests sit together to worship God.

The fact that a congregation is a worshipping community means that a church service ought to

be judged by canons other than those appropriate to other group gatherings. One goes to a symphony concert for the aesthetic lift of hearing good music; to a lecture on current events to get some new ideas; to a movie for entertainment; to a ball game for excitement. Conceivably a church service can be at the same time beautiful, intellectually stimulating, entertaining, even in a sense exciting! Yet it does not exist for any of these purposes. It exists for the corporate worship of God, and ought to be judged solely by the degree to which it contributes to this end.

The first requirement, then, if a person is to worship vitally in church, is to go in a worshipful and not in a critical frame of mind. If as many alibis were found for not going to the movies as for not going to church, the movies would soon close their doors! In a whimsical mood a person quoted anonymously has given the following ten reasons for not going to the movies:

1. I was made to go too often when I was young.
2. Nobody ever speaks to me when I go.
3. They always ask me for money.
4. The manager has never called on me or my family.
5. The people who go do not live up to the fine things they see and hear in the pictures.
6. I get more out of my lodge, anyhow.
7. There is so much fighting among the picture houses.
8. Sunday is the only day I have for my family.
9. The pictures never get down to earth where I live.
10. I can be just as good whether I attend the movies or not.

If these thoughts, or even a few of them, possess the mind of the person who goes to church and sits looking around at those about him, both the mood of worship and his own sense of community with the group are forthwith destroyed.

### **Participation in Directed Worship**

A second characteristic of corporate worship, we noted, is that it is conducted by a leader and proceeds through regular forms. This is true of virtually every form of Christian corporate worship. The most notable exception is the Quaker practice of silent meeting, and even here somebody is responsible for its beginning and end. The regularity of the forms varies greatly, from the most spontaneous occurrences among Pentecostal sects to the most dignified of liturgical services, but there is always some channeling to which the worshiper is expected to conform.

This element in a church service greatly reduces the worshiper's initiative, for in the main the sequence of the worship is carried for him. He does not have to think what to do first and what to do next, for the printed order of worship or the leader's spoken direction tells him. At a certain point he sings or at least, listens while others sing; at another he gives some attention to the sermon; at another he prays.

Or does he? This reduction of demand on the person in the pew is not all pure gain. It can be a great aid to worship, for tested forms and the direction given by a person whose vocation it is to conduct public worship can go far toward eliminating trial-and-error. Many who are baffled at the idea of conducting their own private devotions are able to worship helpfully under guidance at church. But on the other hand, this reduction of outward demand on the worshiper increases his inner demand. When someone else does the praying, it is very easy to sit and do no praying at all, but simply let one's mind wander.

A second major requirement, therefore, is that the worshiper must center his mind upon God, and with alertness but receptivity, enter personally into all the acts of worship in the service. The singing, whether congregational or by the choir, must become his praise, the pulpit prayer his prayer, the sermon a word from God to him.

It is, of course, much easier to do this in some services of worship than others! When the choir, instead of making "a joyful noise unto the Lord," seems simply to make a noise, when the prayer is verbose and effusive or lifeless and pedantic, when the sermon has little in it to nourish mind or spirit, to worship vitally in church requires great inner resources.

Nevertheless, if one goes to church to worship and carries with him such resources, worship is possible under the most untoward outward conditions. To revert to what was said a moment ago, as criticism banishes the mood of worship so appreciative participation fosters it. There are many poorly conducted church services -- more's the pity -- but none with any reverence in it is so badly conducted that one cannot get something from it. Some spiritual point of contact can be found, at least in the scripture reading, the hymns, and the Lord's Prayer -- and if what is said and done seems too "impossible," one can think one's own thoughts of God and worship inwardly. It is far better to sit praying for the minister than criticizing him. Humility is an important Christian virtue, and one point at which even Christian ministers need to exercise it is in passing judgment on services conducted by their brothers in the Lord.

## **Beauty and Symbolism**

It is not by accident that the interior of a church looks different from that of an auditorium. In the plainest of churches a pulpit and an altar or altar rail are to be found, the pattern of architecture following the central tradition of the church as to whether the pulpit is in the center or at the side. On the pulpit or lectern in Protestant churches is a Bible, which, if the symbolism is rightly maintained, ought to be an open Bible. In front of the altar is a communion table, and upon it except in rigidly nonliturgical churches there is a cross. Often the sanctuary has stained-glass windows and elaborately carved or pictured symbols from the Christian tradition.

If to these more or less permanent features in the setting are added vestments and other objects of beauty or meaningful symbolism, a powerful sensuous appeal is made to the eye. These can

combine with the organ and the anthems rendered by the choir to give a great aesthetic lift to the spirit.

Is this an aid to worship? Or a substitute? It is clearly designed to be an aid. Large amounts of money are spent on church architecture and church music to make the setting not only beautiful but conducive to worship. If the product is not finer worship and a fitting tribute to Christ, one may not be wholly blamed for asking the question Judas asked when Mary brought the alabaster cruse, "To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor."

Whether such beauty and symbolism are an aid to worship, a substitute for it, or a distraction from it, depends partly on the setting. But it depends more on the worshiper. Though the Bible says relatively little about beauty and less about art, it was inevitable that the impulse to worship God should have found expression in medieval art and become part of a priceless heritage. Sense-bound as we are, we need symbols for communicating meanings. If worship is part of a total commitment of life to God in faith, not all of it can be expressed through words, and beauty may be an oblation to God as well as a medium of inspiration from him. But whether even the most fitting channels lead to this end depends on whether the worshipers permit them to.

This means, more concretely, that one ought not to go to church simply to enjoy the music and the atmosphere. To do this is not to worship God but to seek one's own enjoyment. Some values may come out of it, but aesthetic are not the same as religious values. No enjoyment of beauty is a worship experience unless it lifts the soul closer to God and gives incentive for doing better the works of God. In cultured urban churches where a great deal is made of the beauty of the service, there is a constant danger lest beauty be made a substitute for both worship and righteousness.

This does not mean, on the other hand, that one worships better in ugliness. If aesthetic enjoyment with spiritual lethargy is the peril of the wealthy city church, plainness with lack of spiritual passion is the pitfall of the poor rural church. This is not to condemn simplicity. Simplicity, with the charm of what nature provides in a rural setting, affords genuine beauty. But sheer ugliness, wherever found, must be one of the things that the divine Artist who made earth fair must mourn.

It is possible to worship in the most uncongenial setting. One who has earnestness and inner spiritual resources can let his soul be lifted by such beauty as is present, get along without what is absent, and avoid confusing aesthetic pleasure with the beauty of holiness. To do this is an exacting art, but one of great reward.

## **Vocal Self-expression**

We noted that a fourth distinctive characteristic of corporate worship is the opportunity it gives for vocal self-expression. Although in most instances the leader is the only person who says anything on his own initiative, members of the congregation usually have a chance to sing, to read the Bible responsively, to repeat in unison at least the Lord's Prayer, and sometimes other prayers and the creed. Such expression does not have to be limited to the church service. If one prays at home or out in nature alone by himself there is nothing to hinder his singing, reading, or affirming aloud. Generally, however, one does not. In the church it is the natural and fitting thing to do.

Several things may be observed about this phase of worship. The first is to emphasize the need of entering responsively and co-operatively into whatever part of the service is designated for congregational participation. It is a psychological impossibility to worship simply as an onlooker, and an important reason why many people fail to get anything from the church service lies exactly at this point. This is not to say one must of necessity use his lips. It is possible to worship silently while others sing or speak in unison -- but the odds are against it. To attempt it is often to lose the mood of worship in aimless mind-wandering or in preoccupation with one's own problems. To sing from the heart, even if not with vocal finesse, is better than to let one's mind remain snarled up in a welter of extraneous thoughts.

But shall one sing hymns or affirm a creed when one does not believe the words? This is no slight problem in view of the fact that there is bad theology in many of the hymns, and the Apostle's Creed, along with great eternally true affirmations, declares belief in such matters as the resurrection of the body, which few people who say it now accept. (This is not to call in question the Christian doctrine of immortality affirmed in "the life everlasting," or the resurrection of Jesus, or the victory over death symbolically couched in this phraseology. However, whatever more it meant, the resurrection of the body meant to the early church the literal rising of the bodies of believers from the dead.)

It may be said in partial answer that the person conducting the worship should try to select hymns true in words as well as spirit, and the creed need not be repeated every Sunday. However, this is not a complete answer. When such time-honored materials of worship are entirely left out of the service in the interests of theological accuracy, the result is apt to be, not theological gain, but emotional loss. Hymns and credal affirmations used through the centuries are the bearers not only of spiritual power but, rightly understood, of Christian truth.

How, then, shall we use them? As materials of worship, not as unchallengeable articles of belief. They have their place in the transmitting of a great tradition of Christian experience. They ought not to fetter the mind of anybody, but neither ought they to be lightly cast aside. They are channels for the lifting of the soul toward God and a medium for aligning oneself with a great Christian heritage. It is possible in the mood of worship to enter into the "feel" of the words, and without compromise of mental integrity find in them not only a reservoir of truth from the past but a challenge to discover more acceptable modes of thought.

## Worship By Radio

A form of corporate worship unknown to previous generations is worship by radio. This stands midway between private and public worship, and presents problems of its own. A further word, therefore, needs to be said about it.

For those who worship by radio a few simple counsels may be given. The most important is to remember that worship centers in God, not in a human voice. This means that a reverent mood is called for. It is impossible to worship while chattering with somebody. Competing sounds should be excluded if possible, and if this is not possible, then disregarded as much as they can be. The same is true of competing activities. To "listen with one ear" while giving most of one's mind to something else is neither to honor God nor get for oneself the fruits of worship.

One ought carefully to choose his radio service and then stay by it. To keep twiddling the dial impatiently looking for something else is to disrupt whatever values there might be in it. If the listener intends to worship, and not merely to hear what a good preacher has to say, worship by radio requires the same receptive, reverent turning of the soul toward God that any other worship requires.

Is "going to church by radio" an adequate substitute for congregational worship? It must be answered that, valuable as it is for invalids and others who cannot get to church, it is not to be recommended as a substitute for those who can. There may be better preaching, better music, better voicing of prayers over the radio than one hears at his own church. However, the situation by its very nature fails to make the same demands on the worshiper; hence something is lost in its fruits.

What are these demands? First, to get up, get dressed, and get to church in reasonably clean and respectable attire is more than a mere formality! It is an expression of the will to worship, which is not necessarily present in a Sunday-morning snooze and slouch with the only external requirement the turning of a dial.

In the second place, radio worship lacks the element of corporate vocal self-expression of which we have just been speaking. The most one is ever asked to do is to get out his Bible and read with the leader some passage of Scripture, but one may doubt how often even this is actually done. The resulting passivity in the listener *may* lead to real worship if the quality of the service is rich enough, but the chances are against it.

And even with the best of music and preaching mediated through the ear, much is lost that a church service provides -- the sense of corporate fellowship, the lift of the atmosphere and architecture, the appeals presented to the eye, most of all, elements in the leader's mood and personality which his voice alone cannot convey. These may be human, physical matters. Yet

they are matters which reach into the heart of living worship.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the question remains to be mentioned. It is often urged that to listen to good music and good preaching by radio is better than to expose oneself to the halting, feeble efforts of the churches. "Let the churches improve," it is said, "and I will go. Until then, the radio gives me something better." What this means is that by such failure to connect with the ongoing life of the churches, not only the worshiper but the church suffers loss. Without support from the congregational end, the churches inevitably are weakened. A church is not the minister only or the congregation only but the entire Christian fellowship, and it can be strong only as its members accept the obligation to give it support by their gifts, their service, their prayers, and their presence.

What has been said above is not intended in any sense as an indictment of the religious uses of the radio. It is a great new vehicle of expression and communication which can be, and ought to be, used in God's service. Radio preaching in conjunction with the habit and practice of churchgoing among the listeners can be a vital means of spiritual refreshment and instruction. It would be hard to overestimate the amount of good done through the years by the radio pulpits of Dr. Fosdick, Dr. Sockman, and others, and experimentation in other types of religious services may greatly expand its usefulness in the future. Nevertheless, if one contents himself with worship by radio and never makes the effort to worship in church, the time comes before long when he does not make the effort to turn the dial.

# Prayer and the Common Life by Georgia Harkness

## Part 3: The Fruits of Prayer

Georgia Harkness was educated at Cornell University, Boston University School of Theology, studied at Harvard & Yale theological seminaries and at Union Theological Seminary of New York. She has taught at Elmira College, Mount Holyoke, and for twelve years was professor of applied theology at Garrett Biblical Institute. In 1950 she became professor of applied theology at the Pacific School of Religion, in Berkeley, California. Published by Abingdon Press, New York, Nashville. Copyright by Stone & Pierce 1968. The material was prepared for Religion Online by Ted & Winnie Brock.

## Chapter 10: Prayer and Peace of Mind

We have through several chapters been tracing the foundations of prayer, trying to answer some questions about it, offering some suggestions as to ways of praying. It now remains to say something more about the fruits of prayer, both within the individual and in the social whole.

"Why," it may be asked, "leave this discussion to the end of the book? Why not start with it? What people want is peace of mind, not theology or techniques!" This is a legitimate challenge. It is undoubtedly true that most people are more interested in the effects of prayer -- however arrived at -- than in understanding its foundations and methods. Nevertheless, the fact that this is true may be one reason why there is not a greater amount of devout, reverent, vital, and psychologically effective praying.

### Psychology and Prayer

We have maintained throughout that the psalmist had the right perspective when he wrote, "I have set the Lord always before me." Prayer must be God-centered, or it is not prayer. There are many forms of self-examination and psychotherapy that do good -- some of them great good -- but they are not prayer and ought not to be confused with it. The main reason, therefore, for putting a psychological analysis late in the discussion is to keep the emphasis and sequence true.

Nevertheless, we ought to understand ourselves, and anything that can be learned from psychology ought to be gratefully welcomed. Since this is one world, anything that is true in psychology must also be true in theology and religion. It is partial truths, or untruths, that appear to clash. There is great loss to the public in the fact that religious leaders have so often fought

shy of psychology while psychologists in turn have viewed religion with disdain. Fortunately, there are signs within the past few years of a much closer meeting. (Among these signs are the great vogue some ten years ago of Henry C. Link's *The Return to Religion* and now Joshua Loth Liebman's *Peace of Mind*. Within this period a considerable number of excellent books dealing with the relations of religion to mental health have appeared. The clinical training of ministers has taken long steps forward, and most of the seminaries now give courses in counseling.)

If anyone who reads this book is afraid that to understand psychologically what happens in prayer is to banish faith, let him put away his fears. Not psychology, but the materialistic assumptions of some psychologists, have tended in this direction. One may study astronomy and be prompted the more reverently to exclaim,

The heavens declare the glory of God,

or physiology and say,

I will give thanks unto thee;  
for I am fearfully and wonderfully made:  
Wonderful are thy works;  
And that my soul knoweth right well.

Comparably one may study human nature and what happens in it through prayer, and be the more challenged and awed at the awareness of God's wonderful works. There is a certain inconsistency in the fact that persons who accept without question the presence of God in the physical universe so often wonder if there is any reality in it when the processes of prayer are examined.

Yet this does not entirely answer the question. The situation in prayer is not wholly analogous with that in astronomy and physiology, where God is not expected to speak except through his handiwork. The real nub of the question for many earnest minds is whether the voice of God is anything other than our own psychological processes.

Much as I sympathize with the questioner, I believe the question presents a false alternative. The answer hinges upon whether God is himself personal, which is to say, upon one's basic theology or philosophy of religion. If God is the personal, loving, righteous God of Hebrew-Christian faith, the Creator and Sustainer of man as well as of the universe, present within man as the Holy Spirit and ever waiting to impart power, then when God speaks, he has no need to speak from without. It is through our mental and moral processes but not in identity with them -- as it is through "the starry heavens above" but not in identification with the heavens -- that God makes himself known to us. God's relation to man as he acts within and through the processes of the human mind is more intimate than any other form of God's self-disclosure, and the fact that he speaks from within us makes it impossible to draw any absolute line of cleavage between

our own thoughts and divine inspiration. Yet it is "the Beyond that is within" that speaks, and in this sense God's disclosure of himself through the inner voice is as objective as anything in nature.

The question remains as to whether all the processes of prayer can be psychologically analyzed. Are there some things about it that ought not to be tampered with? And if our psychological knowledge were complete, would it all be explained away and the mystery disappear? Since this is usually put as a double question, a double answer is necessary. To the first it may be replied that there is no aspect of prayer before which a "No Admittance" sign must be put up to debar inquiry. As in even the most intimate of human relations there are facts for psychologists to discover and use towards man's self-understanding, so there is no limit to what may be found out about what happens in prayer. The more we know of man's mental and moral processes and total psychic life, the better channels these can be for the hearing of God's voice.

To the second question -- whether mystery will vanish in psychological simplification -- the answer is that only an oversimplification of the issue could possibly lead to this conclusion. As long as love and loyalty, aspiration and hope, faith and dedication remain among men, so long will there remain an ultimate mystery in the divine-human encounter.

The fact that God does not speak by audible sounds or through "signs and wonders" but through our conscious and subconscious mental life raises another question, more ethical than psychological. How are we to know the voice of God when we hear it? How distinguish between our own evil and erring impulses and God's word of assurance or command?

The line cannot be drawn so sharply that we can afford to be dogmatic about it. The tendency to "hallow the relative," or give absolute divine authority to our own desires and opinions, is one of the commonest forms of human perversion. Nevertheless, this need not make us give up the attempt to discover God's voice. Any strong intuitive conviction must be subjected to two tests: First, does it square with what we know of God through Jesus? Second, if acted upon, will it lead to better living for ourselves and others? These are not simple tests, but they are workable ones. If we accept them, we must look to Jesus for our ultimate standards of judgment and at the same time keep on estimating relative values and probable consequences within the common life. What this means more concretely we must now observe regarding certain major human problems.

### **What Thwarts Peace of Mind?**

No attempt will be made here to give any complete analysis of human nature. The book lacks the space, and its author the wisdom. Since this chapter deals centrally with peace of mind, we must now ask what stands in the way of it.

God does not send unhappiness and inner unrest because he wants men to suffer. Whatever may

be believed about divine judgment -- and some things need to be believed about it -- it can hardly be thought that the God of Jesus inflicts pain maliciously. Where peace of mind is forfeited, we had better look to human causes which God stands ready -- far more ready than we -- to help men to control and correct.

When one starts to make a list of the things that upset peace of mind, the catalogue is almost endless. Failure to get the material goods, the recognition, the honors, the comforts, the adornments, or the luxuries one desires; thwarted ambitions and vocational misfits; frustrated love affairs; domestic tensions; the strain of having to work or to live with people "who rub you the wrong way"; moods of self-pity, envy, anger, discouragement, rebellion against fate; inferiority and loneliness; regrets over wasted years or opportunities; a multitude of fears, in particular fears of the loss of affection or prestige, fears of economic insecurity, of illness, of incapacity for work, of old age; sometimes the actualization of these fears; anxiety for those one loves; clashing outlooks upon life among those who love but do not understand each other; physical excesses and their aftereffects; bodily pain; incurable disease; the shock of bereavement, especially if death comes suddenly and apparently without purpose; life amid conditions of poverty, squalor, hunger, and the acute denial of opportunities; the separations, sufferings, and devastations of war, and then war's dreadful aftermath. Permeating all of these is the knowledge of one's own inevitable death, if one stops to think of it, and fear of the future of mankind in a world far more precarious than secure.

The bare enumeration of such obstacles to inner peace suggests the weight of unhappiness that oppresses men. It is seldom that the same person has his peace of mind upset in all of these ways, but the convergence of these factors in the lives of some individuals is appalling. And even the person who seems outwardly to "have everything" is never completely happy, for inwardly something keeps gnawing or tugging at his heart. If prayer can do even a little to alleviate this state of affairs, it is enormously important.

The above list does not pretend to be complete. But perhaps the reader noted a conspicuous omission from it. What of a sense of guilt? Is not this too a barrier to peace of mind?

It certainly is! That is one thing on which psychiatrists and discerning religious leaders agree, though there is less agreement as to what to do with it. Yet guilt stands in a somewhat different category from these other sources of unrest. To sin by an act or attitude of rebellion against God or to do an injury to one's neighbor is not the same thing as to be frustrated or fearful. Furthermore, to sin and to feel guilty are not synonymous terms, for often the worst sinners feel least guilty. We shall speak presently of both sin and guilt, but first let us look at some other common causes of inner unrest.

It is obviously out of the question in this chapter to deal separately with each of the obstacles to inner peace noted above. Nor is it necessary, for although their social causes are manifold, they appear in the individual in a few dominant forms. We shall discuss them under the heads of

frustration, fear, loneliness, grief, and guilt.

## **Prayer and Frustration**

Frustration is a term that has fairly recently taken its place in the popular vocabulary; yet it stands for an experience as old as the human race. It comes from the Latin *frustra*, which means "in vain." To be frustrated is to desire something in vain. Adam and Eve were frustrated when they desired to stay in Eden but were driven out. Throughout human history man has been getting the apple he wanted and losing the security for which his soul longed.

Many people are frustrated without knowing it. Everybody knows, of course, that there are things he wants and does not have. This may be a passing mood, or a mature acceptance of the inevitable. But when a person chronically pities himself, rebels at fate and thinks the world or the Lord has a grudge against him, gets angry over trifles and scolds or swears at the people around him, frustration is likely to be at the bottom of it. (Frustration also shows itself frequently in drinking and other physical excesses which are engaged in to secure a temporary illusion of achievement. Important as these are, I omit discussion of them to keep to the main lines of expression). There are hosts of frustrated individuals who go through life suspecting that somebody has done or is going to do them an injury, and saying whenever some minor flurry on life's sea hits them, "That's just my luck!"

Frustration is the main cause of the familiar inferiority complex. When a person tries one thing after another without having the success or getting the recognition he craves, he is apt to decide he does not amount to much and the more he avoids being stepped on the better. This can take the form of shyness and withdrawal, or of bragging, bluster, and a bold front.

How do we get that way? The well-fed, gurgling infant in his crib looks as if he had everything he wanted. He may sleep all night, laugh and play all the time he is awake, and be considered a very good baby! But let him be pricked with an open safety-pin or bumped, deprived of his plaything or his dinner, and the angelic cherub becomes a squalling mass of angry protoplasm. He is having his first lessons in frustration.

As time goes on he gets frustrated a great many times. Other children get the attention or the toys he wants. On the playground he wants his own way, gets it some of the time, but also gets snubs that are worse than his bloody nose. At home he is likely either to be coddled too much or cuddled too little. At school he is scolded by the teacher or ridiculed by his peers, and begins to crawl into a shell of secrecy. As adolescence comes on he wants a girl, but the girl he wants prefers someone else. He wants excitement, but the thrills wear out, and he tries more daring exploits and gets himself in trouble. Meanwhile there are battles with his parents over this and that. By the time he can leave school and go to work -- at a job which does not interest him at all but pays him some money -- he is likely to have a long start toward being a chronically frustrated individual.

What is to be done about it? We shall pass over the problems incident to the rearing of children, a task so difficult and critical that it is hard to see how any parent could venture to undertake it without prayer. When a person has come to adulthood and knows himself to be frustrated in deep desires, what can he do?

In any such situation three possibilities are to be canvassed. To overcome frustration it is necessary to fulfill, to limit, or to redirect desire.

To *fulfill* desire is to achieve what one sets out to do. This can be on the plane of getting money, comforts, power over others, prestige, sexual satisfactions, thrills, or other forms of immediately pleasurable experience. It can also be on the higher plane of family love, vocational adjustment, enlargement of interests, creativity in work or avocation, acquisition of knowledge and skills, and their use in service to God and man. The second type of fulfillment, though it does not solve all problems, is obviously more conducive to lasting peace of mind than the first. When one has it, he is seldom seriously frustrated.

To find peace of mind through fulfillment of desire it is necessary, first, to ask oneself whether one's goals are worthy, and, second, whether some headway toward them is being made. Nothing which narrows and cheapens one's own personality or harms another can give lasting satisfaction. But granted that one's aspirations are in the right direction, some failures must still be expected. To expect perfection, whether in oneself or the outer situation, is to be miserable over not finding it. Nobody does a perfect job of managing his business, his personal relations, or himself. The thing needful is to achieve some measure of success, and keep moving ahead.

To *limit* desire is to accept the inevitable. Everybody has to do this in order to be happy. One of the earliest and hardest lessons a child must learn is that he cannot have everything he wants. If he does not learn it by the time he grows up, he is in for trouble.

A great many adults make themselves unnecessarily unhappy by crying for the moon. Nature endowment sets limits to what one can do. The writer of these pages decided a long time ago that she would never be a Metropolitan Opera singer or a Hollywood star, and therefore is not troubled by failure to arrive! The social situation may be adjustable, but there are limits beyond which it is not. In a monogamous society when a man marries one woman he cannot marry another, and much trouble would be avoided by accepting this fact. Time, health, strength, and many other factors set limits. When a person is old, he is no longer young, and nothing is more incongruously pitiful than to see December trying to imitate May. An arm cut off or an eye plucked out will not grow again. When death comes, no amount of yearning will bring back a beloved form to the life on earth.

To *redirect* desire is to sublimate one's spontaneous, unchosen desires to chosen ends. Some things we want to do or to have are desires that come without beckoning. It is natural and right

for a young person to want to be popular with the opposite sex and to marry. It is not easy, but it is possible, to discover that even when this desire is denied, life is not futile. It is natural to want to be healthy. Yet it is possible to struggle with a defective body and still find something worth while to achieve. It is natural to want to be well fixed and comfortable. Yet some of the greatest literary and artistic masterpieces have been produced in poverty. If a person has an inner capacity to sublimate desire to chosen ends, no outer disaster can be completely devastating.

What is the place of prayer in this? Its primary function is to enable the frustrated person to take one or another or all three of these necessary steps. To "offer up our desires unto God for things agreeable to His will" is to do precisely this. To offer up our desires under the light of God's will as we find it in Jesus is first of all to ask whether what we are desiring is what we ought to desire. It is then to ask God to help us move toward fulfillment if we ought to have it, to accept denial if we must, to find some worthy work to do for him in any situation.

Experience reveals that hosts of defeated individuals have through prayer found guidance and strength for the overcoming of their frustrations. When it is asked how God does this, the answer is not that God speaks through audible words from on high or imparts powers not already latent in the individual. What God does is to take us as we are, and speak through our conscious and subconscious minds to clarify our vision and make available hidden strength. It is he who does it, yet it is we who do it. This sounds cryptic, but it is true to experience. Paul says something like it in the testimony, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. 2:20, King James Version.)

Paul knew nothing of such language as frustration, fulfillment, or sublimation. Yet he gives a perfect example of what prayer can accomplish in this field when facing death he writes from a Roman dungeon,

Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound: in everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want. I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me.

# Prayer and the Common Life by Georgia Harkness

## Part 3: The Fruits of Prayer

Georgia Harkness was educated at Cornell University, Boston University School of Theology, studied at Harvard & Yale theological seminaries and at Union Theological Seminary of New York. She has taught at Elmira College, Mount Holyoke, and for twelve years was professor of applied theology at Garrett Biblical Institute. In 1950 she became professor of applied theology at the Pacific School of Religion, in Berkeley, California. Published by Abingdon Press, New York, Nashville. Copyright by Stone & Pierce 1968. The material was prepared for Religion Online by Ted & Winnie Brock.

## Chapter 11: Fear, Loneliness, and Grief

In the preceding chapter we made some general observations about the forces of unrest that cripple and warp the human spirit. Some specific attention was given to the very common human phenomenon of frustration and thwarted desire. In this chapter we must continue to look at what stands in the way of happiness and peace of mind.

### Fear

Several things ought to be said about fear. The first is that there is no man living who is not afraid of something. If anyone says he is not, he is either self-deceived or prevaricating.

The second thing is that fear, in moderation and properly located, is a very good thing. Without learning to be afraid to jump into fire, afraid of water in which we cannot swim, afraid to play with loaded guns, afraid of approaching juggernauts, we should not live to grow up. In adult life the pain that makes us fear illness sends us to the doctor, and the possibility of universal destruction through atomic bombs makes all thoughtful persons inquire the road to peace.

Nevertheless, fear which runs into inordinate anxiety, whether as sudden panic or chronic worry, can be a terribly devastating force. It probably drives more people neurotic and then insane than any other factor. Dr. Karen Horney, author of *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time*, makes anxiety the root of all our present psychic maladjustments. As fear in battle can either make a soldier fight harder by calling forth his adrenaline or can leave him "frozen" and shell-shocked, so in normal activities fear can be a spur to action or its paralysis. But the action springing from it may be as unhealthy as the inaction. When it obsesses the mind, and its

possessor either feels driven like a whipped horse or stopped in his tracks by some invisible barrier, it is time to see what is the matter.

Fear comes from so many sources that it is impossible to enumerate them all. Joshua Liebman in his very illuminating book *Peace of Mind* points out that it often begins in childhood as the fourth step in a sequence of which frustration is the first. The child fails to get what he wants, he gets angry, he is punished for his tantrum, and he becomes afraid. This cycle once established goes on and on. The reader of these pages may find it profitable to ask himself whether some of his fears do not come from the fact that he "got spanked" by nature or society when he wanted something he could not have. An adult, like a child, can be scolded until he feels the terrible poignancy of the word, "Reproach hath broken my heart." There are other fears that come from the shattering of one's world through failure, bereavement, betrayal by someone loved and trusted, the loss of employment or income or of prestige, the realization that the old securities of whatever nature no longer hold.

As in the case of frustration, there are several things to be done about one's fears. It is necessary to confront them, to analyze them, to circumvent them, to overcome them by confidence. These steps are much easier to enumerate than to take. No one takes them perfectly. They cost dearly, but no one who knows the psychic toll that fear and worry take will count the cost too high.

To *confront* one's fears is to look at one's self and ask, "What am I afraid of?" At first glance one may think he is not afraid of anything. But perhaps the first thing to discover is that he is afraid to haul his fears out into the open. One might possibly find out something uncomplimentary about himself! This is the key to most of our inner insecurities -- we do not want to look at ourselves as we are. In general we want to think ourselves morally better, more self-confident, more ready for whatever comes, than we really are. Sometimes the opposite is the case, at least on the surface. When conscience has become abnormally focused on the self, fears of doing wrong can become obsessions and we like to be a problem to ourselves. Nobody can be completely objective about himself, but every normal person can be more objective than he is. To look the dragons in the face, then, is the first step toward their conquest.

The second step is to *analyze* these fears, whether of loss of a job, money, reputation, professional success, friends, loved ones, health, religion or even of one's sanity. Is there really much likelihood that this will happen? Or have I let molehills become mountains? Here the help of a trusted counselor is very valuable. Some things we really need to be afraid of and do something about. Others we need to look at and dismiss.

Psychoanalysis makes a great deal of uncovering buried memories to see where the fears arose. To the degree that this helps to dismiss fears by disclosure of their present irrelevance this can be very valuable. It is, however, my judgment that to dig around in one's childhood past and put the responsibility for present fears upon one's parents is not as useful a procedure as to see the inconsequential nature of many of the things that now frighten us. Who or what caused the fear

is less important than what is now to be done about it.

The third step is to *circumvent* the fear if it can be thus dealt with. That is to say, if circumstances that create anxiety can be readjusted, they ought to be. There is no way of knowing how many people because they fear an operation refuse to go to a doctor! Or how many, because they fear divorce, are inhibited from talking things over and trying to reach an agreement. The extreme form of failure to circumvent fear is to take the cowardly road of suicide in preference to accepting life with all its hazards. (Most cases of suicide are the result of psychopathic derangement and therefore not subject to moral judgment. Sane persons who kill themselves to escape the consequences of living are not brave men but cowards.)

The final and most necessary step is to *overcome* fear by confidence in something or somebody. To continue the illustration of the last paragraph, it is very necessary that a doctor have a patient's confidence. This is true in all healing, but absolutely imperative in cases of mental ill health. A counselor may be a very wise person, but unless the fearful person trusts him, no good can come of the counsel. From confidence in some other individual the transfer must be made till the person tormented with fears loses them in a new self-confidence and inner assurance. Only so can a personality's quagmires and quicksands become solid earth.

Again the relevance of prayer to this process is very vital but does not need many words. There is nothing except sin and God's mercy that the Bible says more about than the conquest of fear. Looking in a small and by no means complete concordance I find one hundred and sixteen references to fear and to what God does for the fearful, besides innumerable others that speak of rest in God and deliverance through his almighty power.

If a person feels his life being warped and made miserable by fear, he ought with as much resoluteness as possible to take the steps outlined above. And prayer is relevant to each of these steps. Through the new perspective that comes in vital prayer one is enabled to look at himself in the light of God's truth with blindfolds off. Clarity of understanding is enhanced till things assume truer proportions. Direction is given for the next moves to be made. Such direction comes through no spectacular vision or audition but through the refocusing of conscious attention and the upsurge of constructive impulses from the subconscious. The God who, the ancient story tells us, led the people of Israel with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night can lead us by the clouds of the subconscious and the fires of imagination as truly as by consciously studied thought.

We said above that the fearful person must have confidence in something or somebody. The religious name for this is faith. Only as he knows that "underneath are the everlasting arms" and "perfect love casteth out fear" can he really find rest for his soul. Only as he takes his trouble to God in prayer, and resolves faithfully to follow whatever light comes to him from God in Christ, can he expect to hear the word of assurance to stricken, shaken souls through all ages: "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have

tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

## **Loneliness**

The passage just quoted has something to say about loneliness. It is recorded as spoken by Jesus on the night of the Last Supper --his last words before he went out to the loneliness and horror of Gethsemane. Just before these words of assurance to his followers he says almost as if to himself, "Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

The conjunction between loneliness and fear is more than accidental. Jesus may not have been afraid in his loneliness but most of us are. Have you had the experience of being brave enough with other people around -- then frightened at the awareness of being alone in a big, dark house? With one companion -- even a child who could do nothing as a protector but who needs to be protected -- one intuitively feels safer than in complete solitariness. This provides a parable of the interdependence of human existence.

There are various kinds of loneliness. There is physical isolation from other persons, which for a time may be a welcome respite from too much jostling, but which soon so "gets under the skin" that one begins to appreciate the plight of the prisoner in solitary confinement. There is the loneliness of being unknown and overlooked in the midst of a crowd of people the wallflower and the new student in the midst of a joyously chattering dormitory are cases in point. There is the cutting loneliness of feeling misunderstood and rebuffed by someone that one loves, admires, lives or works with, or in some other way is related to but without inner fellowship. And there is a kind of cosmic loneliness which makes one feel so lost before the indifference of the universe and the meaninglessness of life that one finds no home for his soul.

The first of these types of loneliness mainly requires a social readjustment. Though one may be obliged temporarily to live alone, nobody ought to for long if he can help it. It is written not only in the Bible but in human nature, "It is not good that man should be alone." To attempt it is to run the risk of becoming eccentric, self-willed, or depressed -- perhaps all three --the result varying with the temperament of the individual. Where circumstances require it, it is imperative that plenty of outside social contacts be kept up as a corrective.

Where a person "feels strange," as almost anyone is likely to in a new locality, the sensible thing to do is to make friends as fast as possible. But one cannot expect in a day or a week to have his roots as deep as they were in the former community after years. There is something about our ego that wants immediate recognition, and even a mature person who in his mind knows better is apt in his emotions to feel snubbed when in a new place he finds no one loving him as in the old.

A great deal of the world's unhappiness is caused by the fact that people who have to live

together -- as husbands and wives, parents and children -- and who in a deep sense really love each other, still do not understand each other. There are more scoldings and sharp words and usually more heartaches within the family than in public relations. This is partly because at home one feels less inhibited by shame than elsewhere, but it is also because such intimacies bring expectations that are unfulfilled.

To cope with this situation requires perspective, self-examination, and loving patience. Perspective is required in order to see that one's own situation is no special case. There is probably nobody who does not have some areas of loneliness. Complete mutuality, even in the closest of family ties, is a rare achievement. Yet there are many successful families and friendships. Self-examination is necessary in order to discover that instead of being wholly the victim in domestic and personal tensions, one may be quite as much the aggressor. Loving patience to understand without being understood, and if necessary to love without being loved, is a basic requirement that too few of us possess.

The relation of prayer to each of these needs is too obvious to require much elaboration. We have repeatedly pointed out the importance of prayer to the gaining of perspective, and the need for honesty in self-examination both as preparation for prayer and as its fruit. The difficult but imperative task of refusing to be daunted by rebuffs, of continuing to be a friend even when the friendship seems unrequited until finally loneliness is overcome in fellowship, requires such self-subordination that it is seldom found except in persons who draw upon God's strength.

For the still deeper loneliness of feeling at loose ends with the universe and devoid of any deep-going roots, only a religious outlook can work a cure. Other approaches such as understanding friendships, worthy interests, causes to work for, are important and essential steps. But unless these are grounded in something deeper than themselves, they turn out too often to be palliatives. This is the legacy of secularism to our rootless society.

What a person caught in this loneliness needs as a base for his soul is not the belief that in some mysterious way an impersonal cosmic force controls his destiny. He does not need primarily a set of arguments for the existence of God, though these may help to clear away obstacles. What he needs is a sense of fellowship with "the Great Companion, the fellow-sufferer who understands." (A. N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 582.)

To counsel prayer to the rootless, restless twentieth-century man or woman is often to talk of something that sounds like moonshine. This entire book aims to give some pointers toward that end, and we shall not try to repeat here what has been said through many pages. In the event that such a spiritually homeless person should have read thus far, the best counsel I can give is to ask him to read in the New Testament the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of Matthew and the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians.

## Grief

There are many forms and degrees of grief, from a brief temporary sadness that is more than anything else a matter of self-pity and ruffled nerves, to the deepest and most soul-shaking bereavement. The precocious nine-year-old son of a friend of mine was heard to lament that he was now too old to cry but not old enough to swear! Whether or not an adult cries, there is no one who does not sometimes feel like doing so.

Of the minor occasions of grief we shall not say anything further. Most of them come in connection with our frustrations, fears, and loneliness. When sadness settles into chronic depression there may be physical as well psychological causes to be looked for, and very often physical consequences in stomach ulcers, colitis, and the like have to be reckoned with. Man seems to be made for joy, for when joylessness makes protracted inroads not only his spirit but his body suffers. (Little is said here on this most important issue, for my *Dark Night of the Soul* deals with it at length. Chapter VI entitled "Body and Spirit" traces many of these connections.)

We must now try to say a word about an experience that sooner or later befalls almost every adult -- the grief that comes when death removes a person that is loved.

The grief that death brings is, of course, not all of one level. The death of an aged, helpless parent can be welcomed as a blessed release for the person whose work is finished, with no lack of love or respect for the deceased. When a younger person is known to be incurably ill in mind or body, one can mourn his passing without wanting his bondage to earth to be prolonged. Every death brings the sadness of separation to those who love. But it is when death comes prematurely, or violently, or suddenly and without warning, that the shock of bereavement can be life's bitterest experience.

How can one bear it? How pick up the threads of life to carry them forward? Again only a few simple suggestions will be offered.

First, one must accept the inevitable. One may be too stunned at first to believe it can be true. Yet it is true. The person who was a warm, sweet, living presence is no longer here, and will not be again except in memory. No fruitful reordering of life is possible until this fact is accepted.

One must not expect all at once to adjust to it. It is part of "grief's slow wisdom" (The phrase is from a poem by Owen Meredith, in *The Wanderer in Italy*) that only time can heal the poignancy of the hurt. To try to hurry the process is not so much disrespect toward the deceased as the creation of new inner conflicts in the living.

One must give expression without shame to his grief. This does not mean a noisy public

demonstration. But if one feels moved to weep in private or in public, it is far better to do so than to keep it bottled up. Repression can work serious havoc by driving the poison of sorrow inward.

As soon as circumstances permit, grief must be sublimated into action. The worst thing a person can do is to withdraw into himself and brood. The best thing he can do is to carry on the work left unfinished, or do some useful work for others that otherwise would have been done in love for the person no longer present.

If one accepts the view of Christian faith, he can believe in personal immortality. This gives not only comfort and hope but challenge. One can go forward if he believes that the person he loves still lives in spirit and desires in him, not defeat, but victory and advance.

There is no occasion in life when a person needs more to pray for God's sustaining strength, for light to walk by, for inner peace. Though Protestants have usually veered away from praying for the dead, there is no reason why one should not pray for God's watchful care for the person now in God's nearer presence. There is great help to be found in the prayers of a sympathetic, understanding pastor or friend to whom the life with God upon earth is a vital reality. But no prayers of another can take the place of one's own self-offering.

Bereavement can be, not blankness and utter loss, but suffering that with all its poignancy is nevertheless the beginning of a richer fellowship with the Eternal. Much harm has been done by too much moralizing at funerals. But if the bereaved person, alone with God, makes a new dedication of his life to God and his service, great peace and power can ensue. This has not been said better than in George Matheson's great hymn,

O Cross that liftest up my head,  
I dare not ask to fly from Thee;  
I lay in dust life's glory dead,  
And from the ground there blossoms red  
Life that shall endless be.

# Prayer and the Common Life by Georgia Harkness

## Part 3: The Fruits of Prayer

Georgia Harkness was educated at Cornell University, Boston University School of Theology, studied at Harvard & Yale theological seminaries and at Union Theological Seminary of New York. She has taught at Elmira College, Mount Holyoke, and for twelve years was professor of applied theology at Garrett Biblical Institute. In 1950 she became professor of applied theology at the Pacific School of Religion, in Berkeley, California. Published by Abingdon Press, New York, Nashville. Copyright by Stone & Pierce 1968. The material was prepared for Religion Online by Ted & Winnie Brock.

## Chapter 12: Sin and Guilt

We have now for two chapters been discussing the primary sources of human unhappiness, with only a brief preliminary reference to sin. Enough has been said about sin earlier in the book, particularly in chapter three, that I trust no reader will think I regard it as incidental. However, it has purposely been omitted up to this point from the discussion of the relations of prayer to peace of mind. The reasons are, first, that traditional religious thought has often assumed that sin is about all we need to be delivered from, and second, modern liberal thought whether religious or psychological has often made sin too marginal a concept. The reality, the pervasiveness, and the seriousness of sin cannot be overstated, but it needs to be stated in a context which relates it to our total psychic life.

### **Sin and Finiteness**

Our finiteness means anything that limits us. Only God is infinite, and we being human creatures and not the Infinite Creator are limited at many points. Such limitations are interwoven inextricably with those elements of our nature which give us greatness and dignity as sons of God made in his image. Both in body and spirit, some elements emancipate while others chain us, and the same thing may serve either purpose according to its use.

Among the most clamant types of limitations are the body's need to be fed, clothed, sheltered, and periodically rested; the hereditary equipment, mental and physical, which imposes limits on all but far more constrictive limits on some than others; the social environment, which again by no means deals equally with all men; education; the total past experience of the self with a very complex set of habits and memories; biological functions, particularly sex and parenthood; the

bodily mechanism's inevitable tendency to wear out and finally to terminate in death. Some of these limitations are far more elastic than others. Yet in every one of them there are points beyond which it is impossible to go. One can live on little food, but not on none; one can defy his environment, but never wholly escape social claims; one can get more education, but can never know everything; one can live to a ripe old age, but eventually the grim reaper comes his way.

What is the relation of sin to this inevitable fact of limitation?

First, sin exists only where there is enough freedom that it is possible to be or to act otherwise. We have a great deal of freedom in spite of these limitations, and it is in such areas of freedom that our moral responsibility lies.

Second, much of the inertia of the world, which must be sinful in the sight of God, comes from accepting our limitations too soon. To know that there is desperate hunger in Europe and Asia and do nothing about it is sinful callousness. To choose the pleasures of the moment and turn one's back on opportunities for education and personal growth is sinful self-limitation. To find alibis in one's heredity, or early training, or family situation, or occupation for refusing to do what one knows he ought to do and could do is sin.

But in the third place, a vast amount of sin like a great deal of our unhappiness comes from refusal to accept our real limitations. It is when a person wants his own way, defying God and man in his effort to get it, that moral standards crash. Selfishness and self-righteousness are the dominant mood of the person who wants to "run his own show" without restraint. There is not a person living who is not, in some aspect of his life, self-willed and eager to have his own way. Multiply this many millionfold, and what results is a society in which there is not only continual clash between human wills but a continual state of rebellion against God. This means, to put it briefly, that all men are sinners.

The relation of this state of affairs to the disturbances earlier surveyed must now be looked at. Is it a sin to be frustrated, or afraid, or lonely, or sad? If one says no, then what of the self-pity, anger, envy, worry, inaction which so often accompany these states? And will a religious experience of salvation from sin take care of these troubles too? There are fuzzy lines here that are seldom clearly drawn. It may be that they cannot be thus drawn in actuality but they ought to be in understanding.

All of the experiences above noted are results of our finiteness. And to the degree that we actually cannot avoid them it is no sin to have them. Death, for example, inevitably creates loneliness and grief in a loving survivor, and there is no sin in feeling this way. But often after the death of a child from causes which could not be foreseen or prevented a mother is tormented with guilt because she thinks she was in some way responsible. Such self-torture is wrongly based. It is literally true that a person is not to blame for what he does not know -- if he could

not have known it. What we fail to do if we could not do it, or do with evil consequences if we could not foresee or avoid them, may be tragic loss but it is not sin. Recognition of this fact is essential both for tolerance in judging others and such clearness as we can have in judging ourselves.

But there were some big "ifs" a moment back. If we could not know, or do, or avoid! In a vast range of things, we can and don't want to. It is our self-centeredness, our self-will, our desire to have our own way, that perverts our limitations into sin. In great areas of human action man's refusal to accept his finiteness makes him proud, self-righteous, and in rebellion against God; man's selfishness makes him refuse to use his freedom with love toward his fellow men.

## **Guilt and Feeling Guilty**

Sin is offense against God, whether by a spirit of self-willed rebellion or by failure to love our fellow men as God requires. Guilt is the state of being a sinner. To be guilty is to be blameworthy through a misuse of our God-given freedom. All men are sinners; therefore, all men are guilty. But this is not to say that all are equally guilty. It is to divorce religion from morality to deny that there are degrees of guilt. Not conformity to socially accepted standards, but the degree of evilness of motive which only God can fully judge, determines the measure of our guilt. Since most of us tend to judge ourselves less guilty than we are, it is generally a safe principle to be severe toward ourselves and lenient toward others in making such judgments as we must. "Judge not that ye be not judged" is a wise precept that never loses its relevance.

Guilty we are, and still will be even in our best moments. But to *feel guilty* is something else. To feel guilty is to have an uncomfortable feeling of self-condemnation. It can range from vague unrest over something one has done to the most acute forms of self-excoriation. An abnormal sense of guilt over trifles is not only a sign of extreme nervousness, but can have very devastating effects on one's whole mental outlook. To have too little sense of guilt, as some offenders do who commit murder in cold blood with no apparent signs of remorse, is equally a sign of some derangement. Most of us avoid these extremes. But this is not to say we all feel guilty to just the right degree.

The disparity between our real guilt and our guilty feelings is one of the most serious problems of the moral life. Though it is an innate human characteristic to have a conscience, what the conscience gets troubled about is largely a matter of training and experience. Walter G. Everett in his *Moral Values* has pointed out that by surrounding the process with inhibitions, dark hints, and scoldings it would be quite possible to teach a child that it is wrong to eat cherries. On the other hand, many adult Christians not only tolerate but participate with no sense of guilt in practices of race discrimination which, if Jesus was right, must surely be wrong.

The relevance of prayer to this problem is twofold. In the first place, no amount of prayer will take the place of right discernment of good and evil through standards set by the outlook of

Jesus, of right calculation of the probable consequences of our acts, of right knowledge and judgment of the total situation in which our lives are set. To suppose that prayer will take the place of earnest thought on the moral life has led to much acceptance of the *status quo* and hallowing of our own self-centered impulses. It is this which makes religion an opiate in a situation which cries out desperately for social reform.

But in the second place, there is no goodness which does not require prayer for its undergirding. We have dealt mainly in the chapters immediately preceding with the forces in life which make not only happiness but goodness difficult. It is equally needful to remember that prayer is in order when joy floods the soul and duty is delight. Though the Christian life is never easy it ought to be normal to exclaim,

I delight to do thy will, Only God;  
Yea, thy law is within my heart.

To do this with even a minimum of self-deception -- for perhaps no one can say it with full integrity -- requires perspective and vision which come only from God.

Goodness of a high order and genuine saintliness are visible in others, even though it is dangerous and evil to claim them for oneself. When one looks for the secret of such goodness in others or in gratitude thanks God for such a measure of victory as has come to his own life, the explanation lies in humility, loving outreach, a sense of divine forgiveness, and power that comes from dwelling in "the secret place of the Most High."

### **Forgiveness, Human and Divine**

However imperfect our effort to do the will of God, the only genuinely effective release we have from sin and the burden of guilt is in divine forgiveness and a new start. This is not to say that nothing else matters. It is important as far as possible to remove temptation by changes in the situation that surrounds us, to develop strength of will and clearness of moral judgment through any help other people can give us, to utilize whatever inner resources we have for doing right. But when we have done all these things, we shall still be sinners -- either callous sinners headed for further trouble through our badness or sensitive sinners burdened with a feeling of guilt. The only way to have at the same time a sensitive conscience and inner peace is the new orientation of life that comes from the knowledge of being forgiven by God and empowered for a new beginning. All that was said in chapter three about the need of confession of sin and the prayer for cleansing is pertinent here, and need not be repeated.

There is need, however, to go further than religious discussions generally do in regard to the relations of human to divine forgiveness. It is often pointed out that we need to forgive others in order to be open to God's forgiveness -- "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" -- while at the same time we cannot really forgive unless we know

ourselves to be forgiven sinners. Both sides of this paradox are true. What looks like a logical contradiction is resolved in life, for not only the Bible but our own experience tells us that to forgive others as fully as we can is both a condition and a consequence of divine forgiveness.

It is at this point that prayer assumes great importance in relation to resentment. Not positive hate, but a dull, cold, hurt sense of injury is one of the commonest of all human emotions. It may show itself in outbursts of anger and heated words, the outward ferocity of which is soon over while the barbs remain to prick and rankle in the soul. Or, since we are disciplined by social pressures to some measure of civility, the resentment may continue for years under an outward veneer of politeness. Children easily make up and forget their grudges; adults seldom do. And the advice often given to "spit it out and get it out of your system" is not very good advice, for words of anger only drive the injury deeper. The venom of resentment poisons the soul, and not infrequently injures the body also.

Will power is not very effective in the curbing of resentment. Resentment comes from an injured ego, and often the more one asserts his ego, the more injured he feels. Feeling ashamed at being so petty does not banish the pettiness, for fresh occasions keep cropping up which fan the smoldering sparks of resentment into flame.

There is a way to get over it. This is the redirection of life which comes from a sense of being forgiven by God and empowered by him to love even one's enemies. When the love of God takes possession of a life, good will crowds out the sense of injury. One begins praying in love for the person who has injured him. Then one day he realizes -- perhaps to his own surprise -- that he does not need to pray for his enemy any more, for the enemy has become a friend.

But what of the situation when we are on the receiving end of human forgiveness? If a person has sinned against another, he ought to make amends as far as possible, "beg pardon" in a vital and not merely a perfunctory manner, and act in the future with good will and right conduct toward the person injured. Unless one repents enough to do this, his repentance does not go deep enough to open the way for divine forgiveness. If this is done and the other person grants the forgiveness that is asked, the rift is healed.

But what if the other person does not? He may keep on holding a grudge, be suspicious of overtures of friendliness, and refuse to forgive. It is poignant evidence of our finiteness that it is one of the hardest things in the world to feel at peace in one's soul if another person, particularly one whose esteem means something to us, withholds forgiveness. To talk about being forgiven by God may sound very unrealistic under such circumstances.

Yet it is possible even without receiving human forgiveness to have inner peace. Only two things will make it possible. One is vital prayer through which the perspective shifts until the soul has its major orientation, not in human opinion, but in God. The other is to have enough love, born of Christian self-giving, to keep on loving in spite of rebuffs because the other

person's welfare is more important than our own thwarted ego.

From whichever end the problem of human forgiveness impinges on us -- and more often than not, it comes from both ends at once -- the only effective, lasting way to bridge the rift is the love that is begotten of divine forgiveness. This means the willingness, in the spirit of the cross, to go more than half-way toward another to heal the breach because God has gone all the way with us. To do it requires something of Christ's willingness to love without requital. Let no one suppose that it is easy. But when it happens --and it does happen -- not only our sin but our hurt is swallowed up in victory.

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# Prayer and the Common Life by Georgia Harkness

## Part 3: The Fruits of Prayer

Georgia Harkness was educated at Cornell University, Boston University School of Theology, studied at Harvard & Yale theological seminaries and at Union Theological Seminary of New York. She has taught at Elmira College, Mount Holyoke, and for twelve years was professor of applied theology at Garrett Biblical Institute. In 1950 she became professor of applied theology at the Pacific School of Religion, in Berkeley, California. Published by Abingdon Press, New York, Nashville. Copyright by Stone & Pierce 1968. The material was prepared for Religion Online by Ted & Winnie Brock.

## Chapter 13: Prayer and the Peace of the World

Of all the things for which the world now longs and prays, there is none more ardently desired than peace. There is probably not a person living who wants a third world war. Many think it is inevitable. An uncouthed multitude have, mingled with their fears, an eager hope that in some way it can be averted. Not a few of these are praying for peace.

If we are to have a new world with peace, order, and security, there is nothing today more needed than prayer. Through the centuries devout Christians have prayed, "Give peace in our time, O Lord. For it is thou, Lord, only, that makest us dwell in safety." Without prayer in this mood we shall not have the insight, courage, or world vision by which to fashion a world in which all men can be safe.

However, the other side of the paradox is equally true. There is nothing today more needed than action. Unless we do the works that ought to be the fruit and accompaniment of prayer, we cannot hope that in response to even the most fervent prayers God will implant order in the world. There is both great pathos and searching wisdom in Jesus' lament over Jerusalem, "If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace!" When prayer is made a substitute for doing "the things which belong unto peace," it becomes blasphemy.

### **The Requirements For Peace**

The knowledge of what is required for peace in the world is not hidden from men. Though nobody is wise enough to know just what ought to be done in every detail of an infinitely complex world situation, there are general principles and procedures which are clear enough.

As I see them, there are six basic requirements for world peace. Let us enumerate them.

To begin with, there will be no peaceful world unless there is faith that peace is possible. "You can't change human nature." "There always have been wars and there always will be." "If we don't start another war, the Russians will." Such remarks are not only untrue from the standpoint of being ungrounded in evidence, but they carry with them the insidious poison of defeatism.

A second requirement is provision for peaceful change from within each nation. Among all the uncertainties that beset us, there is one thing very certain, namely, that the world will not stand still. If we do not go forward toward peace, we shall go backward and downward toward chaos. And if the nations do not change from within in directions required by basic human rights, changes will be sought by force and violence from without.

The third requirement is a functioning international organization empowered to act for the corporate justice of the world. Toward this an important start has already been made, and instead of decrying the deficiencies of the United Nations organization those who pray for peace ought rather to give it, for its improvement, their prayers and moral support. Yet such an organization requires for its full success something toward which thus far only the barest beginning has been made, the surrender of absolute national sovereignty.

A fourth requirement is economic security for all men. To paraphrase a famous word of Lincoln, "The world cannot remain half hungry and half fed." When society is ordered, or perhaps more correctly we should say disordered, on the basis of a situation in which not only is there starvation as the aftermath of war but millions of people are hungry all their lives, there can be no just and lasting peace. There is bound to be, sooner or later, an outbreak of bitterness, violence, and all the demonic forces that make for war.

The fifth requirement is faith in, understanding of, and practice of democracy. This means a type of democracy that goes far beneath surface slogans. It calls for racial equality; equality of opportunity in education, economic advantage, and a vast range of cultural connections; in short, a society based on democracy of spirit. Probably we shall never have this perfectly while sin and self-will corrupt men's natures. But unless we have to a far greater degree than at present the ordering of society on the basis of the supreme worth of every human being, we shall have repeated outbursts of world tragedy.

Underneath all these requirements is the need of a spiritual world community. It can be called world brotherhood, or world fellowship, or in more formal language "an international ethos." It involves similarity of outlook, or tolerance toward those of different outlook. It has various names, but whatever we call it, it means understanding, friendship, sympathy, and appreciation of other people not those of our race, or our nation, or our economic class, but of all the folk that God has made the world around.

With these six things we can have peace. Without them, I see little prospect that we can have more than an armistice between hostilities. Let me state them again: faith that peace is possible, provision for peaceful change from within the nations, international organization with the surrender of absolute national sovereignty, economic security for all men, faith in and understanding of and practice of the democratic way of life, and a unifying spiritual world community.

## **Prayer and Works of Good Will**

As was noted above and cannot be too strongly emphasized, prayer alone will not bring these things to pass. But it is equally true that without the action born of prayer there is no great likelihood that these requirements will be met. Each of them alone, to say nothing of the other five, is so formidable as to be staggering if undertaken only by human strength and wisdom. Yet all of them are in keeping with what God requires of men, for they are grounded not only in the economic and political conditions of our time but in the Christian gospel. We can believe, without optimistic illusions, that they can be met by an upsurge of reliance upon God and willingness to do by his strength "the things which belong unto peace." There is need to recover an ancient word of wisdom spoken in another time of political confusion and darkness, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

Let us, then, recanvass these requirements to see what if anything prayer can contribute to their fulfillment.

To say that peace is possible means basically faith in God. The Christian world order means that there is an enduring stream of spiritual power that runs through the ups and downs of history, because God is the Lord of history.

In the most searching of prayers we are taught to say, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." In spite of the uncertainties of our time God is delivering us from evil by implanting in the hearts of men and in his Church a new vision of a world that can be free from war. Let us not forget that the song of the angels on the first Christmas morning, "Peace on earth, good will to men," was not from any human voice. It was not the shepherds that sang it; it was not even the wise men that sang it. The voice that sang in that great carol was the voice of God. What God has for us to do within the human scene, he calls us to do because he is the Lord of history who speaks from beyond history of the coming of his kingdom of peace and good will.

We said that for peace, there must be peaceful change from within each nation. There are many ways to put this in political terms. I shall attempt to put it only in religious terminology, though with some political illustrations. Peaceful change from within means on the part of the people of every nation repentance for our corporate sin. It is a wholesome fact that in the recent war, far

more than in any previous one, there was recognition that we are all embroiled in the sin which brought the conflict into being.

But how? During the war I came across a statement which puts more succinctly than I have seen it elsewhere the responsibility of our nation and of Christians within it for the series of events that finally burst forth in world conflagration. I quote from it, not because the United States was alone guilty, but because in expecting the Germans and the Japanese to repent there is danger of evading recognition of our own guilt. It reads:

The second world war is upon us. The responsibility for this great disaster to civilization rests in part upon America. Our selfish isolationism, our refusal to participate in the effort to build a world order of peace and justice through the League of Nations, our aloofness from the World court, our scuttling of the London Economic Conference, our interference with the free flow of goods by high tariffs, our Oriental Exclusion Act, our arming of Japan for her war upon China, are a few of the counts in the indictment which the God and Father of all mankind must bring against us.

The Church itself must bear its full share of responsibility. Our membership includes millions of people. Even as our nation in the period preceding the present war had great power and influence within the world, so church members had great influence within the nation. But too few of us were motivated by a vision of a world-wide community in Christ, transcending nation, race, and class. (From the report of the Committee on World Peace, Southern California-Arizona Conference of the Methodist Church, June, 1942.)

All this is now past history and -- if one may be whimsical about so serious a matter -- "bridges under the water." But what was and was not done then still lives, not only in war's horrible destructiveness but in vindictiveness toward our former enemies, suspicion of our allies, complacency toward the suffering of all but our own circle. Only as we repent much more earnestly than most of us have thus far done for such matters, can the right attitudes prevail for making a just peace. Add to these the more recent and more terrible occurrences in obliteration bombing of German cities and the roasting alive of thousands of civilians, the annihilation without warning of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the dismemberment of Germany and the crippling of her economic life, the starving of her people, the holding -- or condonement of holding -- thousands of prisoners of war in slavery as forced laborers many months after the end of the war, and it becomes apparent that God has still more indictments to bring against us.

(The unanimous moral judgment of a body of Christian theologians on most of these matters is stated in the report on "Atomic Warfare and the Christian Faith" issued by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America.)

But will we repent enough to avoid such policies in the future? There is not much likelihood of any widespread repentance unless the imperatives of the Christian gospel are driven home to

our consciences, not by preaching only, but by prayer. That this must be done has more than a spiritual necessity behind it, for there can be no lasting peace unless it is in considerable measure a just peace, and there can be no just peace unless its outlines are shaped, not by vengeance, but by a spirit of reconciliation and good will.

Let us pass to the third requirement, that of the surrender of absolute national sovereignty in the establishment of an international organization for justice and security. What does that mean in religious language? It means in the words of the first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." It means -- to use a phrase that for awhile was out-moded theology but which is coming back again into its own -- the sovereignty of God. It means that only as we recognize that God is a God above all tribal deities, a God above all national interests, a God who is the Father of all men and who loves the people of all nations as his children, only so can God lead us in the way of peace and justice.

From my undergraduate days at Cornell University one of my deepest impressions is the inscription over the entrance to the main hall of the College of Arts and Sciences, "Above all nations is humanity" To this conviction which an increasing number of thoughtful people now accept must be added another, "Above all humanity is God." We shall have no true internationalism until the world is more nearly viewed from the perspective of the God who is the Father and Ruler of all mankind.

Many movements are on foot which urge, on the one hand, withholding of support from the United Nations organization to further national interests, and on the other, federal world government embracing ex-enemy states and all others. The isolationism of the first policy can only enhance conflict by its collective selfishness and head toward future wars in a world meant by nature to be one. The second policy is right in its goals but sometimes greatly oversimplifies the steps needed to arrive at them. We shall not move beyond the United Nations organization until we make much further use of what is possible through it.

How then can our idealism be farseeing, global in its outreach, and realistic enough to move toward true internationalism? A great deal of education in political affairs is needed, for prayer is no substitute for political wisdom. But such education is not likely to be sought, or very effective upon action when imparted, unless among the rank and file of citizens there are strong spiritual foundations. Statesmen are of varying degrees of moral and spiritual discernment, but none can move far beyond what the people will support. It is therefore imperative not only that there be much prayer for the delegates charged with responsibilities in the United Nations, but that there be much more linkage of prayer with education for peace and political action.

As a fourth requirement, a just and lasting peace requires economic security for all men. This means the subordination of private gain to the welfare of the community -- not the group immediately surrounding us, but the total human community.

In the foreground, more pressing than any other requirement of an economic nature, is the need to relieve suffering the world around. Both a Christian humanitarian concern and political expediency require it. To look backward again for a moment, after the first world war the hunger blockade imposed on Germany and kept up for several months after Germany had surrendered was one of the things that made the German spirit rankle until it could be goaded into a second world war. If the starvation and want now pervading central Europe are not soon alleviated, this may go a long way toward laying the foundations of a third world war. (Long before the danger of the advance of communism on the heels of hunger became current in political discussion, Christian observers pointed out this possibility. See for example "The Fight for Germany" by Reinhold Niebuhr in *Life*, October 21, 1946, reprinted in the January, 1947, issue of *The Reader's Digest*.) Economic insecurity for one people means the weakening of economic foundations in the rest of the world, as we saw with terrible seriousness in the Great Depression. Today the economic crippling of Germany retards the economic recovery of all Europe, and has its repercussions in every industrial nation. As it has been put with blunt finality, "You can't trade with a graveyard. Your customers have to be above ground." (An argument used in asking for UNRRA appropriations).

Yet knowledge of these facts will not make people magnanimous. The only thing that will do this is sensitiveness to human need. Economic security for all men means something about colonies, about tariffs, about the free access of goods to those people who must have raw materials and markets if they are to have in normal times a standard of living adequate to relieve hunger and permit the free development of body and spirit. If the people who now have not only comforts but luxuries are to be brought to accept the economic and political changes needed to achieve this end throughout the world, changes in inner perspective are necessary. Prayer has a bearing even on our business pursuits.

This leads to our fifth point, the need of democracy as a foundation for peace. In its ideological foundations political democracy is derived both from the Stoic conception of a natural law of human equality and the Christian idea of the worth and dignity of all men in the sight of God. As we see it functioning, it is a mixture of idealism and expediency with a great many bureaucratic and even some totalitarian elements corrupting its purity. It ought, therefore, never to be identified with Christianity; and "the American way of life" of which we heard so much during the war lacks much of being the Kingdom of God. Yet political democracy is the best vehicle we have for the expression in society of the requirements of the Christian gospel. What is needed is not to abandon what we have but to make what we have better through bringing more of the everyday, person-to-person democracy of Jesus into our group relations.

This means so many things that the bare enumeration of a few must suffice. At the head of the list stands the race question. With thirteen million Negroes in the United States denied privileges in housing, employment, education, recreation, medical care, and many other basic needs, this can hardly be called a democratic country. Race discrimination is the most pervasive and deadly poison in the world, with Russia and Brazil the only countries that are relatively free

from it. With two-thirds of the world's population colored, a war between Russia and the colored peoples of the Orient on one side and the white democracies of the West on the other would not be a happy prospect to contemplate. For peace and survival, if not for higher Christian considerations, racism must be ended.

Another affront to democracy is in the misuses of industrial power, whether by labor or management. Something has been done in this field towards arbitration; very little has been done to bring the insights of the Christian gospel to bear upon industrial conflict in creating attitudes of understanding, tolerance, the esteeming of persons as persons in whatever economic stratum they are. Here the field is wide open, not merely for the indictment of wrong in another person or group which is the usual approach, but for the appreciation and creation of right through the spiritual resources released in prayer.

One could go on enumerating undemocratic elements in our society -- the vast disparity in incomes and living conditions, the myth of equal opportunity for education and employment, the regimentation and militarization of the public mind, the threat to democracy which would ensue if a system of compulsory peacetime military training should be adopted. The list is long. The remedies are not simple. Yet however many steps need to be taken, nothing but a spiritual vision born of prayer will enable us to approximate Jesus' estimate of every man, woman, and child as precious in God's sight. And until we have this vision, nothing we do will be more than patchwork.

This brings us to our last point, the need of underlying spiritual foundations in a world community. It is here beyond all question that the Church -- the one community that transcends all divisions of nation, race, language, class, or culture can make its fullest contribution. It has been making this contribution over the years as missionaries have gone to remote places to serve "the last, the least, the lost" and as education in world-mindedness has been given in many missionary societies across the land. This world outreach has borne fruit in the ecumenical movement which centers in the World Council of Churches. It must be greatly enlarged as members of local congregations more fully understand and take their places in a world-wide Christian fellowship. And it must move in the direction, not only of bringing the churches together, but through the churches of bringing the world together.

To lay the foundations of world brotherhood through the churches we must have sermons, discussion groups, service projects, directed reading, and much else. It must be got into the emotional life through story, drama, and song. It must be an inherent part of religious education, not something occasionally tacked on. Two approaches, however, are more vital than any others, and these approaches anybody who cares enough can make.

One of these is personal conversation. It is by personal witness and the give-and-take of opinion in conversation, far more than by public addresses that attitudes are molded. To speak one's mind, tactfully but firmly, whenever occasions arise that call for such witness -- far from being

futile -- is the most effective social force there is. What is at first heard and perhaps scoffed at, if it is true gets listened to, thought about, and finally accepted by enough people to place behind it the power of public opinion. Slavery would never have been abolished in this or any other country if there had not first been a great deal of talk about it.

The other approach is prayer. As we bring before God in intercession not only the needs of our own people but those of the people of all lands, the circle of our own interest grows larger, and we are moved to service in such ways as are open. As we pray in loving concern for our enemies, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," enmity recedes, and reconciliation replaces vindictiveness. As we seek in prayer to lay ourselves before God for his service, duty becomes clearer, and staying-power is given for the slow, hard steps that must be taken to fashion a peaceful world.

We can have peace in the world if enough people put away complacency and unrest to find within their souls the peace that leads to works of good will. There is no likelihood of a reconstructed world without reconstructed individuals. Without the discovery of spiritual resources by great numbers of men and women the future is dark. But such resources are available for the taking. So we come back to what was said at the beginning of this book -- that of all the many things the world now needs, none is more needed than an upsurge of vital, God-centered, intelligently-grounded prayer.

We can have peace. We can have it by the help of God, as we look to Jesus Christ, our Leader and Lord. There was never a time when the words of Jesus at the Last Supper had more relevance than they have at this moment when all over the world men's souls are burdened with fear and unrest. Across the centuries we hear him say:

Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me. . . . Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful. . . . These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.