

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN PRAYER

JOHN OWEN



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ABOUT THIS BOOK



A rigorous defense of the **Holy Spirit's indispensable role in prayer**, grounded in Zechariah 12:10 and Romans 8:26. Owen argues that the Spirit, promised as a "Spirit of Grace and Supplications," both **inclines believers' hearts** toward prayer and **gifts them with spiritual ability** to pray according to God's will. He refutes prescribed liturgical forms as a substitute for Spirit-led prayer, examines contemplative prayer traditions, and makes the case that **free, Spirit-assisted prayer** is the normative pattern of the New Testament, superior to human compositions and essential to the vitality of Christian worship.



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PREFACE TO THE READER



It is altogether needless to premise anything in this place, concerning the necessity, benefit and use of prayer in general. All men will readily acknowledge, that as without it there can be no religion at all, so the life and exercise of all religion does principally consist therein. Wherefore that way and profession in religion, which gives the best directions for it, with the most effectual motives unto it, and most abounds in its observance, has therein the advantage of all others. Hence also it follows, that as all errors which either pervert its nature, or countenance a neglect of a due attendance unto it, are pernicious in religion; so differences in opinion, and disputes about any of its vital concerns cannot but be dangerous, and of evil consequence. For on each hand, these pretend unto an immediate regulation of Christian practice in a matter of the highest importance unto the glory of God, and the salvation of the souls of men. Whereas therefore there is nothing more requisite in our religion, than that true apprehensions of its nature and use be preserved in the minds of men, the declaration and defense of them, when they are opposed or unduly traduced, is not only justifiable but necessary also.

This is the design of the ensuing discourse. There is in the Scripture a promise of the Holy Ghost to be given unto the church as a Spirit of grace and supplications. As such also, there are particular operations ascribed unto him. Mention is likewise frequently made of the aids and assistances which he affords unto believers in and unto their prayers. Hence they are said to pray always, with all prayer and supplications in the Spirit. Of the want of these aids and assistances to enable them to pray according to the mind of God, some do profess that they have experience, as also of their efficacy unto that end when they are received. Accordingly these regulate themselves in this whole duty, in the expectation or improvement of them. And there are those who, being accommodated with other aids of another nature, to the same purpose, which they esteem sufficient for them, do look on the former profession and plea of an ability to pray by the aids and assistances of the Holy Spirit, to be a mere empty pretense.

And in the management of these different apprehensions, those at variance seem to be almost barbarians one to another, the one being not able to understand what the other do vehemently affirm. For they are determined in their minds, not merely by notions of truth and falsehood, but by the experience which they have of the things themselves; a sense and understanding whereof they can by no means communicate unto one another. For whereas spiritual experience of truth, is above all other demonstrations unto them that do enjoy it; so it cannot be made an argument for the enlightening and conviction of others. Hence those who plead for prayer by virtue of supplies of gifts and grace from the Holy Spirit, do admire that the use or necessity of them herein should be contradicted. Nor can they understand what they intend, who

seem to deny, that it is every man's duty in all his circumstances, to pray as well as he can, and to make use in his so doing, of the assistance of the Spirit of God. And by prayer they mean that, which the most eminent and only proper signification of the word does denote, namely, that which is vocal. Some, on the other side, are so far from the understanding of these things, or a conviction of their reality, that with the highest confidence they despise and reproach the pretense of them. To pray in the Spirit is used as a notable expression of scorn; the thing signified being esteemed fond and contemptible.

Moreover in such cases as this, men are apt to run into excesses in things and ways, which they judge expedient, either to countenance their own opinions, or to depress and decry those of them from whom they differ. And no instances can be given in this kind of greater extravagancies, than in that under consideration. For hence it is, that some do ascribe the original of free prayer amongst us by the assistance of the Spirit of God, unto an invention of the Jesuits; which is no doubt, to make them the authors of the Bible. And others do avow that all forms of prayer used amongst us in public worship, are mere traductions from the Roman breviaries and missal. But these things will be afterwards spoken unto. They are here mentioned only to evince the use of a sedate inquiry into the truth or the mind of God in this matter, which is the design of the ensuing discourse.

That which should principally guide us in the management of this inquiry, is, that it be done unto spiritual advantage and edification, without strife or contention. Now this cannot be without a diligent and constant attendance unto the two sole rules of judgment herein, namely, Scripture-revelation and the experience of

them that do believe. For although the latter is to be regulated by the former; yet where it is so, it is a safe rule unto them in whom it is. And in this case, as in water, face answers unto face; so do Scripture revelation and spiritual experience unto one another. All other reasonings from customs, traditions, and feigned consequences, are here of no use. The inquiries before us are concerning the nature of the work of the Holy Spirit in the aids and assistances which he gives unto believers in and unto their prayers, according unto the mind of God, as also what are the effects and fruits of that work of his, or what are the spiritual abilities which are communicated unto them thereby. Antecedently hereunto, it should be inquired, whether indeed there be any such thing or no, or whether they are only vainly pretended unto by some that are deceived. But the determination hereof, depending absolutely on the foregoing inquiry, it may be handled jointly with them, and needs no distinct consideration. He that would not deceive nor be deceived in his inquiry after these things, must diligently attend unto the two fore-mentioned rules of Scripture testimony and experience. Other safe guides he has none. Yet will it also be granted, that from the light of nature, whence this duty springs, wherein it is founded, from whence as unto its essence it cannot vary, as also from generally received principles of religion suited thereunto, with the uncorrupted practice of the church of God in former ages, much direction may be given unto the understanding of those testimonies, and examination of that experience.

Wherefore the foundation of the whole ensuing discourse is laid in the consideration and exposition of some of those texts of Scripture wherein these things are expressly revealed and proposed unto us; for to insist on them all, were endless. This we prin-

cipally labor in, as that whereby not only must the controversy be finally determined; but the persons that manage it be eternally judged. What is added concerning the experience of them that do believe the truth herein, claims no more of argument unto them that have it not, than it has evidence of proceeding from, and being suited unto those divine testimonies. But whereas the things that belong unto it, are of great moment unto them who do enjoy it, as containing the principal acts, ways and means of our intercourse and communion with God by Christ Jesus, they are here somewhat at large on all occasions insisted on for the edification of those whose concernment lies only in the practice of the duty itself. Unless therefore it can be proved, that the testimonies of the Scripture produced and insisted on, do not contain that sense and understanding which the words do determinately express (for that only is pleaded,) or that some have not an experience of the truth and power of that sense of them, enabling them to live unto God in this duty according to it, all other contests about this matter are vain and useless.

But yet there is no such work of the Holy Spirit pleaded herein, as should be absolutely inconsistent with, or condemnatory of all those outward aids of prayer, by set composed forms, which are almost everywhere made use of. For the device being ancient, and in some degree or measure received generally in the Christian world, (though a no less general apostasy in many things from the rule of truth at the same time, in the same persons and places, cannot be denied) I shall not judge of what advantage it may be, or has been unto the souls of men, nor what acceptance they have found therein, where it is not too much abused. The substance of what we plead from Scripture and experience is only this; that whereas God

has graciously promised his Holy Spirit, as a Spirit of grace and supplications, unto them that do believe, enabling them to pray according to his mind and will, in all the circumstances and capacities wherein they are, or which they may be called unto; it is the duty of them who are enlightened with the truth hereof, to expect those promised aids and assistances in and unto their prayers, and to pray according to the ability which they receive thereby. To deny this to be their duty, or to deprive them of their liberty to discharge it on all occasions, rises up in direct opposition unto the divine instruction of the sacred Word.

But moreover as was before intimated, there are some generally allowed principles, which though not always duly considered, yet cannot at any time be modestly denied, that give direction towards the right performance of our duty herein. And they are these that follow.

1. It is the duty of every man to pray for himself. The light of nature, multiplied divine commands, with our necessary dependence on God and subjection unto him, give life and light unto this principle. To own a divine being, is to own that which is to be prayed unto, and that it is our duty so to do.

2. It is the duty of some, by virtue of natural relation, or of office, to pray with and for others also. So is it the duty of parents and masters of families to pray with and for their children and households. This also derives from those great principles of natural light, that God is to be worshipped in all societies of his own erection; and that those in the relations mentioned, are obliged to seek the chiefest good of them that are committed unto their care; and so is it frequently enjoined in the Scripture. In like manner it is the duty of ministers to pray with and for their flocks, by virtue

of especial institution. These things cannot be, nor so far as I know of, are questioned by any: but practically the most of men live in an open neglect of their duty herein. Were this but diligently attended unto from the first instance of natural and moral relations, unto the instituted offices of ministers and public teachers, we should have less contests about the nature and manner of praying than at present we have. It is holy practice that must reconcile differences in religion, or they will never be reconciled in this world.

3. Every one who prays either by himself and for himself, or with others and for them, is obliged as unto all the uses, properties and circumstances of prayer, to pray as well as he is able. For by the light of nature every one is obliged in all instances to serve God with his best. The confirmation and exemplification hereof, was one end of the institution of sacrifices under the Old Testament. For it was ordained in them, that the chief and best of every thing was to be offered unto God. Neither the nature of God, nor our own duty towards him, will admit that we should expect any acceptance with him, unless our design be to serve him with the best that we have, both for matter and manner. So is the mind of God himself declared in the prophet. If you offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if you offer the lame and the sick, is it not evil? You brought that which was torn, and that which was lame and sick; should I accept this at your hands, says the Lord? But cursed be the deceiver, who has in his flock a male, and vows and sacrifices unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great king, says the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.

4. In our reasonable service, the best wherewith we can serve God, consists in the intense sincere actings of the faculties and affections of our minds, according unto their respective powers,

through the use of the best assistances we can attain. And if we omit, or forgo in any instance, the exercise of them according to the utmost of our present ability, we offer unto God the sick and the lame. If men can take it on themselves in the sight of God, that the invention and use of set forms of prayer and other the like outward modes of divine worship, is the best that he has endowed them withal for his service, they are free from the force of this consideration.

5. There is no man but, in the use of the aids which God has prepared for that purpose, he is able to pray according to the will of God, and as he is in duty obliged, whether he pray by himself and for himself, or with others and for them also. There is not by these means perfection attainable in the performance of any duty: neither can all attain the same measure and degree as unto the usefulness of prayer and manner of praying; but every one may attain unto that wherein he shall be accepted with God, and according unto the duty whereunto he is obliged, whether personally or by virtue of any relation wherein he stands unto others. To suppose that God requires duties of men which they cannot perform in an acceptable manner, by virtue and in the use of those aids which he has prepared and promised unto that end, is to reflect dishonor on his goodness and wisdom in his commands. Wherefore no man is obliged to pray in any circumstances by virtue of any relation or office, but he is able so to do according unto what is required of him; and what he is not able for, he is not called unto.

6. We are expressly commanded to pray, but are nowhere commanded to make prayers for ourselves, much less for others. This is superadded for a supposed conveniency unto the light of nature

and Scripture-institution.

7. There is assistance promised unto believers, to enable them to pray according unto the will of God; there is no assistance promised, to enable any to make prayers for others. The former part of this assertion is explained and proved in the ensuing discourse; and the latter cannot be disproved. And if it should be granted, that the work of composing prayers for others is a good work, falling under the general aids of the Holy Spirit necessary unto every good work whatever; yet are not those aids of the same kind and nature with his actual assistances in and unto prayer, as he is the Spirit of grace and supplications. For in the use of those assistances by grace and gifts, every man that uses them does actually pray, nor are they otherwise to be used: but men do not pray in the making and composing forms of prayer, though they may do so in the reading of them afterward.

8. Whatever forms of prayer were given out unto the use of the church by divine authority and inspiration, as the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms or prayers of David, they are to have their everlasting use therein, according unto what they were designed unto. And be their end and use what it will, they can give no more warranty for human compositions unto the same end and the injunction of their use, than for other human writings to be added unto the Scripture.

These and the like principles which are evident in their own light and truth, will be of use to direct us in the argument in hand, so far as our present design is concerned therein. For it is the vindication of our own principles and practice, that is principally designed, and not an opposition unto those of other men. Wherefore, as was before intimated, neither these principles, nor the divine

testimonies, which we shall more largely insist upon, are engaged to condemn all use of set forms of prayers as sinful in themselves or absolutely unlawful, or such as so vitiate the worship of God as to render it wholly unacceptable in them that choose so to worship him. For God will accept the persons of those who sincerely seek him, though through invincible ignorance they may mistake in sundry things as unto the way and manner of his worship. And how far as unto particular instances of miscarriage this rule may extend, he only knows; and of men, whatever they pretend, not one. And where any do worship God in Christ, with an evidence of holy fear and sincerity, and walk in a conversation answerable unto the rule of the Gospel, though they have manifold corruptions in the way of their worship, I shall never judge severely either of their present acceptance with God, or of their future eternal condition. This is a safe rule with respect unto others; our own is, to attend with all diligence unto what God has revealed concerning his worship, and absolutely comply therewith, without which we can neither please him, nor come to the enjoyment of him.

I do acknowledge also that the general prevalency of the use of set forms of prayer of human invention in Christian assemblies for many ages (more than any other argument that is urged for their necessity) requires a tenderness in judgment as unto the whole nature of them, and the acceptance of their persons in the duty of prayer by whom they are used. Yet no consideration of this usage, seeing it is not warranted by the Scriptures, nor is of apostolical example, nor is countenanced by the practice of the primitive churches, ought to hinder us from discerning and judging of the

evils and inconveniences that have ensued thereon; nor from discovering how far they are unwarrantable as unto their imposition. And these evils may be here a little considered.

The beginnings of the introduction of the use of set forms of prayer of human composition, into the worship of the church, are altogether uncertain. But that the reception of them was progressive by new additions from time to time, is known to all. For neither Rome, nor the present Roman missal were built in a day. In that and the breviaries did the whole worship of the church issue, at least in these parts of the world. No man is so fond as to suppose that they were of one entire composition, the work of one age, of one man, or any assembly of men at the same time; unless they be so brutishly devout as to suppose that the mass-book was brought from heaven unto the Pope by an angel, as the Alcoran was to Mahomet. It is evident indeed, that the common people, at least, of the communion of the papal church, do believe it to be as much of a divine original, as the Scripture, and that on the same grounds of the proposal of it unto them as the only means of divine worship, by their church. Hence is it unto them an idol. But it is well enough known how from small beginnings by various accessions it increased unto its present form and station. And this progress in the reception of devised forms of prayer in the worship of the church, carried along with it sundry pernicious concomitants, which we may briefly consider.

1. In and by the additions made unto the first received forms, the superstitious and corrupt doctrines of the apostasy in several ages, were insinuated into the worship of the church. That such superstitious and corrupt doctrines were gradually introduced into the church, is acknowledged by all Protestants, and is sufficiently

known; the supposition of it is the sole foundation of the Reformation. And by this artifice of new additions to received forms, they were from time to time admitted into, and stated in the worship of the church, by which principally to this very day, they preserve their station in the minds of men. Were that foundation of them taken away, they would quickly fall to the ground. By this means did those abominations of transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the mass, both leaven and poison the whole worship of the public assemblies, and imposed themselves on the credulity of the people. The disputes of speculative men, superstitious and subtle, about these things, had never infected the minds of the common people of Christians nor ever been the means of that idolatry, which at length spread itself over the whole visible church of these parts of the world, had not this device of prescribed forms of prayer wherein those abominations were not only expressed, but graphically represented and acted (so violently affecting the carnal minds of men superstitious and ignorant) imposed them on their practice; which gradually hardened them with an obdurate credulity. For although they saw no ground or reason doctrinally to believe what was proposed unto them about transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the mass, and might easily have seen that they were contradictory unto all the conductive principles of men and Christians, namely faith, reason and sense; yet they deceived themselves into an obstinate pretense of believing in the notion of truth, of what they had admitted in practice. Men I say of corrupt minds, might have disputed long enough about vagrant forms, accidents without subjects, transmutation of substances without accidents, sacrifices bloody and unbloody, before they had vitiated the whole worship of the church with gross idolatry; had not this

engine been made use of for its introduction; and the minds of men by this means inveigled with the practice of it. But when the whole matter and means of it was gradually insinuated into, and at length comprised in those forms of prayer, which they were obliged continually to use in divine service, their whole souls became leavened and tainted with a confidence in, and love unto these abominations.

Hence it was, that the doctrines concerning the sacraments and the whole worship of God in the church, as they became gradually corrupted, were not at once objectively and doctrinally proposed to the minds and considerations of men, to be received or rejected according to the evidence they had of their truth or error (a method due to the constitution of our natures) but gradually insinuated into their practice by additional forms of prayer, which they esteemed themselves obliged to use and observe. This was the gilding of the poisonous pill, whose operation, when it was swallowed, was to bereave men of their sense, reason, and faith, and make them madly avow that to be true, which was contrary unto them all.

Besides, as was before intimated, the things themselves that were the ground-work of idolatry, namely transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the mass, were so acted and represented in those forms of worship, as to take great impression on the minds of carnal men until they were mad on their idols. For when all religion and devotion is let into the soul by fancy, and imagination excited by outward spectacles, they will make mad work in the world, as they have done, and yet continue to do. But hereof I shall speak in the next place.

It had therefore been utterly impossible that an idolatrous worship should have been introduced into the church in general, had not the opinion of the necessity of devised forms of prayer been first universally received. At least it had not been so introduced and so established, as to procure and cause the shedding of the blood of thousands of holy persons for not complying with it. By this means alone was brought in that fatal engine of the church's ruin, from whose murderous efficacy few escaped with their lives, or souls. Had all churches continued in the liberty wherein they were placed and left by our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles, it is possible that many irregularities might have prevailed in some of them, and many mistakes been admitted in their practice; yet this monster of the mass devouring the souls of the most, and drinking the blood of many, had never been conceived nor brought forth, at least not nourished into that terrible form and power wherein it appeared and acted for many ages in the world. And upon the account thereof it is not without cause that the Jews say that the Christians received their Tephilloth or prayer books from Armillus, that is, Antichrist.

It is true, that when the doctrine of religion is determined and established by civil laws, the laws of the nation where it is professed, as the rule of all outward advantages, liturgies composed in compliance therewithal, are not so subject to this mischief: but this arises from that external cause alone. Otherwise wherever those who have the ordering of these things do deviate from the truth once received, as it is common for the most so to do, forms of prayers answerable unto those deviations would quickly be insinuated. And the present various liturgies that are amongst the several

sorts of Christians in the world, are of little other use than to establish their minds in their peculiar errors, which by this means they adhere unto as articles of their faith.

And hereby did God suffer contempt to be cast upon the supposed wisdom of men about his worship and the ways of it. They would not trust unto his institutions and his care of them; but did first put the ark into a cart, and then like Uzzah put forth a hand of force to hold it when it seemed to shake. For it is certain that, if not the first invention, yet the first public recommendation and prescription of devised forms of prayer unto the practice of the churches, were designed to prevent the insinuation of false opinions and corrupt modes of worship into the public administrations. This was feared from persons infected with heresy that might creep into their ministry. So the Orthodox and the Arians composed prayers, hymns and doxologies, the one against the other, inserting in them passages confirming their own profession, and condemning that of their adversaries. Now however this invention might be approved whilst it kept within bounds, yet it proved the Trojan horse that brought in all evils into the city of God in its belly. For he who was then at work in the mystery of iniquity, laid hold on the engine and occasion to corrupt those prayers, which by the constitution of them who had obtained power in them, the churches were obliged and confined unto. And this took place effectually in the constitution of the worship of the second race of Christians, or the nations that were converted unto the Christian faith after they had destroyed the western Roman Empire. To speak briefly and plainly, it was by this means alone, namely, of the necessary use of devised forms of prayer in the assemblies of the church, and of them alone, that the mass, with its

transubstantiation and sacrifice, and all the idolatrous worship wherewith they were accompanied, were introduced, until the world inflamed with those idols, drenched itself in the blood of the saints and martyrs of Christ for their testimony against those abominations. And if it had been sooner discovered, that no church was entrusted with power from Christ to frame and impose such devised forms of worship, as are not warranted by the Scripture, innumerable evils might have been prevented. For that there were no liturgies composed, no imposed use of them, in the primitive churches for some ages, is demonstratively proved with the very same arguments whereby we prove that they had neither the mass, nor the use of images in their worship. For besides the utter silence of them in the apostolical writings, and those of the next ensuing ages, which is sufficient to discard their pretense unto any such antiquity, there are such descriptions given of the practice of the churches in their worship, as are inconsistent with them and exclusive of them; besides, they give such a new face of divine worship, so different from the portraiture of it delivered in the Scripture, as is hardly reconcilable thereunto, and so not quickly embraced in the church.

I do not say, that this fatal consequence of the introduction of humanly devised set forms of prayer in the worship of the church in the horrible abuse made of it, is sufficient to condemn them as absolutely unlawful. For where the opinions leading unto such idolatrous practices are openly rejected and condemned as was before intimated, there all the causes, means and occasions of that idolatry may be taken out of them, and separate from them, as it is in the liturgies of the Reformed churches whether imposed or left free. But it is sufficient to lay in the balance against that veneration

which their general observance in many ages may invite or procure. And it is so also to warrant the disciples of Christ to stand fast in the liberty wherewith he has made them free.

Another evil which either accompanied or closely followed on the introduction of devised forms of prayer into the church, was a supposed necessity of adorning the observance of them with sundry arbitrary ceremonies. And this also in the end as is confessed among all Protestants, increased superstition in its worship, with various practices leading unto idolatry. It is evident that the use of free prayer in church administrations, can admit of no ceremonies but such as are either of divine institution, or are natural circumstances of the actions wherein the duties of worship do materially consist. Divine institution and natural light, are the rules of all that order and decency which is needful unto it. But when these devised forms were introduced, with a supposition of their necessity and sole use in the church in all acts of immediate worship, men quickly found that it was needful to set them off with adventitious ornaments. Hereon there was gradually found out and prescribed unto constant observation so many outward postures and gestures, with attires, music, bowings, cringes, crossings, veneration, censings, altars, images, crucifixes, responds, alternatives, and such a rabble of other ceremonies, as rendered the whole worship of the church ludicrous, burdensome and superstitious. And hereon it came to pass that he who is to officiate in divine service, is obliged to learn and practice so many turnings and windings of himself, eastward and westward, to the altar, to the wall, to the people; so many gestures and postures in kneeling, rising, standings, bowings, less and profound, secret and loud speakings, in a due observance of the interposition of crossings, with removals

from one place to another, with provision of attires, in their variety of colors and respect to all the furniture of their altars, as are difficult to learn, and foolishly antic in their practice, above all the preparations of players for the stage. Injunctions for these and the like observances, are the subject of the rubric of the missal, and the cautels of the mass.

That these things have not only no affinity with the purity, simplicity and spirituality of evangelical worship, but were invented utterly to exclude it out of the church and the minds of men, needs no proof unto any, who ever read the Scripture with due consideration. Nor is the office of the ministry less corrupted and destroyed by it. For besides a [reconstructed: sorry] cunning in this practice, and the reading of some forms of words in an accommodation unto these rites, there was little more besides an easy good intention to do what he does, and not the quite contrary, required to make any one man or woman (as it once at least fell out) to administer in all sacred worship.

Having utterly lost the Spirit of grace and supplications, neglecting at best all his aids and assistances, and being void of all experience in their minds of the power and efficacy of prayer by virtue of them, they found it necessary by these means to set off and recommend their dead forms. For the lifeless carcass of their forms merely alone, were no more meet to be esteemed prayer, than a tree or a log was to be esteemed a God, before it was shaped, fashioned, gilded and adorned. By this means they taught the image of prayer which they had made, to speak and act a part to the satisfaction of the spectators. For the bare reading of a form of words, especially as it was ordered in an unknown tongue, could never have given the least contentment unto the multitude, had it

not been set off with this variety of ceremonies composed to make an appearance of devotion and sacred veneration. Yet when they had done their utmost, they could never equal the ceremonies and rites of the old temple-worship in beauty, glory and order; nor yet those of the heathen in their sacred Eleusinian mysteries for number, solemnity, gravity and appearance of devotion. Rejecting the true glory of Gospel-worship, which the apostle expressly declares to consist in the administration of the Spirit, they substituted that in the room thereof, which debased the profession of Christian religion beneath that of the Jews and pagans; especially considering that the most of their ceremonies were borrowed of them or stolen from them. But I shall never believe that their conversion of the holy prayers of the church by an open contempt of the whole work of the Spirit of God in them, into a theatrical pompous observance of ludicrous rites and ceremonies, can give so much as present satisfaction unto any who are not given up to strong delusions to believe a lie. The exercise of ingrafted prevalent superstition, will appease a natural conscience; outward forms and representations of things believed, will please the fancy, and exercise the imagination; variety and frequent changes of modes, gestures and postures, with a sort of prayer always beginning and always ending, will entertain present thoughts and outward senses, so as that men finding themselves by these means greatly affected, may suppose that they pray very well, when they do nothing less. For prayer consisting in a holy exercise of faith, love, trust, and delight in God, acting themselves in the representation of our wills and desires unto him, through the aid and assistance of the Holy Ghost, may be absent, where all these are most effectually present.

This also produced all the pretended ornaments of their temples, chapels, and oratories, by crucifixes, images, a multiplication of altars, with relics, tapers, vestments and other utensils.

None of these things whereby Christian religion is corrupted and debased, would ever have come into the minds of men, had not a necessity of their invention been introduced by the establishment of set forms of prayer, as the only way and means of divine worship. And wherever they are retained, proportionably unto the principles of the doctrine which men profess, some such ceremonies must be retained also. I will not therefore deny but that here lies the foundation of all our present differences about the manner of divine worship. Suppose a necessity of confining the solemn worship of the church unto set forms of prayer, and I will grant that sundry rituals and ceremonies may be well judged necessary to accompany their observance. For without them they will quickly grow obsolete and unsatisfactory. And if on the other hand, free prayer in the church be allowed, it is evident that nothing but the grace and gifts of the Holy Ghost, with a due regard unto the decency of natural circumstances is required in divine service, or can be admitted therein.

Neither yet is this consequent, how inseparable soever it seems from the sole public use of set forms of prayer in sacred administrations, pleaded to prove them either in themselves or their use to be unlawful. The design of this consideration is only to show, that they have been so far abused, that they are so subject to be abused, and do so always stand in need to be abused, that they may attain the ends aimed at by them, as much weakens the plea of the necessity of their imposition.

For this also is another evil that has attended their invention. The guides of the church after a while were not contented to make use of humanly devised forms of prayer, confining themselves unto their use alone in all public administrations; but moreover they judged it meet to impose the same practice on all whom they esteemed to be under their power. And this at length they thought lawful yea necessary to do on penalties ecclesiastical and civil, and in the issue capital. When this injunction first found a prevalent entertainment is very uncertain. For the first two or three centuries there were no systems of composed forms of prayer used in any church whatever, as has been proved. Afterwards, when they began to be generally received, on such grounds and for such reasons as I shall not here insist on (but may do so in a declaration of the nature and use of spiritual gifts, with their continuance in the church, and an inquiry into the causes of their decay) the authority of some great persons did recommend the use of their compositions unto other churches, even such as had a mind to make use of them, as they saw good. But as unto this device of their imposition, confining churches not only unto the necessary use of them in general, but unto a certain composition and collection of them, we are beholding for all the advantage received thereby, unto the Popes of Rome alone, among the churches of the second edition. For from their own good inclination, and by their own authority, without the advice of councils, or pretense of traditions, the two Gorgon's heads, whereby in other cases they frighten poor mortals, and turn them into stones; by various degrees they obtained a pretense of right to impose them, and did it accordingly. For when the use and benefit of them had been for a while pleaded, and thence a progress made unto their necessity, it was needful that they should

be imposed on all churches and Christians by their ecclesiastical authority. But when afterwards they had insinuated into them, and lodged in their bowels, the two great idols of transubstantiation and the unbloody sacrifice, not only mulcts personal and pecuniary, but capital punishments were enacted and executed to enforce their observance. This brought fire and faggot into Christian religion, making havoc of the true church of Christ, and shedding blood of thousands. For the martyrdom of all that have suffered death in the world for their testimony against the idolatries of the mass, derives originally from this spring alone of the necessary imposition of complete liturgical forms of prayer. For this is the sole foundation of the Roman breviary and missal, which have been the Abaddons of the church of Christ in these parts of the world, and are ready once more to be so again. Take away this foundation, and they all fall to the ground. And it is worth consideration, of what kind that principle is, which was naturally improved unto such pernicious effects; which quickly was found to be a meet and effectual engine in the hand of Satan, to destroy and murder the servants of Christ.

Had the churches of Christ been left unto their primitive liberty under the enjoined duties of reading and expounding the Scripture, of singing Psalms to the praise of God, of the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and of diligent preaching the Word, all of them with prayer according unto the abilities and spiritual gifts of them who did preside in them, as it is evident that they were for some ages, it is impossible for any man to imagine what evils would have ensued thereon, that might be of any consideration, in comparison of those enormous mischiefs which followed on the contrary practice. And as unto all

the inconveniences, which as it is pretended, might ensue on this liberty, there is sufficient evangelical provision for their prevention or cure, made in the Gospel constitution and communion of all the true churches of Christ.

But this was not the whole of the evil that attended this imposition. For by this means all spiritual ministerial gifts were caused to cease in the church. For as they are talents given to trade withal, or manifestations of the Spirit given to profit or edify the church, they will not reside in any subject, they will not abide if they are by any received, if they are not improved by continual exercise. We see every day what effects the contempt or neglect of them does produce. Wherefore this exercise of them being restrained, and excluded by this imposition, they were utterly lost in the church; so as that it was looked on as a rare thing for any one to be able to pray in the administration of divine worship; yea the pretense of such an ability was esteemed a crime, and the exercise of it a sin, scarce to be pardoned; yet do I not find it in any of the ancient canons reckoned among the faults for which a bishop or a presbyter were to be deposed. But that hereon arose in those who were called to officiate in public assemblies, as unto the gifts which they had received for the edification of the church in divine administrations, that neglect which has given a fatal wound unto the light and holiness of it, is openly evident. For when the generality of men of that order, had provision of prayers made for them, which they purchased at an easy rate, or had them provided for them at the charge of the people, they were contented to be at rest, freed from that labor and travail of mind, which are required unto the constant exercise and improvement of spiritual gifts. This imposition was the grave wherein they were buried. For at length, as it is manifest in the

event, our Lord Jesus Christ being provoked with their sloth and unbelief, did withhold the communication of such gifts from the generality of those who did officiate in divine worship. And hereby they lost also one great evidence of the continuance of his mediatory life in heaven for the preservation of the church.

It is known that this was and is the state of things in the Roman church, with reference unto their whole worship in their public assemblies. And therefore although they have indulged divers enthusiasts, whose revelations and actings pretended from the Holy Spirit, have tended to the confirmation of their superstitions; and some of them have ventured at notions about mental prayer which they understand not themselves; yet as unto free prayer by the assistance of the Holy Ghost, in the church assemblies or otherwise, they were the first, and continue to be the fiercest opposers of it: and it is their interest so to be. For shake this foundation of the imposition of an entire system of humanly devised prayers for the only way and means of the worship of the church, and the whole fabric of the mass, with all the weight of their religion (if vanity and imagination may be said to have any weight) which is laid thereon, will tumble into the pit from whence it came. And therefore I must here acquaint the reader, that the first occasion of writing this discourse, was the perusal of Mr. Cressy's preface to his Church History, wherein out of a design to advance the pretended mental prayer of some of his enthusiasts, he reflects with much contumely and reproach upon that free praying by the aids of the Spirit of God which we plead for. And he will find that all his pretenses are examined in the latter part of this discourse.

But notwithstanding these things, those of the Roman church do at this day boast themselves of their devotions in their prayers private and public; and have prevailed thereby on many disposed unto a compliance with them, by their own guilt, ignorance and superstition. The vanity of their pretense has been well detected by evincing the idolatry whereby all or the most of their devotions are vitiated and rendered unacceptable. But this also is of weight with me, that the provision of the system and order of their whole devotion and its exercise, is apparently composed and fitted unto the exclusion of the whole work of the Spirit of God in prayer. And yet do they continue under an incredible delusion as to oppose, revile and condemn the prayers of others who are not of their communion, on this consideration, that those who make them, have not the Holy Spirit nor his aids, which are all confined unto their church. But if any society of men in the world, maintaining the outward profession of Christian religion, can do more to exclude the Holy Ghost and all his operations, in prayer and divine worship, than their church has done, I shall acknowledge myself greatly mistaken. It is nothing but ignorance of him and his whole work, with all the ends for which he is promised unto the church (that I say not, a hatred and detestation of them) that causes any to embrace their ways of devotion.

But to return. The things pleaded for may be reduced unto the ensuing heads.

1. No persons, no churches are obliged by virtue of any divine constitution, precept, or approved example, to confine themselves in their public or private worship, unto set or humanly devised forms of prayer. If any such constitution, precept, or example can

be produced, which hitherto has not been done, it ought to be complied withal. And whilst others are left unto their liberty in their use, this is sufficient to enervate all pleas for their imposition.

2. There is a promise in the Scripture, there are many promises made and belonging unto the church unto the end of the world, of the communication of the Holy Spirit unto it, as unto peculiar aids and assistances in prayer. To deny this, is to overthrow the foundation of the holiness and comfort of all believers, and to bring present ruin to the souls of men in distress.

3. It is the duty of believers to look after, to pray for those promised aids and assistances in prayer. Without this, all those promises are despised, and looked on as a flourish of words, without truth, power or efficacy in them. But,

4. This they are commanded to do, and have blessed experience of success therein. The former is plain in the Scripture, and the latter must be left unto their own testimony living and dying.

5. Beyond the divine institution of all the ordinances of worship in the church, with the determination of the matter and form which are essential unto them, contained in the Scripture, and a due attendance unto natural light in outward circumstances, there is nothing needful unto the due and orderly celebration of all public worship in its assembly. If any such thing be pretended, it is what Christ never appointed, nor the apostles ever practiced, nor the first churches after them, nor has it any promise of acceptance.

6. For the preservation of the unity of faith, and the communion of churches among themselves therein, they may express an agreement, as in doctrine by a joint confession of faith, so in a declaration of the material and substantial parts of worship, with the

order and method thereof; on which foundation they may in all things communicate with each other as churches, and in the practice of their members.

7. Whereas the differences about prayer under consideration, concern Christian practice in the vitals of religion, great respect is to be had unto the experience of them that do believe; where it is not obstructed and clouded by prejudices, sloth, or adverse principles and opinions. Therefore the substance of the greatest part of the ensuing discourse consists principally in the declaration of those concernments of prayer, which relate unto practice and experience. And hence it follows,

8. That the best expedient to compose these differences amongst us, is for every one to stir up the gift and grace of God that is in him, and all of us to give up ourselves unto that diligence, frequency, fervency and perseverance in prayer which God requires of us, especially in such a season as that wherein we live. A time wherein they, who ever they be, who trouble others, may for ought they know, be near unto trouble themselves. This will be the most effectual means to lead us all into the acknowledgement of the truth, and without which, an agreement in notions, is of little use or value.

But I confess hopes are weak concerning the due application of this remedy to any of our evils or distempers. The opinions of those who deny all internal, real, efficacious operations of the Holy Spirit on the souls of men, and deride all their effects, have so far diffused and riveted themselves into the minds of many, that little is to be expected from a retreat to those aids and reliefs. This evil in the profession of religion was reserved for these latter ages. For although the work and grace of the Holy Spirit in divine worship

was much neglected and lost in the world, yet no instances can be given in ages past, of such contempt cast upon all his internal grace and operations, as now abounds in the world. If the Pelagians, who were most guilty, did fall into any such excesses, they have escaped the records and monuments that remain of their deportment. Bold efforts they are of atheistical inclinations, in men openly avowing their own ignorance and utter want of all experience in things spiritual and heavenly. Neither does the person of Christ or his office meet with better entertainment among many; and by some have been treated with scurrility and blasphemy. In the meantime the contests about communion with churches are great and fierce. But where these things are received and approved, those who live not on a traditionary faith, will not forsake Christ and the Gospel, or renounce faith and experience, for the communion of any church in the world.

But all flesh almost, has corrupted its ways. The power of religion, and the experience of it in the souls of men being generally lost, the profession of it is of no great use, nor will long abide. Yes, multitudes all the world over seem to be weary of the religion which themselves profess, so far as it is pleaded to be of divine revelation, be it true or false, unless it be where they have great secular advantages by their profession of it. There is no greater pretense of a flourishing state in religion, than that of some churches of the Roman communion, especially one at this day. But if the account which is given us from among themselves concerning it be true, it is not much to be gloried in. For set aside the multitude of atheists, antiscipturists, and avowed disbelievers of the supernatural mysteries of the Gospel, and the herd that remains influenced into a hatred and persecution of the truth by a combination of men

upholding themselves and their way by extravagant secular interests and advantages, is not very highly considerable. Yes, their present height seems to be on a precipice. What inroads in other places, bold opinions concerning the authority of Scripture and the demonstration of it, the person and office of Christ, the Holy Spirit and all his operations, with the advancement of a pretense of morality in opposition to evangelical grace in its nature and efficacy, are made every day, is known to all who consider these things. And although the effects of this poison discover themselves daily, in the decays of piety, the increase of immoralities of all sorts, and the abounding of flagitious sins, exposing nations to the high displeasure of God; yet the security of most in this state of things, proclaims itself in various fruits of it, and can never be sufficiently deplored.

Whereas therefore, one means of the preservation of the church, and its deliverance out of these evils, is a due attendance to the discharge of this duty of prayer, the declaration of its nature, with a vindication of the springs and causes from which it derives its efficacy, which are attempted in the ensuing discourse, may, I hope, through the blessing of God, be of some use to such whose minds are sincere in their inquiries after truth.

CHAPTER 1



The Use of Prayer, and the Work of the Holy Spirit therein.

THE Works of the Spirit of God towards Believers, are either general and not confined with a respect unto any one Duty more than another; or particular, with respect unto some especial Duty. Of the first sort are, Regeneration and Sanctification, which being common unto them all, are the general Principles of all actings of Grace or particular Duties, in them. But there are moreover sundry especial Works or Operations of this holy Spirit in and towards the Disciples of Christ, which although they may be reduced unto the general head of Sanctification, yet they fall under an especial consideration proper unto themselves; of this sort is the Aid or Assistance which he gives unto us, in our Prayers and Supplications.

I suppose it will be granted that Prayer in the whole compass and extent of it, as, comprising Meditation, Supplication, Praise, and Thanksgiving, is one of the most signal Duties of Religion. The Light of nature in its most pregnant notions, with its practical Language in the Consciences of mankind, concur in their suffrage with the Scripture in this matter. For they both of them jointly witness that it is not only an important Duty in Religion, but also that

without it, there neither is nor can be the exercise of any Religion in the world. Never any Persons lived in the acknowledgment of a Deity, but under the conduct of the same apprehension, they thought the duty of Vows, Prayers and Praises incumbent on them as they found occasion. Yea although they found out external Ceremonious ways of solemnizing their Devotions, yet it was this Duty of Prayer alone, which was their Natural, Necessary, fundamental Acknowledgment of that divine Being which they did own. Neither are there any considerable stories extant recording the monuments of the antient Heathen Nations of the World, wherein (to the shame of degenerate Christianity it may be spoken) there are not more frequent accounts given of their sacred Invocations and Supplications unto their supposed Gods, than are to be found in any of the Historical Monuments and stories concerning the Actions of Christian Nations in these latter Ages. This therefore is the most natural and most eminent way and means of our Converse with God, without which converse we have no present advantage above the beasts that perish; but such as will turn unto our eternal disadvantage in that misery whereof they are incapable. This is the way whereby we exercise towards him all that Grace which we do receive from him; and render him an acceptable acknowledgment of that Homage and Revenue of Glory, which we are never able to exhibit in their due kind and measure. Of what use and advantage the due performance of this Duty is unto ourselves, no man is able fully to express; every one can add somewhat of his own experience. But we need not insist on the Commendation of Prayer, for it will be said by whom was it ever discommended?

And I wish I saw Reason to acquiesce in that Reply. For not only the Practice of the most, but the declared Opinions of many do evidence, that neither the Excellency of this Duty, nor its necessity, do find that acceptance and esteem in the minds of men as is pretended. But this being not my present design, I shall not further insist upon it.

For my purpose is not to treat of the Nature, Necessity, Properties, Uses, Effects and Advantages of this gracious Duty, as it is the vital breath of our spiritual Life, unto God. Its original in the Law of nature as the first and principal means of the acknowledgment of a Divine Power, whereof the neglect is a sufficient evidence of practical Atheism; (for he that prays not, says in his heart there is no God) Its Direction in the Scripture as to the Rule, manner and proper object of it; the Necessity of its constant use and practice, both from especial Commands and our state in this World, with the whole variety of inward and outward occasions that may befall us, or we may be exercised withal; Arguments, motives and encouragements unto constancy, fervency, and perseverance in the performance of the Duty of it; with known Examples of its mighty efficacy and marvellous success; the certain Advantages which the Souls of Believers, do receive thereby, in spiritual Aids and supplies of strength, with peace and consolation, with sundry other of its concernments, although much treated of already by many, might yet be further considered and improved. But none of these are my present design. The interest of the Holy Spirit of God by his gracious Operations in it, is that alone which I shall inquire into.

And it cannot be denied, but that the Work and actings of the Spirit of Grace in and towards Believers with respect unto the Duty of prayer, are more frequently and expresly asserted in the Scripture, than his Operations with respect unto any other particular Grace or Duty what ever. If this should be called into question, the ensuing Discourse I hope will sufficiently vindicate and confirm Truth. But hereby Believers are instructed as in the importance of the Duty it self, so in the use and necessity of the Aid and Assistance of the Spirit of God in and unto the right discharge or performance of it. For where frequent, plain Revelations concur in multiplied commands and directions, with continual Experience as it is with them in this case, their Instruction is firm, and in a way of being fixed on their minds. As this renders an Inquiry hereinto both necessary and seasonable; for what can be more so, than that wherein the spiritual life and comfort of Believers are so highly concerned, and which exhibits unto us so gracious a condescension of Divine Love and Goodness; so moreover, the opposition that is made in the World against the Work of the Spirit of God herein, above all other his Operations, requires that something be spoken in the vindication of it.

But the Enmity hereunto seems to be peculiar unto these latter Ages, I mean among such as pretend unto any acquaintance with these things, from the Scripture. It will be hard to find an instance in former Ages, of any unto whom the Spirit of God, as a Spirit of Grace and Supplications, was a reproach. But as now the contradiction herein is great and fierce; so is there not any difference concerning any practical duty of Religion, wherein Parties at variance are more confident and satisfied, in and about their own apprehensions, than they are, who dissent about the Work of the

Spirit of God in our Prayers and Supplications. For those who oppose what is ascribed by others unto him herein, are not content to deny and reject it, and to refuse a communion in the faith and practice of the work so ascribed unto him; but moreover, such is the confidence they have in their own conceptions, that they revile and speak evil contemptuously and despitefully of what they do oppose. Hence Ability to pray, as is pleaded, by the Assistance of the Holy Ghost, is so far from being allowed to be a Gift, or a Grace, or a Duty, or any way useful among men, that it is derided and scorned as a paltry faculty fit to be exploded from among Christians. And at length it is traduced as an invention and artifice of the Jesuits, to the surprizal and offense of many sober persons; the unadvisedness of which insinuation, the ensuing discourse will manifest.

Others again, profess that of all the Privileges whereof they are made partakers in this World, of all the Aids, Assistances or Gifts which they receive from or by the Spirit of God, that which he communicates and helps them withal in their Prayers and Supplications, is the most excellent and inestimable. And herein they have living and dying, in all Troubles, Distresses, Temptations and Persecutions, such assurance and satisfaction in their minds, as that they are not in the least moved with all the scorn and contempt that are cast upon their profession and practice in the exercise of the Gift which they have received; but rather judge, that they contract the guilt of great sin to themselves, by whom this work of the Spirit is reproached. Hence I know not any difference about Religious things, that is managed with greater Animositities in the minds of men, and worse Consequences, than this which is about the work of the Spirit of God in Prayer, which indeed is the

hinge on which all other differences about Divine Worship do turn and depend. It may therefore be well worth our while, yea it is our Duty, sedately and diligently to inquire into what the Scripture teaches us in this matter, wherein we must acquiesce, and whereby all Experiences on the one side or the other must be tryed and regulated. Two things therefore I do propose unto my self in the ensuing Discourse, concerning both which I shall plainly and briefly endeavour the satisfaction of indifferent and unprejudiced Readers. And these are first, to evince that there is promised, and actually granted an especial work of the Spirit of God in the Prayers or praises of Believers under the New Testament; Secondly, to declare the Nature of that work wherein it does consist, or the manner of the operation of the Holy Spirit therein. And if in these things no impression can be made on the minds of men possessed with those mighty prejudices which reject their very Proposal, and all consideration of them with contempt; yet it may be of use, unto them, who being not byassed with the undue love or hatred of parties of men, nor elated with high valuations of their own conceptions above those of others, whom they think they have reason if not to hate, yet to scorn, do sincerely desire to live unto God, and to prefer the performance of their Duty unto all other considerations, endeavouring to subdue their inclinations and affections thereunto. Nor do I desire more of any Reader, but that he will grant that he is herein conversant about things, which will have an influence into his everlasting account.

CHAPTER 2



Zechariah 12:10. Opened and vindicated.

THE especial Promise of the Administration of the Spirit of God unto the end under consideration, is that which I shall lay as the foundation of the ensuing discourse, Zechariah 12:10. I will pour upon the House of David, and the Inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of Grace and Supplications. The Spirit here promised is the Spirit of God; the Holy Spirit, with respect unto the especial end for which he is promised. And the manner of his Administration in the accomplishment of the promise is expressed by [illegible]I will pour out. The same word is used to the same purpose, Ezek. 39:29. Joel 2:28. as are also other words of the same importance which we render by pouring out, as Proverbs 1:23. Isaiah 32:15. Chapter 44:3. Chapter 52:10.

Two things have been elsewhere declared concerning this Expression, applied unto the Communication of the Holy Ghost.

(1) That a plentiful Dispensation of him unto the end for which he is promised, with respect unto a singular and eminent Degree in his operations, is intended therein. The Apostle expresses this word, or the accomplishment of what is promised in it, by [illegible], Tit. 3:6. he has richly, or abundantly, poured out his spirit. Not there-

fore a mere Grant and Communication of the Spirit, but a plentiful Effusion of him is intended; which must have some eminent Effects, as pledges and tokens thereof. For it is absurd to speak of a plentiful abundant Effusion with Degrees above what was before granted, and yet there be no certain ways or means whereby it may be evidenced and demonstrated. The Spirit therefore is so promised in this place, as to produce some notable and peculiar Effects of his Communication. (2.) That this Promise is peculiar unto the Days of the Gospel; I mean every Promise is so, where mention is made of pouring out the Spirit on men; which may be evinced by the consideration of every place where this expression is used. But in this place it is most unquestionable, the immediate effect of it, being a looking unto Christ as he was pierced. And it may be yet further observed, that there is a tacit comparison in it, with some other time or season, or some other act of God, wherein or whereby he gave his Spirit before; but not in that way, manner, or measure, that he now promiss to bestow him. Of the whole of these observations, Dydimus gives us a brief account, *De Spir. Sanct. l. 1.* 1. Significat autem effusionis verbum, largam, & divitem muneris abundantiam; itaque cùm unus quis alicubi, aut duo Spiritum Sanctum accipiunt, non dicitur, Effundam de Spiritu meo, sed tunc quando in universas gentes munus Spiritus Sancti redundaverit.

(2.) Those unto whom he is thus promised, are the House of David and the Inhabitants of Jerusalem; that is the whole Church expressed in a Distribution into the ruling family and the body of the people under their rule. And the Family of David, which was then in supreme power among the people, in the Person of Zerubbabel, is expressly mentioned for three reasons: (1.) Because

the Faithfulness of God in his Promises, was concerned in the preservation of that Family, whereof the Messiah was to spring, Christ himself being thereby in the Rule of the Church typed out in an especial manner. (2.) Because all the Promises in a peculiar manner, were first to be fulfilled in the Person of Christ, so typed by David and his House. On him the Spirit under the New Testament was first to be poured out in all fullness, and from him to be communicated unto others. (3.) It may be to denote the especial Gifts and Graces that should be communicated unto them, who were to be employed in the Rule and conduct of the Church, under him, the King and Head thereof. And the Inhabitants of Jerusalem, is a phrase expressive of the whole Church; because that was the seat of all their public ordinances of worship. See Psalm 122:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. Wherefore the whole spiritual Church of God, all Believers are the object of this Promise as represented in the Family of David and the Inhabitants of Jerusalem.

(3.) The especial Qualifications of the promised Spirit are two: For (1.) He is to be [illegible] a Spirit of Grace.[illegible] which the Greek constantly render [illegible], and we from the Latine Gratia, Grace, is derived of [illegible], as is also the following word, which signifies to have Mercy, or Compassion, to be Gracious; as all the words whereby Gods Gracious dealings with Sinners in the Hebrew do include the signification of Pity, Compassion, free Goodness and Bounty. And it is variously used in the Scripture. Sometimes for the Grace and Favor of God, as it is the fountain of all gracious and merciful effects towards us, Romans 1:7. Chapter 4:4, 16. Chapter 5:2, 14, 20. Chapter 6:1. Chapter 11:5. 1 Corinthians. 1:3. and in other places innumerable; and sometimes for the principal Effect hereof, or the gracious Favor of God

whereby he accepts us in Christ, Ephesians 2:5. 2 Thessalonians. 1:12. which is the Grace the Apostle prays for in the behalf of the Church, Romans 16:20. 1 Corinthians. 16:23. And sometimes it is applied unto the Favor of men, and acceptance with them, called the finding grace or favor in the sight of any, Genesis. 39:4, 21. Chapter 41:24. 1 Samuel. 2:26. Romans 15:11. Esther 2:15, 17. Chapter 5:2. Luke 2:52. Acts 4:33. And sometimes for the free effectual Efficacy of Grace in those in whom it is, Acts 14:26. 1 Corinthians. 15:10. 2 Corinthians. 11:9. And sometimes for our Justification and Salvation, by the free Grace or favor of God in Christ, John 1:17. 1 Peter. 1:13. For the Gospel it self, as the instrument of the declaration and communication of the Grace of God, 2 Corinthians. 6:1. Ephesians 3:2. Colossians 1:6. Tit. 2:11. For the free donation of the Grace and gifts of the Spirit, John 1:16. Ephesians 4:7. And many other significations it has, which belong not unto our purpose.

Three things may be intended in this adjunct; of Grace.

(1.) A respect of the Sovereign Cause of his Dispensation, which is no other but the mere Grace of God. He may be called a Spirit of Grace, because his donation is an effect of Grace, without the least respect unto any desert in those unto whom he is given. This Reason of the Appellation is declared, Titus 3, 4, 5, 6. The sole cause and reason in opposition unto our own works or deservings of the pouring out of the Spirit upon us, is the Love and Kindness of God in Jesus Christ; whence he may be justly called, a Spirit of Grace. (2.) Because he is the Author of all Grace in and unto them on whom he is poured out; So God is called the God of all Grace, because he is the Fountain and Author of it. And that the Holy Spirit is the immediate efficient cause of all Grace in us, has been

elsewhere proved both in general and in the principal instances of Regeneration and Sanctification, and it shall be yet further confirmed in what does ensue. (3.) [illegible] is commonly used for that Grace or Favor which one has with another: Let me find grace in your sight, as in the instances before-quoted. And so the Spirit also may be called a Spirit of Grace, because those on whom he is poured out, have Grace and Favor with God; they are gracious with him as being accepted in the beloved, Ephesians 2:18. Whereas therefore all these concur where-ever this Spirit is communicated, I know no reason why we may not judge them all here included; though that in the second place be especially intended. The Spirit is promised to work Grace and Holiness, in all on whom he is bestowed.

He is as thus poured out a Spirit [illegible], of Supplications, that is of Prayer for Grace and mercy. The word is formed from [illegible] as the other, to be gracious or merciful; and expressing our Act towards God, it is Prayer for Grace, Supplication. And the original word is never used but to express vocal prayer, either in the Assemblies of the people of God, or by private persons. Harken to the voice of my Supplications is rendred by the Apostle Paul [illegible], Hebrews 5:7. in which place alone in the Scripture that word is used. Originally it signifies a Bough or Olive branch wrapt about with Wooll or Bays, or something of the like nature, which those carried in their hands and lifted up, who were Suppliants unto others for the obtaining of Peace, or the averting of their Displeasure. Hence came the phrase of *velamenta praeferre*, to hold out such covered branches. So Livy de Bel. Punic. Ramasoleae, ac velamenta alia Supplicantium portantes, orant ut recipere sententiam: Holding forth Olive branches and other covered

tokens used by Suppliants, they prayed that they might be received into Grace and Favor. Which custome Virgil declares in his Aeneas addressing himself to Evander.

And they called them [illegible] Branches of Supplication, or Prayer. And they constantly called those Prayers which they made solemnly unto their gods, Supplicia and Supplicationes, Liv. lib. 10. *Eo anno multa prodigia erant, quarum avertendarum causa Supplicationes in biduum Senatus decrevit.* A form of which kind of Prayer we have in Cato, *de re rustica*, cap 13. *Mars pater te precor quaesoque ut calamitates—.*

Some render [illegible] by Miserationes, or Lamentationes, and interpret it of mens bemoaning themselves in their Prayers for Grace and Mercy, which in the issue varies not from the sense insisted on. But whereas it is derived from [illegible] which signifies to be merciful or gracious, and expresses an act of ours towards God, it can properly signifie nothing but Supplications for Mercy and Grace. Nor is it otherwise used in the Scripture. See Job 40:21. Proverbs 18:23. Dan. 9:3. Jeremiah 31:60. 2 Chronicles. 6:21. Jeremiah 3:21. Psalm 28:2, 6:31, 23:116. 1:130. 2:140. 7:143. 1. Dan. 9:18. 25. Psalm 46:6. which are all the places, besides this, where the word is used; in all which it denotes, deprecation of Evil and Supplication for Grace, constantly in the plural Number to denote the Earnestness of Men.

[illegible] these are properly Supplications for Grace and Mercy in freedom and deliverance from Evil, but by a Synecdoche for all sorts of Prayer whatever. We may therefore inquire in what sense the Holy Spirit of God is called a Spirit of Supplication, or what is the Reason of this Attribution unto him. And he must be so either formally or efficiently, either because he is so in himself, or

unto us. If in the former way, then he is a Spirit who himself prays, and according to the import of those Hebraisms, abounds in that Duty. As a man of wickedness, Isaiah 55:7. or a man of Blood is a man wholly given to wickedness and violence; So on the other hand, a Spirit of Supplication should be a Spirit abounding in Prayer for Mercy, and the diverting of evil, as the word imports. Now the Holy Ghost cannot be thus a Spirit of Supplication, neither for himself nor us. No Imagination of any such thing can be admitted with respect unto himself, without the highest Blasphemy. Nor can he in his own Person make Supplications for us. For besides that any such Interposition in Heaven on our behalf is in the Scripture wholly confined unto the Priestly Office of Christ and his Intercession, all Prayer, whether Oral or Interpretative only, is the Act of a nature inferiour unto that which is prayed unto. This the Spirit of God has not, he has no Nature inferiour unto that which is Divine. We cannot therefore suppose him to be formally a Spirit of Supplication, unless we deny his Deity. He is therefore so Efficiently with respect unto us, and as such he is promised unto us. Our inquiry therefore in General is how or in what sense he is so. And there are but two ways conceivable whereby this may be affirmed of him. (1.) By working Gracious Inclinations and dispositions in us unto this Duty. (2.) By giving a Gracious Ability for the discharge of it in a due manner. These therefore must belong unto, and do comprise his Efficiency as a Spirit of Supplication.

Both of them are included in that of the Apostle, The Spirit it self maks Intercession for us, Romans 8:26. Those who can put any other sense on this Promise, may do well to express it. Every one consistent with the Analogy of Faith shall be admitted, so that

we do not judge the Words to be void of sense, and to have nothing in them. To deny the Spirit of God to be a Spirit of Supplication in and unto Believers, is to reject the Testimony of God himself.

By the ways mentioned we affirm that he is so, nor can any other way be assigned.

(1.) He is so, by working gracious Inclinations and Dispositions in us unto this Duty. It is he who prepares, disposs, and inclins the hearts of Believers unto the Exercise thereof with delight and Spiritual Complacency. And where this is not, no Prayer is acceptable unto God. He Delights not in those cryes which an unwilling mind is pressed and forced unto by Earthly desires, distress or misery, James 4:5. Of ourselves, naturally, we are averse from any converse and intercourse with God, as being alienated from living unto him, by the Ignorance and vanity of our minds.

And there is a secret Alienation still working in us from all duties of immediate Communion with him. It is he alone who works us unto that frame wherein we Pray Continually, as it is required of us; Our Hearts being kept ready and prepared for this Duty on all Occasions and Opportunities, being in the mean time acted and steered under the Conduct and Influence of those Graces which are to be exercised therein. This some call the Grace of Prayer that is given us by the Holy Ghost, as I suppose improperly, though I will not contend about it. For Prayer absolutely, and formally, is not a peculiar Grace distinct from all other Graces that are exercised in it: But it is the Way and Manner whereby we are to exercise all other Graces of Faith, Love, Delight, fear, Reverence, self Abasement and the like, unto certain especial Ends. And I know no Grace of Prayer distinct or different from the exercise of these Graces: It is therefore an Holy commanded Way of the exercise of

other Graces, but not a peculiar Grace it self. Only where any Person is singularly disposed and devoted unto this Duty, we may if we please, though improperly, say that he is Eminent in the Grace of Prayer. And I do suppose that this part of his Work will not be denied by any, no not that it is intended in the Promise. If any are minded to stand at such a distance from other things which are ascribed unto him, or have such an abhorrency of allowing him part or interest in our Supplications, as that we may in any sense be said to Pray in the Holy Ghost, that they will not admit of so much as the Work of his Grace, and that wrought in Believers by virtue of this Promise, they will manage an Opposition unto his other Actings, at too dear a rate to be gainers by it.

(2.) He is so by giving an Ability for Prayer, or communicating a Gift unto the minds of men, enabling them profitably unto themselves and others, to exercise all his Graces in that especial way of Prayer. It will be granted afterwards, that there may be a Gift of Prayer used where there is no Grace in exercise, nor perhaps any to be exercised; that is, as some improperly express it, the Gift of Prayer, where the Grace of Prayer is not. But in declaring how the Spirit is a Spirit of Supplication, we must take in the Consideration of both. He both disposs us to pray, that is to the Exercise of Grace in that especial way, and enables us thereunto. And where this Ability is wholly and absolutely wanting, or where it is rejected or despised, although he may act and exercise those very Graces which are to be exercised in Prayer, and whose Exercise in that way is commonly called the Grace of Prayer, yet this Work of his belongs unto the General head of Sanctification wherein he preserves, excites and acts all our Graces, and not unto this especial Work of Prayer, nor is he a Spirit of Supplication therein. He is

therefore only a Spirit of Supplication properly, as he communicates a Gift or Ability unto Persons to exercise all his Graces in the way and Duty of Prayer. This is that which he is here promised for, and promised to be poured out, for that is to be given in an abundant and plentiful manner. Wherever he is bestowed in the accomplishment of this Promise, he both disposses the hearts of men to pray, and enables them so to do. This Ability indeed, he communicates in great variety as to the Degrees of it and usefulness unto others in its exercise, but he does it unto every one so far as is necessary unto his own Spiritual Concernments, or the discharge of his Duty towards God and all others. But, whereas this Assertion contains the Substance of what we plead for, the farther confirmation of it must be the Principal Subject of the ensuing Discourse.

That this is the sense of the place and the mind of the Holy Ghost in the Words, needs no other Demonstration, but that it is expressive of their proper Signification, neither can any other sense tolerably be affixed on them. To deny the Holy Spirit to be denominated a Spirit of Supplication, because he enclines, disposes and enables them to pray unto whom he is promised and on whom he is bestowed as such, is to use a little too much Liberty in Sacred things.

A Learned man of late out of hatred unto the Spirit of Prayer, or Prayer as his Gift, has endeavoured to deprive the Church of God of the whole benefit and comfort of this Promise, Amyrald. praefat. in Psalm For he contends that it belongs not unto the Christian Church, but unto the Jews only. Had he said it belonged unto the Jews in the first place who should be converted unto Christ, he had not gone so wide from the Truth, nor from the sense of other Expositors, though he had said more than he could prove.

But to suppose that any Grace, any Mercy, any Privilege by Jesus Christ, is promised unto the Jews wherein Gentile Believers shall be no Sharers, that they should not partake of the same kind, whoever has the Prerogative as to Degrees, is fond and impious. For if they also are Children of Abraham, if the Blessing of Faithful Abraham do come upon them also, if it is through them that he is the Heir of the World, his Spiritual Seed inhabiting it by Right in all places, then unto them do all the Promises belong that are made unto him and his Seed. And whereas most of the Exceeding great and precious Promises of the Old Testament are made to Jacob and Israel, to Hierusalem and Zion; it is but saying that they are all confined unto the Jews, and so at once despoil the Church of God of all Right and Title to them, which Impious folly and Sacrilege has been by some attempted. But whereas all the Promises belong unto the same Covenant, with all the Grace contained in them and exhibited by them, who ever is interested by Faith in that Covenant, is so in all the Promises of God that belong thereunto, and has an equal Right unto them, with those unto whom they were first given. To suppose, now that the Jews are rejected for their Unbelief, that the Promises of God made unto them whilst they stood by Faith, are ceased and of no use, is to overthrow the Covenant of Abraham, and indeed the whole Truth of the New Testament. But the Apostle assures us that all the Promises of God are in Christ Yea, and in him Amen, unto the Glory of God by us: that is, in their Accomplishment in us and towards us, 2 Corinthians. 1:20. So also he positively affirms that all Believers have Received those Promises which Originally were made unto Israel, 2 Corinthians. 6:16, 17, 18. Chap 7:1. And not only so, but he declares also that the Promises which were made of

old unto particular Persons on especial Occasions, as to the Grace, Power and Love contained in them and intended by them, do yet belong unto all individual Believers, and are applicable by them unto all their especial Occasions, Hebrews 13:5, 6. And their Right unto, or interest in all the Promises of God, is that which those who are concerned in the Obedience of Faith, would not forego for all that this World can supply them withal. This therefore is only a particular Instance of the Work and Effect of the Spirit, as he is in general promised in the Covenant. And as we have declared, the Promises of him, as a Spirit of Grace and Holiness in the Covenant, belong unto the Believers of the Gentiles also. If they do not, they have neither share nor Interest in Christ, which is a better Plea for the Jew, than this peculiar Instance will afford. But this Promise is only an especial Declaration of what in one case this Spirit shall do, who is promised as a Spirit of Grace and Holiness in the Covenant. And therefore the Author of the Evasion, suspecting that the fraud and Sacrilege of it would be detected, betakes himself to other Subterfuges, which we shall afterwards meet with, so far as we are concerned.

It may be more soberly objected, that the Spirit of Grace and Supplication was given unto Believers under the Old Testament; and therefore if there be no more in it, if some Extraordinary Gift be not here intended, how comes it to be made an Especial Promise with Respect unto the times of the New Testament? It may therefore be supposed that not the Ordinary Grace or Gift of Prayer which Believers, and especially the Officers of the Church do receive, but some Extraordinary Gift bestowed on the Apostles and first Converts to the Church, is here intended. So the Prophecies concerning the Effusion of the Spirit on all sorts of

Persons, Joel 2. is interpreted by Peter, and applied unto the sending of the Holy Ghost in Miraculous Gifts on the Day of Pentecost, Acts 2.

Answer (1.) I have elsewhere already in General obviated this Objection, by shewing the prodigious folly of that Imagination, that the Dispensation of the Spirit is confined unto the first times of the Gospel, whereof this Objection is a Branch, as Enmity unto the matter treated of is the Occasion of the whole. (2.) We nowhere find Grace and Prayer, the things here promised, to be reckoned among the Extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit under the New Testament. Prayer indeed in an Unknown Tongue was so; but Prayer it self was not so, no more than Grace, which if it were, the whole present Church is Graceless. (3.) The Promise in Joel had express Respect unto the Extraordinary Gifts of Prophecy and Visions, and therefore had its Principal Accomplishment in the Day of Pentecost. This Promise is quite of another nature. (4.) That which is Necessary for, and the Duty of all Believers, and that always, is not an Extraordinary Gift bestowed on a few, for a season. Now if there are any who think that Grace and Prayer are not Necessary unto all Believers, or that they may have Abilities, and exercise them without any Aid of the Holy Spirit, I will not at present contend with them; for this is not a place to plead with those by whom the principles of the Christian Faith are denied. Divine Commands are the Rule of our Duty, not mans Imaginations. (5.) If this be not an Especial Promise of the New Testament, because the matter of it, or Grace Promised, was in some Degree and measure enjoyed under the Old, then is there no Promise made with Respect unto that Season; For the Saints under the Old Testament were really made Partakers of all the same

Graces with those under the New. Wherefore (6.) Two things are intended in the Promise with Respect unto the times of the Gospel. (1.) An Ampliation and Enlargement of this Grace or Favor as unto the Subjects of it Extensively. It was under the Old Testament confined unto a few, but now it shall be communicated unto many, and diffused all the World over. It shall be so poured out as to be shed abroad and imparted thereby unto many. That which before was but as the watering of a Garden by an especial hand, is now as the Clouds pouring themselves forth on the whole Face of the Earth. (2.) An Increase of the Degrees of Spiritual Abilities for the performance of it. Tit. 3:5, 6. There is now a Rich Communication of the Spirit of Grace and Prayer granted unto Believers, in comparison of what was enjoyed under the Old Testament. This the very Nature of the Dispensation of the Gospel, wherein we Receive from Jesus Christ Grace for Grace, does evince and confirm. I suppose it needless to prove, that as unto all Spiritual supplies of Grace there is brought in an abundant Administration of it by Jesus Christ; the whole Scripture testifying unto it.

There were indeed under the Old Testament, Prayers and Praises of God dictated by a Spirit of Prophecy, and Received by immediate Divine Revelation, containing Mysteries for the Instruction of the Church in all Ages. These Prayers were not suggested unto them by the Aid of the Spirit as a Spirit of Supplication, but dictated in and to them by the Spirit, as a Spirit of Prophecy. Nor did they themselves comprehend the mind of the Holy Spirit in them fully, but inquired diligently thereinto, as into other Prophecies given out by the Spirit of Christ which was in them, 1 Peter. 1:11, 12. An Instance whereof we may have in Psalm 22. A Prayer it is with thanksgiving from first to last. Now although

David unto whom it was given by Inspiration, might find in his own Condition things that had some low and mean Resemblance of what was intended in the Words suggested unto him by the Holy Spirit, as he was a Type of Christ, yet the Depth of the Mysteries contained therein, the principal Scope and Design of the Holy Ghost, was in a great measure concealed from himself, and much more from others. Only it was given out unto the Church by immediate Inspiration, that Believers might search and diligently inquire into what was signified and foretold therein, that so thereby they might be gradually led into the Knowledge of the Mysteries of God according as he was pleased graciously to communicate of his Saving Light unto them. But withal it was Revealed unto David and the other Prophets, that in these things, they did not minister unto themselves but unto us, as having Mysteries in them, which they could not, which they were not, to comprehend. But as this Gift is ceased under the New Testament after the finishing of the Canon of the Scripture, nor is it by any pretended unto: So was it confined of old unto a very few inspired Persons, and belongs not unto our present inquiry; for we speak only of those things which are common unto all Believers. And herein a preference must in all things be given unto those under the New Testament.

If therefore it could be proved, which I know it cannot be, that the Generality of the Church under the Old Testament made use of any Forms of Prayers as mere Forms of Prayer, without any other end, use or mystical Instruction (all which concurred in their Prophetical Composures) for the sole end of Prayer; yet would it not, whatever any pretend or plead, thence follow, that Believers under the New Testament may do the same, much less that they may be obliged always so to do. For there is now a more Plentiful

and Rich Effusion of the Spirit of Grace and Supplication upon them, than was upon those of old. And as our Duty is to be regulated by Gods Commands, so Gods Commands are suited unto the Dispensation of his Grace. For Persons under the New Testament who are Commanded to Pray, not to make use constantly in their so doing, of the Gifts, Aids, and Assistance of the Spirit, which are peculiarly dispensed and communicated therein, on pretense of what was done under the Old, is to reject the Grace of the Gospel, and to make themselves Guilty of the highest Ingratitude. Wherefore although we may and ought to bear with them, who having not received any thing of this promised Grace and Assistance, nor do believe there is any such thing, do plead for the use of Forms of Prayer to be composed by some and read by others or themselves, and that only, in the Discharge of this Duty; Yet such as have been made Partakers of this Grace, and who own it their Duty constantly to use and improve the promised Aids of the Spirit of God, will be careful not to admit of any such principles or practice, as would plainly annihilate the Promise.

Thus much then we may suppose ourselves to have obtained in the Consideration of this Testimony, That God has promised under the New Testament to give unto Believers in a plentiful manner or measure, the Spirit of Grace and Supplication, or his own Holy Spirit enabling them to pray according to his mind and will. The way and manner of his Work therein, shall be afterwards declared. And it may suffice to oppose in General this one Promise unto the open reproaches and bold Contempts that are by many cast on the Spirit of Prayer, whose Framers unless they can blot this Text out of the Scripture, will fail at last in their design. We shall not therefore need to plead any other Testimony to the same purpose in the

way of Promises. Only we may observe, that this being expressly assigned as a part of the Gracious Work of the Holy Spirit, as promised under the New Testament, there is no one Promise to that purpose, wherein this Grace is not included: Therefore the known Multiplication of them adds strength unto our Argument.

CHAPTER 3



Galatians 4:6. Opened and Vindicated.

THE next general Evidence given unto the Truth under Consideration, is the Account of the Accomplishment of this Promise under the New Testament, where also the Nature of the Operation of the Holy Spirit herein, is in general expressed. And' this is, Galatians 4:6. Because ye are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son crying Abba Father. An Account as was said, is here given of the Accomplishment of the Promise before explained. And sundry things may be considered in the Words.

First, The Subject on whom he is bestowed and in whom he works, are Believers or those who by the Spirit of Adoption are made the Children of God. We receive the Adoption of Sons, and because we are Sons, he sends his Spirit into our Hearts. And this privilege of Adoption we obtain by Faith in Christ Jesus, John 1:12. To as many as received him, he gave Power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believed on his Name. Secondly. There is an especial Appellation or Description of the Spirit as promised and given unto this purpose, He is the Spirit of the Son. That the Original ground and Reason hereof, is his Eternal Relation to the Son as proceeding from him, has been elsewhere evinced. But

there is something more particular here intended. He is called the Spirit of the Son, with respect unto his Communication to Believers. There is therefore included herein, that especial Regard unto Jesus Christ the Son of God which is in the Work mentioned, as it is an Evangelical Mercy and Privilege. He is therefore called the Spirit of the Son, not only because of his eternal Procession from him; But (1.) Because he was in the first place given unto him as the Head of the Church, for the Uncion, Consecration and Sanctification of his humane Nature. Here he laid the Foundation, and gave an example of what he was to do in and towards all his Members. (2.) It is immediately from and by him, that he is communicated unto us, and that two ways: (1.) Authoritatively, by Virtue of the Covenant between the Father and him, whereon, upon his Accomplishment of the Work of the Mediation in a State of Humiliation according to it, he received the Promise of the Spirit, that is, Power and Authority to bestow him on whom he would, for all the ends of that Mediation, Acts 2:33. Chapter 5:31. (2) Formally, in that all the Graces of the Spirit are derived unto us from him as the Head of the Church, as the spring of all spiritual Life, in whom they were all treasured and laid up unto that purpose, Colossians 2:19. Ephesians 4:16. Colossians 3:1, 2, 3, 4. Secondly, The Work of this Spirit in general as bestowed on Believers, is partly included, partly expressed in these words. In general (which is included) He enables them to behave themselves suitably unto that state and condition whereunto they are taken upon their Faith in Christ Jesus. They are made Children of God by Adoption, and it is meet they be taught to carry themselves as becomes that new Relation. Because ye are Sons, he has given you the Spirit of his Son, without which they cannot walk before him as

becoms Sons. He teaches them to bear and behave themselves no longer as Foreigners and Strangers, nor as Servants only, but as Children and Heirs of God, Romans 8:15. He endows them with a frame and disposition of heart unto Holy filial obedience: For as he takes away the distance, making them to be nigh who were Aliens, and far from God; so he removes that fear, dread and bondage which they are kept in who are under the power of the Law, 2 Timothy. 1:7. For God has not given us the Spirit of fear, but of power and love, and of a sound mind. Not the Spirit of fear, or a Spirit of bondage unto fear, as Romans 8:15. that is, in and by the efficacy of the Law filling our minds with dread and such considerations of God as will keep us at a distance from him. But he is in the Sons, on whom he is bestowed, a Spirit of Power; strengthening and enabling them unto all Duties of Obedience. This [illegible] is that whereby we are enabled to Obedience, which the Apostle gives thanks for, 1 Timothy. 1:12. [illegible], to Christ that enables me that is, by his Spirit of Power. For without the Spirit of Adoption we have not the least strength or Power to behave ourselves as Sons in the Family of God. And he is also, as thus bestowed, a Spirit of Love, who works in us that Love unto God and that delight in him, which becoms Children towards their Heavenly Father. This is the first genuine consequent of this Relation. There may be many Duties performed unto God where there is no true Love to him; at least no love unto him as a Father in Christ, which alone is genuine and accepted. And lastly, he is also a Spirit [illegible], of a modest, grave and sober mind. Even Children are apt to wax wanton and curious and proud in their Fathers House; but the Spirit enables them to behave themselves with that Sobriety, Modesty and Humility which becoms the

Family of God. And in these three things, spiritual Power, Love, and Sobriety of mind, consists the whole deportment of the Children of God in his Family. This is the State and Condition of those who by the effectual working of the Spirit of Adoption, are delivered from the Spirit of Bondage unto fear, which the Apostle discours of, Romans 8 15.

Those who are under the Power of that Spirit, or that efficacious working of the Spirit by the Law, cannot by virtue of any Aids or Assistance make their Addresses unto him by Prayer in a due manner. For although the means whereby they are brought into this State, be the Spirit of God acting upon their Souls and Consciences by the Law; yet formally, as they are in the State of Nature, the Spirit whereby they are acted is the unclean Spirit of the World, or the influence of him who rules in the Children of disobedience. The Law that they obey, is the Law of the Members mentioned by the Apostle, Romans 7. The Works which they perform, are the unfruitful works of darkness, and the fruits of these unfruitful Works are Sin and Death. Being under this Bondage they have no power to approach unto God, and their Bondage tending unto fear, they can have no Delight in an access unto him. Whatever other provisions or preparations such Persons may have for this Duty, they can never perform it unto the Glory of God, or so, as to find acceptance with him. With those who are delivered from this State, all things are otherwise. The Spirit whereby they are acted is the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Adoption, of Power, Love and a sound mind. The Law which they are under Obedience unto, is the Holy Law of God, as written in the fleshly Tables of

their Hearts. The Effects of it are Faith and Love with all other Graces of the Spirit, whereof they receive the Fruits in peace with joy unspeakable and full of Glory.

Thirdly, An Instance is given of his effectual working these things in the adopted Sons of God in the Duty of Prayer; crying Abba Father. (1.) The Object of the especial Duty intended, is God even the Father, Ephesians 2:18. Abba[illegible], Abba is the Syriack or Chaldee name for Father, then in common use among the Jews; And [illegible] was the same name amongst the Greeks or Gentiles, So that the Common Interest of Jews and Gentiles in this Privilege may be intended. Or rather an holy boldness and intimate confidence of Love is designed in the Reduplication of the name. The Jews have a saying in the Babylonian Talmud in the Treatise of Blessings [illegible]Servants and handmaids (that is Bondservants) do not call on such a one Abba or Imma, Freedom of State, with a Right unto Adoption, whereof they are incapable in regard unto this Liberty and confidence. God gives unto his adopted Sons [illegible]a frèe Spirit, Psalm 51:14. a Spirit of gracious filial ingenuity. This is that Spirit which cries Abba; that is the word, whereby those who were adopted, did first salute their Fathers, to testify their affection and obedience. For Abba signifies not only Father, but my Father; For [illegible]my Father in the Hebrew, is rendred by the Chaldee Paraphrast only [illegible] Abba; see Genesis. 19:34. and elsewhere constantly. To this purpose speaks Chrysostome,[illegible]. Being willing to shew the ingenuity (that is in this Duty) he uss also the language of the Hebrews; and says not only Father, but Abba Father, which is a wordproper unto them who are highly ingenuous.

And this he effects two ways, (1.) By the Excitation of Graces and Gracious Affections in their Souls in this Duty; especially those of Faith, Love and Delight. (2) By enabling them to exercise those Graces and express those Affections in Vocal Prayer. For [illegible] denotes not only crying, but an earnestness of mind expressed in Vocal Prayer. It is praying [illegible], as it is said of our Saviour, Math. 27:50. For the whole of our Duty in our Supplications is expressed herein. Now we are not concerned or do not at present inquire, what course they take, what means they imploy, or what helps they use in Prayer, who are not as yet Partakers of this privilege of Adoption: It is only those who are so, whom the Spirit of God assists in this Duty. And the only question is, What such Persons are to do, in compliance with his Assistance, or what it is that they obtain thereby?

And we may compare the different expressions used by the Apostle in this matter, whereby the general Nature of the Work of the Spirit herein, will further appear. In this place he saith, God has sent forth into our Hearts [illegible], the Spirit of his Son, crying Abba Father, Romans 8:15. He saith we have received [illegible], The Spirit of Adoption, the Spirit of the Son given us because we are Sons, whereby, or in whom we cry Abba Father. His acting in us, and our acting by him is expressed by the same word. And the inquiry here is, how in the same Duty he is said to cry in us, and we are said to cry in him. And there can be no Reason hereof, but only because the same Work is both his and ours in divers Respects. As it is an Act of Grace and Spiritual Power, it is his, or it is wrought in us by him alone. As it is a Duty performed by us, by virtue of his Assistance, it is ours; by him we cry Abba Father. And to deny his actings in our Duties is to overthrow the Gospel. And it

is Prayer formally considered, and as comprising the Gift of it, with its outward Exercise, which is intended. The mere excitation of the Graces of Faith, Love, Trust, Delight, Desire, Self-abasement, and the like animating Principles of Prayer, cannot be expressed by crying, though it be included in it. Their actual Exercise in Prayer formally considered, is that which is ascribed unto the Spirit of God. And they seem to deal somewhat severely with the Church of God and all Believers, who will not allow that the Work here expressly assigned unto the Spirit of Adoption or of the Son, is sufficient for its end, or the discharge of this Duty, either in private or in the Assemblies of the Church. There is no more required unto Prayer either way, but our crying Abba Father, that is, the making our Requests known unto him as our Father in Christ, with Supplications and Thanksgivings, according as our State and occasions do require. And is not the Aid of the Spirit of God sufficient to enable us hereunto? It was so of Old, and that unto all Believers according as they were called unto this Duty, with respect unto their Persons, Families, or the Church of God. If it be not so now, it is because either God will not now communicate his Spirit unto his Children or Sons according to the Promise of the Gospel, or because indeed this Grace and Gift of his is by men despised, neglected and lost. And the former cannot be asserted on any safe grounds whatever: the latter is our interest to consider.

This two-fold Testimony concerning the Promise of the Communication of the Holy Spirit, or a Spirit of Supplication, unto Believers under the New Testament, and the accomplishment of it, does sufficiently evince our general Assertion, that there is a peculiar Work or special gracious operation of the Holy Ghost in the Prayers of Believers enabling them thereunto. For we intend no

more hereby, but that as they do receive him by virtue of that Promise, which the World cannot do, in order unto his Gracious efficiency in the Duty of Supplication; so he does actually incline, dispose, and enable them to cry Abba Father, or to call upon God in Prayer as their Father by Jesus Christ. To deny this therefore, is to rise up in contradiction unto the express Testimony of God himself; and by our unbelief to make him a Lyar. And had we nothing farther to plead in this cause, this were abundantly sufficient to reprove the petulant folly of them by whom this Work of the Holy Ghost, and the Duty of Believers thereon to Pray in the Spirit, if we may use the despised and blasphemed expressions of the Scripture, is scorned and derided.

For as to the Ability of Prayer which is thus received, some there are, who know no more of it as exercised in a way of Duty, but the outside, shell and appearance of it; and that not from their own Experience, but from what they observed in others. Of these there are not a few who confidently affirm, that it is wholly a Work of Fancy, Invention, Memory, and Wit, accompanied with some Boldness and Elocution, unjustly fathered on the Spirit of God, who is no way concerned therein. And it may be they do perswade many, no better skilled in these things than themselves, that so it is indeed. Howbeit those who have any Experience of the real Aids and Assistances of the Spirit of God in this Work and Duty, any Faith in the express Testimonies given by God himself hereunto, cannot but despise such fabulous Imaginations. You may as soon perswade them that the Sun does not give Light, nor the Fire Heat, that they see not with their Eyes, nor hear with their Ears, as that the Spirit of God does not enable them to pray, or assist them in their Supplications. And there might some probability be given

unto these pretenses, and unto the total Exclusion of the Holy Ghost from any concernment herein, if those concerning whom and their Duties they thus judge, were generally Persons known to excel others in those Natural Endowments and acquired Abilities whereunto this Faculty of Prayer is ascribed. But will this be allowed by them who make use of this pretense, namely, that those who are thus able to pray as they pretend by virtue of a Spiritual Gift, are Persons excelling in Fancy, Memory, Wit, Invention, and Elocution? It is known that they will admit of no such thing; but in all other Instances they must be represented as dull, stupid, ignorant, unlearned and brutish. Only in Prayer they have the advantage of those natural Endowments. These things are hardly consistent with common Ingenuity. For is it not strange that those who are so contemptible with respect unto natural and acquired Endowments in all other things, whether of Science or of Prudence, should yet in this one Duty or Work of Prayer so improve them, as to outgo the Imitation of them by whom they are despised? For as they do not, as they will not pray as they do, so their own Hearts tell them, they cannot, which is the true Reason why they so despitefully oppose this praying in the Spirit, whatever Pride or Passion pretends to the contrary. But things of this nature will again occur unto us, and therefore shall not be here further insisted on. Having therefore proved that God has promised a plentiful dispensation of his Spirit unto Believers under the New Testament to enable them to pray according unto his mind; and that in general this Promise is accomplished in and towards all the Children of God; It remains in the second place, as to what we

have proposed, that we declare what is the Work of the Holy Ghost in them unto this end and purpose, or how he is unto us a Spirit of Prayer or Supplication.

CHAPTER 4



The nature of Prayer Romans 8:26. Opened and Vindicated.

PRayer at present I take to be, a Gift, Ability or Spiritual Faculty of exercising Faith, Love, Reverence, Fear, Delight, and other Graces in a way of vocal Requests, Supplications, and Praises unto God. In every thing making our Request known unto God, Philippians 4:6.

This Gift and Ability, I affirm to be bestowed, and this Work by Virtue thereof to be wrought in us by the Holy Ghost in the Accomplishment of the Promise insisted on, so crying Abba Father in them that do believe. And this is that which we are to given an account of, wherein we shall assert nothing but what the Scripture plainly goeth before us in, and what the experience of Believers duly exercised in Duties of Obedience, does confirm. And in the Issue of our Endeavour, we shall leave it unto the Judgement of God and his Church, whether they are ecstatical, enthusiastical, unaccountable Raptures that we plead for, or a real Gracious Effect and Work of the Holy Spirit of God.

The first thing we ascribe unto the Spirit herein is, that he supplieth and furnishes the mind, with a due comprehension of the Matter of Prayer, or what ought, both in general, and as unto all

our particular occasions, to be prayed for. Without this, I suppose it will be granted, that no man can pray as he ought. For how can any man pray, that knows not what to pray for? Where there is not a Comprehension hereof, the very nature and being of Prayer is destroyed. And herein the Testimony of the Apostle is express, Romans 8:26. Likewise also the Spirit helps our Infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit it self makes Intercession for us with groans that cannot be uttered.

It is that expression only which at present I urge, We know not what we should pray for as we ought. This is generally supposed to be otherwise; Namely, that men know well enough what they ought to pray for, only they are wicked and careless, and will not pray for what they know they ought so to do. I shall make no excuse or Apology for the wickedness and carelessness of men, which without doubt are abominable. But yet I must abide by the truth asserted by the Apostle, which I shall further evidence immediately, namely, that without the especial Aid and Assistance of the Holy Spirit no man knows what to pray for as he ought.

But yet there is another Relief in this matter, and so no need of any Work of the Holy Ghost therein. And we shall be accounted Impudent, if we ascribe any thing unto him, whereof there is the least colourable pretense, that it may be otherwise effected or provided for: so great an unwillingness is there to allow him either Place, Work, or Office in the Christian Religion, or the practice of it. Wherefore it is pretended that although men do not of themselves know what to pray for, yet this defect may be supplied in a Prescript form of words, prepared on purpose to teach, and confine men unto, what they are to pray for.

We may therefore dismiss the Holy Spirit and his Assistance as unto this Concernment of Prayer; for the due matter of it may be so set down and fixed on Ink and Paper, that the meanest capacity cannot miss of his Duty therein. This therefore is that which is to be tryed in our ensuing discourse; Namely, what whereas it is plainly affirmed that we know not of ourselves what we should pray for as we ought, (which I judge to be universally true, as unto all Persons, as well those who prescribe Prayers, as those unto whom they are prescribed) and that the Holy Spirit helps and relieves us herein, whether we may or ought to relinquish and neglect his Assistance, and so to rely only on such supplies as are invented or used unto that end, for which he is promised; that is plainly, whether the Word of God be to be trusted unto in this matter or not.

It is true, that whatever we ought to pray for, is declared in the Scripture; yea and summarily comprised in the Lords Prayer. But it is one thing to have what we ought to pray for, in the Book; another thing to have it in our Mind, and Hearts, without which it will never be unto us, the due matter of Prayer. It is out of the abundance of the Heart that the Mouth must speak in this matter, Mat. 12:34. There is therefore in us a threefold defect with respect unto the matter of Prayer; which is supplied by the Holy Spirit, and can be so no other way, nor by any other means; And therein is he unto us a Spirit of Supplication, according to the Promise.

For (1.) we know not our own wants, (2.) we know not the supplied of them that are expressed in the Promises of God, and (3.) we know not the end whereunto what we pray for, is to be directed, which I add unto the former. Without the knowledge and understanding of all these, no man can pray as he ought; and we can no

way know them, but by the Aid and Assistance of the Spirit of Grace. And if these things be manifest, it will be evident how in this first Instance we are enabled to pray by the Holy Ghost.

(1.) Our wants, as they are to be the Matter of Prayer, may be referr'd unto three Heads; and none of them of ourselves do we know aright, so as to make them the due Subject of our Supplications, and of some of them we know nothing at all.

This first consists in our outward straits, pressures and Difficulties, which we desire to be delivered from, with all other temporal things wherein we are concerned. In those things it should seem wondrously clear, that of ourselves we know what to pray for. But the truth is, whatever our sense may be of them, and our natural desires about them, yet how and when, under what conditions and limitations, with what frame of heart and Spirit, what submission unto the pleasure of God they are to be made the matter of our Prayers, we know not. Therefore does God call the Prayers of most about them, howling, and not a crying unto him with the Heart, Hos. 7:14. There is indeed a Voice of nature crying in its distress unto the God of nature. But that is not the Duty of Evangelical Prayer which we inquire after. And men oft-times most miss it, where they think themselves most ready and prepared. To know our Temporal wants so as to make them the matter of Prayer according to the mind of God, requires more Wisdom than of ourselves we are furnished withal. For who knows what is good for man in this Life, all the days of his vain life, which he spends as a shadow? Eccl. 6:12. And oft-times Believers are never more at a loss, than how to pray aright about temporal things. No man is in pain or distress, or under any wants, whose continuance would be destructive to his Being, but he may, yea he ought to

make deliverance from them the matter of his Prayer. So in that case he knows in some measure, or in general, what he ought to pray for, without any peculiar spiritual illumination. But yet the Circumstances of those things, and wherein their respect unto the Glory of God and the supreme End, or chiefest good of the Persons concerned, does stand, (with regard whereunto they can alone be made the matter of prayer acceptable unto God in Christ) is that which of themselves they cannot understand, but have need of an interest in that Promise made to the Church, that they shall be all taught of God. And this is so much more in such things as belong only unto the Conveniences of this Life, whereof no man of himself knows what is good for him, or useful unto him.

(2.) We have Internal wants that are discerned in the light of a natural Conscience: such is the Guilt of Sin, whereof that accus; Sins against natural Light and plain outward letter of the Law. These things we know somewhat of without any especial Aid of the Holy Spirit, Romans 2:14, 15. and desires of Deliverance are inseparable from them. But we may observe here two things, [1.] That the knowledge which we have hereof of ourselves, is so dark and confused, as that we are no ways able thereby to manage our wants in Prayer aright unto God. A Natural Conscience awakened and excited by Afflictions or other providential Visitations, will discover it self in unfeign'd and severe Reflections of Guilt upon the Soul. But untill the Spirit does convince of Sin, all things are in such disorder and confusion in the mind, that no man knows how to make his Address unto God about it in a due manner. And there is more required to treat aright with God about the Guilt of Sin, than a mere Sense of it. So far as men can proceed under that sole conduct and guidance, the Heathens went in dealing with their sup-

posed Gods, without a due respect unto the Propitiation made by the Blood of Christ. Yea Prayer about the guilt of Sin discerned in the Light of a natural Conscience, is but an abomination.

Besides, [2.] We all know how small a portion of the concernment of Believers does lye in those things which fall under the Light and determination of a natural Conscience. For,

(3.) The things about which Believers do, and ought to treat principally, and deal with God in their Supplications, are the inward Spiritual frames and dispositions of their Souls, with the actings of Grace and Sin in them. Hereon David was not satisfied with the Confession of his Original and all known actual Sins, Psalm 51:5. nor yet with an acknowledgment that none knows his own wanderings, whence he desirs cleansing from unknown Sins, Psalm 19:12. But moreover, he begs of God to undertake the inward search of his Heart, to find out what was amiss, or right, in him, Psalm 139:23, 24. as knowing, that God principally required Truth in the inward part, Psalm 51:6. Such is the carrying on of the Work of sanctification in the whole Spirit and Soul, 1 Thess. 5:23.

The inward sanctification of all our faculties, is what we want and pray for. Supplies of Grace from God unto this purpose, with a sense of the Power, Guilt, violence and deceit of Sin in its inward actings in the mind and affections, with other things innumerable thereunto belonging, make up the principal matter of Prayer as formally Supplication.

Add hereunto, that unto the matter of Prayer taken largely for the whole Duty so called, every thing wherein we have intercourse with God in Faith and Love, does belong. The Acknowledgement of the whole mystery of his Wisdom, Grace and Love in Christ Jesus,

with all the Fruits, Effects and Benefits which thence we do receive, all the Workings and actings of our Souls towards him, with their Faculties and Affections; in brief, every thing and every conception of our minds, wherein our spiritual Access unto the Throne of Grace does consist, or which does belong thereunto, with all occasions and emergencies of Spiritual Life, are in like manner comprised herein. And that we can have such an Acquaintance with these things as to manage them acceptably in our Supplications, without the Grace of spiritual illumination from the Holy Ghost, few are so ignorant or profane as to assert. Some I confess seem to be strangers unto these things, which yet renders them not of the less weight or moment.

For some can see no necessity of thus understanding the Grace and Mercy, that is in the Promises unto Prayer; and suppose that men know well enough what to pray for without it.

But those who so speak, neither know what it is to pray, nor it seems are willing to learn. For we are to pray in Faith, Romans 10:14. And Faith respects Gods Promises, Hebrews 4:1. Romans 4. If therefore we understand not what God has promised, we cannot pray at all. It is marvellous what thoughts such persons have of God and themselves, who without a due comprehension of their own Wants, and without an understanding of Gods Promises, wherein all their supplies are laid up, do say their Prayers as they call it continually. And indeed in the poverty, or rather misery, of devised Aids of Prayer, this is not the least pernicious effect or consequent, that they keep men off from searching the Promises of God, whereby they might know what to pray for. Let the matter of Prayer be so prescribed unto men, as that they shall never need, either to search their own Hearts or Gods Promises about it, and this

whole Work is dispatcht out of the way. But then is the Soul prepared aright for this Duty, and then only, when it understands its own condition, the supplies of Grace provided in the Promise, the suitableness of those supplies unto its wants, and the means of its Conveyance unto us by Jesus Christ. That all this we have by the Spirit and not otherwise, shall be immediately declared.

Thirdly, Unto the matter of Prayer I joyn the End we aim at, in the things we pray for, and which we direct them unto. And herein also are we in ourselves at a loss: And men may lose all the benefit of their Prayers by proposing undue Ends unto themselves in the things they pray for. Our Saviour saith, Ask and you shall receive; but the Apostle James affirms of some, Chapter 4:3. Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, to consume it on your pleasures. To pray for any thing, and not expressly unto the end whereunto of God it is designed, is to ask amiss and to no purpose. And yet whatever confidence we may have of our own Wisdom and Integrity; if we are left unto ourselves, without the especial guidance of the Spirit of God, our aims will never be suited unto the Will of God. The ways and means whereby we may fail, and do so in this kind, when not under the actual conduct of the Spirit of God, that is, when our own natural and distempered Affections do immix themselves in our Supplications, are innumerable. And there is nothing so excellent in its self, so useful unto us, so acceptable unto God in the matter of Prayer, but it may be vitiated, corrupted, and Prayer it self rendred vain, by an Application of it unto false or mistaken Ends. And what is the Work of the Spirit to guide us herein, we shall see in its proper place.

CHAPTER 5



The Work of the Holy Spirit as to the matter of Prayer.

THESE things are considerable as to the matter of Prayer; and with respect unto them, of ourselves we know not what we should pray for, nor how, nor when. And the first Work of the Spirit of God, as a Spirit of Supplication in Believers, is to give them an understanding of all their wants, and of the supplies of Grace and Mercy in the Promises, causing a sense of them to dwell and abide on their minds; as that, according unto their measure, they are continually furnished with the matter of Prayer, without which men never pray, and by which, in some sense, they pray always. For,

(1.) He alone does, and he alone is able to give us such an understanding of our own wants, as that we may be able to make our thoughts about them known unto God in Prayer and Supplication. And what is said concerning our wants, is so likewise with respect unto the whole matter of Prayer, whereby we give Glory to God, either in Requests or Prayers. And this I shall manifest in some instances, whereunto others may be reduced.

(1.) The Principal matter of our Prayer concerns Faith and Unbelief. So the Apostles prayed in a particular manner, Lord increase our Faith; and so the poor man prayed in his distress, Lord help you my unbelief. I cannot think that they ever pray aright, who never pray for the pardon of Unbelief, for the removal of it, and for the increase of Faith. If Unbelief be the greatest of Sins, and if Faith be the greatest of the Gifts of God, we are not Christians, if those things are not one principal part of the matter of our Prayers. Unto this end we must be convinced of the nature and guilt of Unbelief, as also of the nature and use of Faith; nor without that conviction do we either know our own chiefest wants, or what to pray for as we ought. And that this is the especial Work of the Holy Ghost, our Saviour expressly declares, John 16:9. He convinces the World of Sin, because they believe not on him. I do, and must deny, that any one is or can be convinced of the nature and guilt of that Unbelief, either in the whole or in the remainder of it, which the Gospel condemns, and which is the great condemning Sin under the Gospel, without an especial Work of the Holy Ghost on his mind and Soul. For Unbelief as it respects Jesus Christ, not believing in him, or not believing in him as we ought, is a Sin against the Gospel, and it is by the Gospel alone that we may be convinced of it, and that as it is the ministration of the Spirit. Wherefore neither the Light of a natural Conscience, nor the Law, will convince any one of the guilt of Unbelief with respect unto Jesus Christ, nor instruct them in the nature of Faith in him. No innate Notions of our Minds, no Doctrines of the Law will reach hereunto. And to think to teach men to pray, or to help them out in praying, without a sense of Unbelief, or the remainders of it in its Guilt and Power, the nature of Faith with its necessity, use and ef-

ficacy, is to say unto the naked and the hungry, be ye warmed and filled, and not give them those things that are needful to the Body. This therefore belongs unto the Work of the Spirit as a Spirit of Supplication. And let men tear and tire themselves Night and Day with a multitude of Prayers, if a Work of the Spirit of God in teaching the nature and Guilt of Unbelief, the nature, efficacy and use of Faith in Christ Jesus, go not with it, all will be lost and perish. And yet it is marvellous to consider how little mention of these things occurs in most of those compositions, which have been published to be used as Forms of Prayer. They are generally omitted in such endeavours, as if they were things, wherein Christians were very little concerned. The Gospel positively and frequently determines the present Acceptation of men with God, or their Disobedience, with their future Salvation and Condemnation according unto their Faith or Unbelief. For their Obedience or Disobedience are infallible consequences thereon. Now if things that are of the greatest Importance unto us, and whereon all other things, wherein our spiritual Estate is concerned, do depend, be not a part of the subject matter of our daily Prayer, I know not what deserves so to be.

Secondly, The matter of our Prayer respects the Depravation of our natures and our wants on that account. The Darkness and Ignorance that is in our Understandings, our unacquaintedness with heavenly things, and Alienation from the Life of God thereby, the secret workings of the Lusts of the mind under the shades and Covert of this darkness; the stubbornness, obstinacy and perverseness of our Wills by nature, with their reluctancies unto, and dislike of things spiritual, with innumerable latent guiles thence arising, all keeping the Soul from a due conformity unto the Holiness

of God, are things which Believers have an especial regard unto in their Confessions and Supplications. They know this to be their Duty, and find by experience, that the greatest concernment between God and their Souls, as to Sin and Holiness, do lye in these things. And they are never more jealous over themselves, than when they find their Hearts least affected with them. And to give over treating with God about them, for Mercy in their pardon, for Grace in their removal, and the daily Renovation of the Image of God in them thereby, is to renounce all Religion, and all designs of living unto God.

Wherefore without a knowledge, a sense, a due comprehension of these things, no man can pray as he ought, because he is unacquainted with the matter of Prayer, and knows not what to pray for. But this knowledge we cannot attain of ourselves. Nature is so corrupted, as not to understand its own depravation. Hence some absolutely deny this Corruption of it, so taking away all necessity of labouring after its cure, and the Renovation of the Image of God in us. And hereby they overthrow the Prayers of all Believers, which the Antient Church continually pressed the Pelagians withal. Without a sense of these things I must profess, I understand not how any man can pray. And this knowledge, as was said, we have not of ourselves. Nature is blind, and cannot see them; it is proud, and will not own them; stupid, and is senseless of them. It is the Work of the Spirit of God alone, to give us a due conviction of, a spiritual insight into, and sense of the Concernment of these things. This I have elsewhere so fully proved, as not here again to insist on it.

It is not easy to conjecture, how men pray, or what they pray about, who know not the plague of their own Hearts. Yea, this Ignorance, want of Light into, or conviction of the depravation of their nature, and the remainders thereof, even in those that are renewed, with the Fruits, Consequences and Effects thereof, is the principal cause of mens Barrenness in this Duty, so that they can seldome go beyond what is prescribed unto them. And they can thence also satisfie themselves with a set or frame of well composed words, wherein they might easily discern that their own condition and concernment are not at all expressed, if they were acquainted with them. I do not fix measures unto other men, nor give bounds unto their understandings; Only I shall take leave to profess for my own part, that I cannot conceive or apprehend how any man does or can know what to pray for as he ought, in the whole compass and course of that Duty, who has no Spiritual illumination enabling him to discern in some measure the Corruption of his nature, and the internal Evils of his Heart. If men judge the faculties of their Souls to be undepraved, their minds free from vanity, their Hearts from Guile and deceit, their Wills from perverseness and carnality, I wonder not on what Grounds they despise the Prayers of others, but should do so, to find real Humiliation, and fervency in their own.

Hereunto I may add the irregularity and disorder of our Affections. These I confess are discernible in the Light of Nature, and the rectifying of them, or an attempt for it, was the principal end of the old Philosophy. But the chief respect that on this principle it had unto them, is, as they disquiet the mind, or break forth into outward expressions, whereby men are defiled, or dishonoured, or distressed. So far natural Light will go, and thereby in

the working of their Consciences, as far as I know, men may be put to pray about them. But the chief depravation of the Affections lyes in their aversation unto things spiritual and Heavenly.

They are indeed sometimes ready of themselves to like things spiritual under false Notions of them, and divine Worship under Superstitious Ornaments and meretricious dresses, in which respect they are the spring and life of all that Devotion, which is in the Church of Rome. But take Heavenly and Spiritual things in themselves with respect unto their proper Ends, and there is in all our Affections, as corrupted, a dislike of them and aversation unto them, which variously act themselves, and influence our Souls unto Vanities and disorders in all Holy Duties. And no man knows what it is to pray, who is not exercised in Supplications for mortifying, changing and renewing of these Affections as spiritually irregular. And yet is it the Spirit of God alone, which discovers these things unto us and gives us a sense of our concernment in them. I say the Spiritual irregularity of our Affections, and their Aversation from spiritual things, is discernible in no Light, but that of supernatural illumination. For if without that, Spiritual things themselves cannot be discerned, as the Apostle assures us they cannot, 1 Corinthians. 2. it is impossible that the disorder of our Affections with respect unto them, should be so. If we know not an object in the true nature of it, we cannot know the actings of our minds towards it. Wherefore although there be in our Affections an innate universal aversation from spiritual things, seeing by nature we are wholly alienated from the life of God, yet can it not be discerned by us in any Light but that which discovers these spiritual things themselves unto us. Nor can any man be made sensible of the Evil and Guilt of that disorder, who has not a Love also implanted in

his Heart unto those things, which it finds obstructed thereby. Wherefore the Mortification of these Affections and their Renovation with respect unto things Spiritual and Heavenly, being no small part of the matter of the Prayers of Believers, as being an especial part of their Duty, they have no otherwise an acquaintance with them or sense of them, but as they receive them by Light and Conviction from the Spirit of God. And those who are destitute hereof must needs be strangers unto the Life and Power of the Duty of Prayer it self.

As it is with respect unto Sin, so it is with respect unto God and Christ, and the Covenant, Grace, Holiness and Privileges. We have no spiritual conceptions about them, no right Understanding of them, no insight into them, but what is given us by the Spirit of God. And without an Acquaintance with these things, what are our Prayers, or what do they signifie? Men without them may say on to the World's end, without giving any thing of Glory unto God, or obtaining of any Advantage unto their own Souls.

And this I place as the first part of the Work of the Spirit of Supplications in Believers, enabling them to pray, according to the mind of God, which of themselves they know not how to do, as is afterward in the place of the Apostle insisted on. When this is done, when a right apprehension of Sin and Grace, and of our concernment in them, is fixed on our minds, then have we in some measure the matter of Prayer always in readiness, which words and expressions will easily follow, though the Aid of the Holy Spirit be necessary thereunto also, as we shall afterwards declare.

And hence it is, that the Duty performed with respect unto this part of the Aid and assistance of the Spirit of God, is of late by some (as was said) vilified and reproached. Formerly their excep-

tions lay all of them against some Expressions or weakness of some Persons in conceived Prayer, which they liked. But now scorn is poured out upon the matter of Prayer it self, especially the humble and deep confessions of Sin, which on the discoveries before mentioned, are made in the Supplications of Ministers and others. The things themselves are traduced as absurd, foolish and irrational, as all Spiritual things are unto some sorts of men. Neither do I see how this disagreement is capable of any Reconciliation. For they who have no Light to discern those respects of Sin and Grace, which we have mentioned, cannot but think it uncouth to have them continually made the matter of mens Prayers. And those on the other hand who have received a Light into them, and Acquaintance with them by the Spirit of God, are troubled at nothing more, than that they cannot sufficiently abase themselves under a sense of them, nor in any words fully express that impression on their minds which is put on them by the Holy Ghost; nor cloath their desires after Grace and Mercy, with words sufficiently significant and emphatical. And therefore this difference is irreconcilable by any but the Spirit of God himself. Whilst it does abide, those who have respect only unto what is discernible in the Light of Nature or of a natural Conscience in their Prayers, will keep themselves unto general expressions and outward things, in words prepared unto that purpose by themselves or others, do we what we can to the contrary. For men will not be led beyond their own Light, neither is it meet they should. And those who do receive the Supplies of the Spirit in this matter, will in their Prayer be principally conversant about the spiritual internal concernments of their Souls in Sin and Grace, let others despise them and reproach them whilst they please. And it is in vain much to contend about these

things, which are regulated not by Arguments but by Principles. Men will invincibly adhere unto the capacity of their Light. Nothing can put an end to this difference, but a more plentiful Effusion of the Spirit from above, which according unto the Promise we wait for.

Secondly, We know not what to pray for as we ought, but the Holy Ghost acquaints us with the Grace and Mercy which are prepared in the Promises of God for our Relief. That the Knowledge hereof is necessary to enable us to direct our Prayers unto God in a due manner, I declared before; and I suppose it will not be denied. For what do we pray for? What do we take a prospect and design of in our Supplications? What is it we desire to be made Partakers of? Praying only by saying or repeating so many words of Prayer, whose sence and meaning those who make use of them, perhaps understand not, as in the Papacy; or so as to rest in the saying or Repetition of them without an especial design of obtaining something or things which we make known in our Supplications, is unworthy the Disciples of Christ, indeed of rational Creatures. Deal thus with your Governour, Will he be pleased with you or accept your Person? as Malachi 1:8. neither Ruler nor Friend nor Neighbor would accept it at our hands, if we should constantly make solemn addresses unto them, without any especial design: We must pray with our understanding; that is, understand what we pray for. And these things are no other but what God has promised, which if we are not regulated by in our Supplications, we ask amiss. It is therefore indispensably necessary unto Prayer, that we should know what God has promised, or that we should have an understanding of the Grace and Mercy of the Promises. God knows our wants, what is good for us, what is useful to us,

what is necessary to bring us unto the enjoyment of himself, infinitely better than we do ourselves; Yea, we know nothing of these things but what he is pleased to teach us. These are the things which he has prepared for us, as the Apostle speaks, 1 Corinthians. 2:9. And what he has so prepar'd, he declares in the Promises of the Covenant. For they are the declaration of the Grace and good pleasure which he has purposed in himself. And hence Believers may learn, what is good for them and what is wanting unto them in the Promises, more clearly and certainly than by any other means whatever. From them therefore do we learn what to pray for as we ought. And this is another Reason, why men are so barren in their Supplications, they know not what to pray for, but are forced to betake themselves unto a confused Repetition of the same requests; namely their ignorance of the Promises of God, and the Grace exhibited in them. Our inquiry therefore is, by what way or means we come to an Acquaintance with these Promises, which all Believers have in some measure, some more full and distinct than others, but all in an useful sufficiency. And this we say is by the Spirit of God, without whose Aid and Assistance we can neither understand them, nor what is contained in them.

I do confess, that some by frequent reading of the Scripture, by the only help of a faithful Memory, may be able to express in their Prayers the Promises of God, without any spiritual Acquaintance with the Grace of them, whereby they administer unto others, and not unto themselves. But this Remembrance of Words or Expressions belongs not unto the especial Work of the Holy Ghost in supplying the Hearts and minds of Believers with the matter of Prayer. But this is that which he does herein; He opens their Eyes, he givs an understanding, he enlightens their minds, so that they

shall perceive the things that are of God prepared for them, and that are contained in the Promises of the Gospel; and represents them therein in their beauty, Glory, suitableness and desirableness unto their Souls. He makes them to see Christ in them, and all the Fruits of his Mediation in them, all the effect of the Grace and Love of God in them, the Excellency of Mercy and Pardon, of Grace and Holiness, of a new Heart, with Principles, dispositions, Inclinations and Actings, all as they are proposed in the Truth and Faithfulness of God. Now when the mind and Heart is continually filled with an Understanding and due Apprehensions of these things; it is always furnished with the matter of Prayer and praise unto God, which Persons make use of according as they have actual assistance and utterance given unto them. And whereas this Holy Spirit together with the knowledge of them, does also implant a Love unto them upon the minds of Believers, they are not only hereby directed what to pray for, but are excited and stirred up to seek after the enjoyment of them, with ardent Affections and earnest Endeavours, which is to pray. And although among those on whose Hearts these things are not implanted, some may (as was before observed) make an appearance of it, by expressing in Prayer the words of the Promises of God retined in their memories, yet for the most part they are not able themselves to pray in any tolerable useful manner, and do either wonder at, or despise those that are so enabled.

But it may be said, that where there is any defect herein, it may be easily supplied. For if men are not acquainted with the Promises of God themselves in the manner before described, and so know not what they ought to pray for, others who have the un-

derstanding of them may compose Prayers for their use according to their Apprehensions of the mind of God in them, which they may read, and so have the matter of Prayer always in a readiness.

I answer, (1.) I do not know that any one has a Command, or Promise of Assistance, to make or compose Prayers to be said or read by others as their Prayers; and therefore I expect no great matter from what any one shall do in that kind. The Spirit of Grace and Supplication is promised, as I have proved, to enable us to pray, not to enable us to make or compose Prayers for others.

(2.) It savours of some unacquaintance with the Promises of God, and the Duty of Prayer, to imagine that the matter of them so as to suit the various conditions of Believers, can be pent up in any one Form of mans devising. Much of what we are to pray about, may be in general and doctrinally comprised in a Form of Words, as they are in the Lords Prayer, which gives directions in, and a boundary unto our requests: But that the things themselves should be prepared and suited unto the condition and wants of them that are to pray, is a fond imagination.

(3.) There is a vast difference between an objective Proposal of good things to be prayed for, unto the consideration of them that are to pray, which men may do; and the implanting an acquaintance with them and Love unto them upon the mind and Heart, which is the Work of the Holy Ghost.

(4.) When things are so prepared and cast into a form of Prayer, those by whom such forms are used, do no more understand them, than if they had never been cast into any such form,

unless the Spirit of God give them an understanding of them, which the form it self is no sanctified means unto. And where that is done, there is no need of it.

(5.) It is the Work of the Holy Spirit to give unto Believers such a comprehension of promised Grace and Mercy, as that they may constantly apply their minds unto that or those things in an especial manner which are suited unto their present daily wants and occasions, with the frame and dispositions of their Souls and Spirit. This is that which gives spiritual beauty and order unto the Duty of Prayer; namely, the suiting of Wants and Supplies, of a thankful disposition and Praises, of Love and Admiration unto the excellencies of God in Christ, all by the Wisdom of the Holy Ghost. But when a Person is made to pray by his Directory for things though good in themselves, yet not suited unto his present state, frame, inclination, wants and desires, there is Spiritual Confusion and disorder and nothing else.

Again, What we have spoken concerning the Promises, must also be applied unto all the Precepts or Commands of God. These in like manner are the matter of our Prayers, both as to Confession and Supplication. And without a right understanding of them, we can perform no part of this duty as we ought. This is evident in their apprehension who repeating the words of the Decalogue, do subjoyn their acknowledgments of a want of Mercy, with respect unto the Transgression of them, I suppose, and their desires to have their hearts inclined to keep the Law. But the Law with all the Commands of God are Spiritual and inward, with whose true sense and importance in their extent and latitude, we cannot have an useful Acquaintance, but by the enlightning, instructing efficacy of the Grace of the Spirit. And where this is, the mind is greatly sup-

plied with the true matter of Prayer. For when the Soul has learnt the Spirituality and Holiness of the Law, its extent unto the inward frame and disposition of our Hearts, as well as unto outward Actions, and its requiring absolute Holiness, Rectitude and Conformity unto God at all times, and in all things; then does it see and learn its own discrepancy from it, and coming short of it, even then when as to outward Acts and Duties, it is unblameable. And hence do proceed those Confessions of Sin in the best and most holy Believers, which they who understand not these things, do deride and scorn. By this means therefore does the Holy Spirit help us to pray, by supplying us with the due and proper matter of Supplications, even by acquainting us and affecting our hearts with the Spirituality of the Command, and our coming short thereof in our dispositions, and frequent inordinate actings of our Minds and Affections. He who is instructed herein, will on all occasions be prepared with a fulness of matter for Confession and Humiliation; as also, with a sense of that Grace and Mercy, which we stand in need of with respect unto the Obedience required of us.

Thirdly, He alone guides and directs Believers to pray, or ask for any thing in order unto right and proper Ends. For there is nothing so excellent in it self, so useful unto us, so acceptable unto God, as the matter of Prayer, but it may be vitiated, corrupted, and Prayer it self be rendred vain, by an application of it unto false or mistaken Ends. And that in this case we are relieved by the Holy Ghost, it is plain in the Text under consideration. For helping our infirmities, and teaching us what to pray for as we ought, he makes Intercession for us according unto God, that is his mind or his will, v. 27. This is well explained by Origen on the Place, *Velut si magister suscipiens ad Rudiment a Discipulum, & ignorantem penitus*

litteras, ut eum docere possit & instituere, necesse habet inclinare se ad Discipuli rudimenta, & ipse prius dicere nomen literae, ut respondendo discipulus discat, & sit quodammodo Magister incipienti Discipulo similis, ea loquens & ea meditans, quae incipiens loqui debeat ac meditari; Itaque & Sanctus Spiritus, ubi oppugnationibus carnis perturbari nostrum Spiritum viderit, & nescientem quid orare debeat secundum quod oportet, ipse velut Magister orationem praemittit, quam noster spiritus (si tamen Discipulus esse Sancti Spiritus desiderat) prosequatur, ipse gemitus ossert quibus noster spiritus discat ingemiscere, ut repropitiet sibi Deum. To the same purpose speaks Damascen, lib. 4. Ch. 3. and Austin in sundry places collected by Beda in his Comment on this. He does it in us, and by us, or enables us so to do. For the Spirit himself without us, has no Office to be performed immediately towards God, nor any Nature inferiour unto the Divine, wherein he might intercede. The whole of any such Work with respect unto us, is incumbent on Christ, he alone in his own Person performs what is to be done with God for us. What the Spirit does, he does in and by us. He therefore directs and enables us to make Supplications according to the mind of God. And herein God is said to know the mind of the Spirit, that is, his end and design in the matter of his requests. This God knows, that is, approves of and accepts. So it is the Spirit of God who directs us as to the design and end of our Prayers, that they may find Acceptance with God.

But yet there may be, and I believe there is, more in that expression; God knows the mind of the Spirit. For he works such high, holy, spiritual desires and designs in the minds of Believers

in their Supplications, as God alone knows and understands in their full extent and latitude. That of ourselves we are apt to fail and mistake has been declared from James 4:3.

I shall not here insist on particulars, but only mention two general Ends of Prayer which the Holy Spirit keeps the minds of Believers unto in all their Requests, where he has furnished them with the matter of them according to the mind of God. For he does not only make Intercession in them, according unto the mind of God, with respect unto the matter of their Requests, but also with respect unto the End which they aim at, that it may be accepted with him. He guides them therefore to design,

(1.) That all the success of their Petitions and Prayers, may have an immediate tendency unto the Glory of God. It is he alone who enables them to subordinate all their desires unto Gods Glory. Without his especial Aid and Assistance we should aim at Self only and ultimately in all we do. Our own profit, ease, satisfaction, Mercies, Peace and Deliverance would be the End whereunto we should direct all our Supplications, whereby they would be all vitiated and become abominable.

(2.) He keeps them unto this also, that the Issue of their Supplications may be the improvement of Holiness in them, and thereby their conformity unto God, with their nearer access unto him. Where these Ends are not, the matter of Prayer may be good and according to the word of God, and yet our Prayers an Abomination. We may pray for Mercy and Grace and the best promised Fruits of the Love of God, and yet for want of these Ends find no acceptance in our Supplications. To keep us unto them is his Work, because it consists in casting out all self-Ends and aims, bringing all natural desires unto a subordination unto God, which

he works in us, if he works in us any thing at all. And this is the first part of the Work of the Spirit towards Believers as a Spirit of Grace and Supplication; He furnishes and fills their minds with the matter of Prayer, teaching them thereby what to pray for as they ought. And where this is not wrought in some measure and degree, there is no praying according to the mind of God.

CHAPTER 6



The due manner of Prayer, wherein it does consist.

THE Holy Spirit having given the mind a due Apprehension of the things we ought to pray for, or furnished it with the matter of Prayer, he moreover works a due sense and valuation of them with desires after them upon the Will and Affections, wherein the due manner of it, does consist. These things are separable. The mind may have Light to discern the things that are to be prayed for, and yet the Will and Affections be dead unto them, or unconcerned in them. And there may be a Gift of Prayer founded hereon, in whose exercise the Soul does not spiritually act towards God. For Light is the matter of all common Gifts. And by virtue of a perishing Illumination a man may attain a Gift in Prayer, which may be of use unto the Edification of others. For the manifestation of the Spirit is given unto every man to profit withal. In the mean time it is with him that so prays, not much otherwise than it was with him of old, who prayed in an unknown Tongue; his Spirit prays, but his Heart is unfruitful. He prays by virtue of the Light and Gift that he has received, but his own Soul is not benefited nor improved thereby. Only sometimes

God makes use of mens own Gifts to convey Grace into their own Souls. But Prayer properly so called, is the Obediential acting of the whole Soul towards God.

Wherefore, where the Holy Spirit completes his Work in us as a Spirit of Grace and Supplication, he works on the Will and Affections to act obedientially towards God in and about the matter of their Prayers. Thus when he is poured out as a Spirit of Supplication, he fills them, unto whom he is communicated, with mourning and godly sorrow to be exercised in their Prayers as the matter does require, Zach. 12:10. He does not only enable them to pray, but works Affections in them suitable unto what they pray about. And in this Work of the Spirit, lies the Fountain of that inexpressible fervency and delight, of those enlarged Labourings of mind and desires which are in the Prayers of Believers, especially when they are under the Power of more than ordinary influences from him. For these things proceed from the Work of the Spirit on their Wills and Affections, stirring them up and carrying them forth unto God in and by the matter of their Prayers, in such a manner, as no vehement working of natural Affections can reach unto. And therefore is the Spirit said to make intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered, Romans 8:26, 27. [illegible]. As he had before expressed his Work in general by [illegible], which intends an help by working, carrying us on in our undertaking in this Duty beyond our own strength (for he helps us on, under our infirmities, or weaknesses) so his especial acting is here declared by [illegible]; that is an additional Interposition, like that of an Advocate for his Client, pleading that in his Case which he of himself is not able to do. Once this Word is used in the service of a contrary design. Speaking of the Prayer of Elijah, the Apostle says,

[illegible], How he makes intercession unto God against Israel, Romans 11:2. as [illegible], which is constantly used in the Old Testament for to declare good tidings, Tidings of Peace, is once applied in a contrary signification unto Tidings of Evil and destruction, 1 Samuel. 4:17. The man that brought the News of the destruction of the Army of the Israelites and the taking of the Ark by the Philistins is called [illegible]. But the proper use of this Word is to intercede for Grace and favor. And this he does [illegible]. We ourselves are said [illegible], to groan, v. 23. that is, humbly, mournfully and earnestly to desire. And here the Spirit is said, to intercede for us with Groans, which can be nothing but his working in us, and acting by us that frame of Heart, and those fervent labouring desires which are so expressed; and these with such depth of intention and labouring of mind as cannot be uttered. And this he does by the Work now mentioned.

Having truly affected the whole Soul, enlightened the mind in the perception of the Truth, Beauty and Excellency of Spiritual things, engaged the Will in the Choice of them, and prevalent Love unto them, excited the Affections to delight in them, and unto desires after them, there is in the actual discharge of this Duty of Prayer, wrought in the Soul by the Power and efficacy of his Grace, such an inward labouring of Heart and Spirit, such an Holy Supernatural Desire and Endeavour after an Union with the things prayed for in the enjoyment of them, as no Words can utter or expressly declare, that is, fully and compleatly; which is the sense of the place.

To avoid the force of this Testimony some (one at least) would have this Intercession of the Spirit, to be the Intercession of the Spirit in Christ for us now at the right Hand of God, so that no

Work of the Spirit it self in Believers is intended. Such irrational Evasions will men sometimes make use of, to escape the convincing Power of Light and Truth. For this is such a Description of the Intercession of Christ at the Right Hand of God, as will scarcely be reconciled unto the Analogy of Faith. That it is not an humble, oral Supplication, but a blessed Representation of his Oblation whereby the efficacy of it is continued and applied unto all the particular occasions of the Church or Believers, I have elsewhere declared, and it is the common Faith of Christians. But here it should be reported as the labouring of the Spirit in him with unutterable groans, the highest expression of an humble, burthened, solicitous Endeavour. Nothing is more unsuited unto the present Glorious condition of the Mediator. It is true, that in the Days of his Flesh he prayed with strong cryes and tears in an humble deprecation of Evil, Hebrews 5:7. But an humble prostration and praying with unutterable groans is altogether inconsistent with his present state of Glory, his fulness of Power, and Right to dispense all the Grace and Mercy of the Kingdom of God. Besides, this Exposition is as adverse to the context as any thing could be invented. Ver. 15. It is said that we receive the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry Abba Father, which Spirit God sends forth into our Hearts, Galatians 4:6. And the blessed Work of this Spirit in us, is further described, v. 16, 17. And thereon v. 23. having received the first-fruits of this Spirit, we are said to groan within ourselves; to which it is added, that of ourselves not knowing what we ought to pray for, [illegible]that very Spirit so given unto us, so received by us, so working in us, makes intercession for us with groans that cannot be uttered. Wherefore without offering violence unto the Context, here is no place for the Introduction of the Intercession of Christ in

Heaven, especially under such an expression as is contrary to the nature of it. It is mentioned afterwards by the Apostle in its proper place as a consequent and fruit of his Death and Resurrection, ver. 34. And there he is said simply [illegible]. But the Spirit here is said [illegible], which implies an additional supply unto what is in ourselves.

Yet to give countenance unto this uncouth Exposition, a force is put upon the beginning of both the verses 26, 27. For whereas [illegible] does constantly in the Scripture denote any kind of infirmity or weakness, spiritual or corporal, it is said here to be taken in the latter sense for diseases with troubles and dangers; which latter, it no where signifies. For so the meaning should be, That in such conditions we know not what to pray for, whether wealth or health or Peace or the like, but Christ interceeds for us. And this must be the sense of [illegible], which yet in the Text does plainly denote an help and assistance given unto our weaknesses, that is, unto us who are weak, in the discharge of the Duty of Prayer, as both the words themselves and the ensuing reasons of them do evince. Wherefore neither the Grammatical sence of the words, nor the Context, nor the Analogy of Faith will admit of this new and uncouth Exposition.

In like manner if it be enquired, why it is said, that he who searchs the Heart knows the mind of the Spirit, which plainly refers to some great and secret Work of the Spirit in the Heart of man, if the Intercession of Christ be intended; nothing is offered but this Paraphrase, And then God that by being a searcher of Hearts, knows our wants exactly, understands also the desire and intention of the Spirit of Christ. But these things are [illegible];

and have no dependance the one on the other. Nor was there any need of the mentioning the searching of our Hearts, to introduce the Approbation of the Intercession of Christ. But to return:

That is wrought in the Hearts of Believers in their Duty, which is pervious to none but him that searchs the Heart. This frame in all our Supplications we ought to aim at, especially in time of Distress, Troubles and Temptations, such as was the season here especially intended, when commonly we are most sensible of our own infirmities. And wherein we come short hereof in some measure, it is from our Unbelief or carelessness and negligence, which God abhors. I do acknowledge that there may be, that there will be more earnestness and intention of mind and of our natural Spirit, therein, in this Duty, at one time than another, according as outward occasions or other motives do excite them or stir them up. So our Saviour in his Agony prayed more earnestly than usuall, not with an higher exercise of Grace, which always acted it self in him in perfection, but with a greater vehemency in the working of his natural faculties. So it may be with us at especial seasons; But yet we are always to endeavour after the same Aids of the Spirit, the same actings of Grace in every particular Duty of this kind.

Thirdly, The Holy Spirit gives the Soul of a Believer a Delight in God, as the Object of Prayer. I shall not insist on his exciting, moving and acting all other Graces that are required in the exercise of this Duty, as Faith, Love, Reverence, Fear, Trust, Submission, Waiting, Hope and the like. I have proved elsewhere, that the exercise of them all in all Duties, and of all other Graces in like manner, is from him, and shall not therefore here again confirm the same Truth. But this Delight in God as the Object of Prayer, has a peculiar consideration in this matter. For without it ordinarily the

Duty is not accepted with God, and is a barren burthensome task unto them by whom it is performed. Now this Delight in God as the Object of Prayer, is for the substance of it included in that description of Prayer given us by the Apostle, namely, that it is crying Abba Father. Herein a Filial, Holy Delight in God is included; such as Children have in their Parents in their most affectionate addresses unto them, as has been declared. And we are to inquire wherein this Delight in God as the object of Prayer does consist, or what is required thereunto. And there is in it,

(1.) A Sight or prospect of God as on a Throne of Grace. A prospect, I say, not by carnal Imagination, but spiritual Illumination. By Faith we see him who is invisible, Hebrews 11:27. For it is the Evidence of things not seen, making its proper Object evident and present unto them that do believe. Such a sight of God on a Throne of Grace is necessary unto this Delight. Under this consideration he is the proper object of all our Addresses unto him in our Supplications, Hebrews 4:16. Let us come boldly to the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain Mercy and find Grace to help in a time of need. The Duty of Prayer is described by the subject matter of it, namely Mercy and Grace, and by the only object of it, God on a Throne of Grace.

And this Throne of Grace is further represented unto us by the place where it is erected or set up; and that is in the Holiest, or most Holy Place. For in our coming unto God as on that Throne, we have boldness to enter into the Holiest by the Blood of Jesus, Hebrews 10:19. And hereby the Apostle shews, that in the expression, he had respect, or alludes unto the Mercy-Seat upon the Ark, covered with the Cherubims, which had a Representation of a

Throne. And because of Gods especial Manifestation of himself thereon, it was called his Throne. And it was a Representation of Jesus Christ, as I have shewed elsewhere.

God therefore on a Throne of Grace, is God, as in a readiness through Jesus Christ to dispense Grace and Mercy to suppliant Sinners. When God comes to execute Judgment, his Throne is otherwise represented. See Dan. 7:9, 10. And when Sinners take a view in their minds of God as he is in himself, and as he will be unto all out of Christ, it ingenerates nothing but Dread and Terror in them, with foolish Contrivances to avoid him, or his displeasure, Isaiah 33:14. Mic. 6:7, 8. Revelation. 6:16. All these places and others testifie, that when Sinners do ingage into serious thoughts and conceptions of the Nature of God, and what entertainment they shall meet with from him, all their Apprehensions issue in Dread and Terror. This is not a frame wherein they can cry Abba Father. If they are delivered from this fear and bondage, it is by that which is worse, namely carnal boldness and presumption, whose Rise lys in the highest Contempt of God and his Holiness. When men give up themselves to the customary performance of this Duty, or rather saying of their Prayers, I know not out of what Conviction that so they must do, without a due Consideration of God, and the Regard that he has unto them, they do but provoke him to his Face in taking his name in Vain; Nor, however they satisfie themselves in what they do, have they any Delight in God in their approaches unto him.

Wherefore there is required hereunto, a Prospect of God by Faith as on a Throne of Grace, as exalted in Christ to shew Mercy unto Sinners. So is he represented, Isaiah 30:18. Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious; and therefore will he be ex-

alted, that he may have Mercy. Without this we cannot draw nigh to him or call upon him with Delight as becoms Children, crying Abba Father. And by whom is this discovery made unto us? Is this a fruit of our own Fancy and Imagination? So it may be with some to their ruine. But it is the Work of the Spirit, who alone in and through Christ reveals God unto us, and enables us to discern him in a due manner. Hence our Apostle prays for the Ephesians, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, would give unto them the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the knowledge of him, that the Eyes of their understanding being enlightned, they might know what is the hope of his Calling, and what the Riches of the Glory of his Inheritance in the Saints. Chapter 1:17, 18. All the Acquaintance which we have with God in a way of Grace, is from the Revelation made in us by his Spirit. See Colossians 2:1. 2. By him does God say unto us, That, Fury is not in him, and that if we lay hold on his Arm, that we may have peace, we shall have peace, Isaiah 29:4, 5.

Secondly, Unto this Delight is required a sense of Gods Relation unto us as a Father. By that name and under that Consideration has the Lord Christ taught us to address ourselves unto him in all our Supplications. And although we may use other Titles and Appellations in our speaking to him, even such as he has given himself in the Scripture, or those which are Analogous thereunto; yet this Consideration principally influences our Souls and minds, that God is not ashamed to be called our Father, that the Lord Almighty has said that he will be a Father unto us, and that we shall be his Sons and Daughters, 2 Corinthians. 6. Wherefore as a Father is he the ultimate object of all Evangelical Worship, of all our Prayers. So is it expressed in that Holy and Divine Description

of it given by the Apostle, Ephesians 2:18. Through Christ we have an Access by one Spirit unto the Father. No Tongue can express, no mind can reach the Heavenly placidness and Soul-satisfying Delight which are intimated in these words. To come to God as a Father, through Christ, by the help and assistance of the Holy Spirit, revealing him as a Father unto us, and enabling us to go to him as a Father, how full of sweetness and satisfaction is it! Without a due Apprehension of God in this Relation, no man can pray as he ought. And hereof we have no sense, herewith we have no Acquaintance, but by the Holy Ghost. For we do not consider God in a general manner, as he may be said to be a Father unto the whole Creation; but in an especial distinguishing Relation, as he makes us his Children by Adoption. And as it is the Spirit that bears witness with our Spirit, that we are thus the Children of God, Romans 8:16. giving us the highest and utmost Assurance of our Estate of Sonship in this World; so being the Spirit of Adoption, it is by him alone that we have any Acquaintance with our interest in that Privilege.

Some may apprehend that these things belong but little, and that very remotely unto the Duty of Prayer, and the Assistance we receive by the Spirit therein. But the truth is, those who are so minded, on Consideration, know neither what it is to pray, nor what does belong thereunto. There is nothing more essential unto this Duty, than that in the performance of it, we address ourselves unto God under the Notion of a Father, that is, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him our Father also. Without this we cannot have that Holy Delight in this Duty which is required in us,

and the want whereof ordinarily ruins our design in it. And this we can have no spiritual satisfactory sense of, but what we receive by and from the Spirit of God.

Thirdly, There belongs thereunto, that Boldness which we have in our Access into the Holy Place, or unto the Throne of Grace. Having therefore boldness to enter into the Holiest by the Blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a true Heart in full assurance of Faith, Hebrews 10:19, 22. Where there is on men a Spirit of Fear unto Bondage, they can never have any Delight in their Approaches unto God. And this is removed by the Spirit of Grace and Supplication, Romans 8:15. For ye have not received the Spirit of Bondage again unto fear; but ye have received the Spirit of Adoption whereby we cry Abba Father. These things are opposed, and the one is only removed and taken away by the other. And where the Spirit of Bondage unto fear abides, there we cannot cry Abba Father, or pray in a due manner. But where the Spirit of God is, there is Liberty, 2 Corinthians. 3:18. And this, as we render the Word, consists in two things, (1.) in orandi libertate, (2.) in exauditionis fiducia. (1.) There is in it an Enlarged Liberty and freedom of speech in Prayer unto God. So the word signifies. [illegible] is as much as [illegible], a Freedom to speak all that is to be spoken, a Confidence that countenances men in the freedom of speech according to the Exigency of their state, condition and cause. So the word is commonly used, Ephesians 6:19. Where there is servile fear and dread, the Heart is straitned, bound up, knows not what it may, what it may not utter, and is pained about the Issue of all it thinks or speaks; or it cannot pray at all beyond what is prescribed unto it, to say, as it were, whether it will or no: But where this Spirit of Liberty and Boldness is, the Heart is enlarged with a true

genuine Openness and Readiness to express all its concerns unto God as a Child unto its Father. I do not say that those who have this Aid of the Spirit have always this Liberty in Exercise, or equally so. The exercise of it may be variously impeded by Temptations, spiritual Indispositions, Desertions, and by our own negligence in stirring up the Grace of God. But Believers have it always in the Root and Principle, even all that have received the Spirit of Adoption, and are ordinarily assisted in the use of it. Hereby are they enabled to comply with the blessed advice of the Apostle, Philippians 4:6. Be careful in nothing, but in every thing by Prayer and Supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. The whole of our concern in this World, is to be committed unto God in Prayer, as that we should not retain any dividing cares in our own minds about them. And herein the Apostle would have us to use an holy Freedom and Boldness in speaking unto God on all occasions, as one who concerns himself in them; hide nothing from God, which we do what lyes in us, when we present it not unto him in our Prayers; but use a full plain-hearted open Liberty with him, In every thing let your requests be made known unto God. He is ready to hear all that you have to offer unto him, or plead before him. And in so doing, the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ, v. 7. which is ordinarily the condition of those who are found in diligent obedience unto this Command.

(2.) There is also in it a Confidence of Acceptance, or being heard in Prayer; that is, that God is well pleased with their Duties, accepting both them and their Persons in Jesus Christ. Without this we can have no Delight in Prayer, or in God as the Object of it, which vitiates the whole Duty. When Adam thought there was no

Acceptance with God for him, he had no confidence of access unto him; but as the first effect of folly that ensued on the entrance of Sin, went to hide himself. And all those who have no Ground of spiritual Confidence for Acceptance with Christ, do in their Prayer but endeavour to hide themselves from God by the Duty which they perform. They cast a mist about them, to obscure themselves from the Sight of their own Convictions, wherein alone they suppose that God sees them also. But in such a frame there is neither Delight nor Enlargement, nor Liberty, nor indeed Prayer it self.

Now this Confidence or Boldness which is given unto Believers in their Prayers by the Holy Ghost, respects not the Answer of every particular Request, especially in their own understanding of it; but it consists in an Holy perswasion that God is well pleased with their Duties, accepts their Persons and delights in their Approaches unto his Throne. Such Persons are not terrified with Apprehensions that God will say unto them, What have you to do to take my name into your mouths, or to what purpose are the multitude of your Supplications? when you make many Prayers I will not hear. Will he, saith Job, plead with me with his great Power? no, but he will put strength in me, Chapter 23:6. Yea they are assured that the more they are with God, the more constantly they abide with him, the better is their Acceptance. For as they are commanded to Pray always and not to faint, so they have a sufficient Warranty from the Encouragement and Call of Christ to be frequent in their spiritual Addresses to him; so he speaks to his Church, Cant. 2:14. Oh my Dove, let me see your Countenance, let me hear your Voice; for sweet is your Voice, and your Countenance is comely. And herein also is comprised a due Apprehension of the Goodness and Power of God, whereby he is in all conditions ready

to receive them, and able to relieve them. The Voice of Sinners by Nature, let presumption and superstition pretend what they please to the contrary, is, that God is austere and not capable of Condescension or compassion. And the proper acting of Unbelief lyes in limiting the most Holy; saying, Can God do this or that thing, which the Supplies of our necessities do call for, are they possible with God? So long as either of these works in us with any kind of prevalency, it is impossible we should have any Delight in calling upon God. But we are freed from them by the Holy Ghost in the Representation he makes of the ingaged goodness and Power of God in the Promises of the Covenant, which gives us Boldness in his presence.

Fourthly, It is the Work of the Holy Spirit in Prayer to keep the Souls of Believers Intent upon Jesus Christ, as the only way and means of Acceptance with God. This is the fundamental Direction for Prayer now under the Gospel. We are now to ask in his name, which was not done expressly under the Old Testament. Through him, we Act Faith on God in all our Supplications. By him we have an Access unto the Father. We enter into the Holiest through the new and living Way that he has consecrated for us. The various Respect which Faith has unto Jesus Christ as Mediator in all our Prayers, is a matter worthy a particular inquiry, but is not of our present consideration, wherein we declare the Work of the Spirit alone. And this is a part of it, that he keeps our Souls intent upon Christ according unto what is required of us; as he is the Way of our Approach unto God, the Means of our Admittance, and the Cause of our Acceptance with him. And where Faith is not actually exercised unto this purpose, all Prayer is vain and unprofitable.

And whether our Duty herein be answered with a few words, wherein his name is expressed with little spiritual regard unto him, is worth our Inquiry.

To enable us hereunto is the Work of the Holy Ghost. He it is that glorifies Jesus Christ in the Hearts of Believers, John 16:14. And this he does when he enables them to act Faith on him in a due manner. So speaks the Apostle expresly, Ephesians 2:18. For through him we have an access by one Spirit unto the Father. It is through Jesus alone that we have our Access unto God, and that by Faith in him. So we have our Access unto him for our Persons in Justification, Romans 5:2. By whom we have an Access by Faith unto this Grace wherein we stand. And by him we have our actual Access unto him in our Supplications, when we draw nigh to the Throne of Grace. But this is by the Spirit. It is he who enables us hereunto by keeping our minds spiritually intent on him in all our Addresses unto God. This is a genuine Effect of the Spirit as he is the Spirit of the Son, under which Consideration in an especial manner he is bestowed on us to enable us to pray, Galatians 4:6. And hereof Believers have a refreshing Experience in themselves. Nor does any thing leave a better savor or relish on their Souls, than when they have had their Hearts and minds kept close in the exercise of Faith on Christ the Mediator in their Prayers.

I might yet insist on more Instances in the Declaration of the Work of the Holy Ghost in Believers as he is a Spirit of Grace and Supplication. But my design is not to declare what may be spoken, but to speak what ought not to be omitted. Many other things therefore might be added, but these will suffice to give an express

understanding of this Work unto them who have any spiritual Experience of it; and those who have not, will not be satisfied with Volumes to the same purpose.

Yet something may be here added to free our passage from any just Exceptions. For it may be some will think, that these things are not pertinent unto our present purpose, which is to discover the Nature of the Duty of Prayer, and the Assistance which we receive by the Spirit of God therein. Now this is only in the Words that we use unto God in our Prayers, and not in that Spiritual Delight and Confidence which have been spoken unto, which with other Graces, if they may be so esteemed, are of another Consideration. An. (1.) It may be, that some think so, and also it may be, and is very likely that some, who will be talking about these things, are utterly ignorant what it is to pray in the Spirit, and the whole nature of this Duty. Not knowing therefore the thing, they hate the very name of it; as indeed it cannot but be uncouth unto all who are no way interested in the Grace and privilege intended by it. The objections of such Persons are but as the stroaks of Blind-men, whatever strength and violence be in them, they always miss the mark. Such are the fierce arguings of the most against this Duty; they are full of Fury and Violence, but never touch the Matter intended. (2.) My design is so to discover the Nature of Praying in the Spirit in general, as that therewith I may declare what is a furtherance thereunto, and what is an hindrance thereof. For if there be any such Ways of Praying which men use or oblige themselves unto, which do not comply with, or are not suited to promote, or are unconcerned in, or do not express those workings of the Holy Ghost, which are so directly assigned unto him in the Prayers of Believers, they are all nothing but means of

Quenching the Spirit, of disappointing the Work of his Grace, and rendring the Prayers themselves so used, and as such, unacceptable with God. And apparent it is, at least that most of the ways and modes of Prayer used in the Papacy, are inconsistent with, and exclusive of the whole Work of the Spirit of Supplication.

CHAPTER 7



The nature of Prayer in General, with respect unto Forms of Prayer and Vocal Prayer. Ephesians 6:18. Opened and Vindicated.

THE Duty I am endeavouring to express, is that enjoined in Ephesians 6:18. Praying always, with all Prayer and Supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all Perseverance and Supplication for all Saints. Some have made bold to advance a fond Imagination (as what will not Enmity unto the Holy ways of God put men upon?) that praying in the Spirit intends only praying by virtue of an extraordinary and miraculous Gift. But the use of it is here enjoined unto all Believers, none excepted, men and Women, who yet I suppose had not all and every one of them that extraordinary miraculous Gift which they fansie to be intended in that Expression. And the Performance of this Duty is enjoined them in the manner prescribed [illegible], always, say we, in every season, that is such just and due seasons of Prayer, as Duty and our Occasions call for: But the Apostle expressly confines the exercise of extraordinary Gifts unto some certain seasons, when under some Circumstances they may be needful or useful unto Edification, 1 Corinthians. 14. There is therefore a praying in the Spirit, which is the constant Duty of all Believers, and it is a great

reproach unto the Profession of Christianity, where that name it self is a matter of Contempt. If there be any thing in it that is Foolish, Conceited, Fanatical, the Holy Apostle must answer for it; Yea, he by whom he was inspired. But if this be the Expression of God himself of that Duty which he requirs of us, I would not willingly be among the number of them by whom it is derided, let their pretenses be what they please. Besides, in the Text, all Believers are said thus to pray in the Spirit at all seasons,[illegible]; and [illegible], with all Prayer and Supplication; that is, with all manner of Prayer according as our own Occasions and Necessities do require. A man certainly by virtue of this Rule can scarce judge himself obliged to confine his performance of this Duty unto a pre-script form of Words. For a Variety in our Prayers commensurate unto the various occasions of ourselves, and of the Church of God, being here enjoined us, how we can comply therewith in the constant use of any one Form, I know not; those who do, are left unto their Liberty. And this we are obliged unto, [illegible], diligently watching unto this very end, that our Prayers may be suited unto our Occasions. He who can divide this Text, or cut it out into a garment to cloath set forms of Prayer with, will discover an admirable dexterity in the using and disposal of a Text of Scripture.

But yet neither do I conclude from hence that all such forms are unlawful; only that another way of Praying is here enjoined us, is I suppose unquestionable unto all impartial searchers after Truth. And doubtless they are not to be blamed who endeavour a Compliance therewith. And if Persons are able in the daily constant reading of any Book whatever, meerly of an humane Composition, to rise up in answer to this Duty of Praying always, with all manner of Prayer and Supplication in the Spirit, or the

Exercise of the aid and assistance received from him, and his holy acting of them as a Spirit of Grace and Supplication, endeavouring, labouring, and watching thereunto; I shall say no more but that they have attained, what I cannot understand.

The sole Inquiry remaining is, how they are enabled to pray, in whose minds the Holy Ghost does thus work as a Spirit of Grace and Supplication. And I do say in answer thereunto, that those who are thus affected by him, do never want a gracious Ability of making their Addresses unto God in Vocal Prayer, so far as is needful unto them in their circumstances, Callings, States and Conditions. And this is that which is called the Gift of Prayer. I speak of ordinary Cases; for there may be such interpositions of Temptations and Desertions, as that the Soul being overwhelmed with them, may for the present be able only to mourn as a Dove, or to chatter as a Crane, that is, not to express the sense of their minds clearly and distinctly, but only as it were to mourn and groan before the Lord in brokenness of spirit and expressions. But this also is sufficient for their acceptance in that Condition. And hereof there are few Believers but at one time or other they have more or less experience. And as for those whose Devotion discharges it self in a formal course of the same words, as it must needs be in the Papacy, wherein for the most part they understand not the signification of the Words which they make use of, they are strangers unto the true Nature of Prayer, at least unto the Work of the Spirit therein. And such Supplications as are not variously influenced by the Variety of the Spiritual Conditions of them that make them according to the Variety of our spiritual exercise, are like one constant Tone or noise which has no Harmony nor Musick in it.

I say therefore, (1.) That the things insisted on, are in some degree and measure necessary unto all acceptable Prayer. The Scripture assigns them thereunto, and Believers find them so by their own Experience. For we discourse not about Prayer as it is the working of Nature in its straits and difficulties towards the God of Nature, expressing thereby its dependence on him with an acknowledgement of his Power, in which sence all Flesh in one way or other, under one notion or other come to God; Nor yet upon those Cries which legal Convictions will wrest from them that fall under their Power: But we treat only of Prayer as it is required of Believers under the Gospel, as they have an Access through Christ in one Spirit unto the Father. And, (2.) That those in whom this Work is wrought by the Holy Spirit in any degree, do not in ordinary Cases want an Ability to express themselves in this Duty, so far as is needful for them. It is acknowledged that an Ability herein will be greatly increased and improved by Exercise; and that not only because the exercise of all moral Faculties is the genuine way of their strengthening and improvement, but principally, because it is instituted, appointed and commanded of God unto that end. God has designed the Exercise of Grace for the means of its growth; and givs his blessing in answer to his institution. But the nature of the thing it self requires a performance of the Duty suitably unto the Condition of him that is called unto it. And if men grow not up unto further Degrees in that Ability by Exercise in the Duty it self, by stirring up the Gifts and Grace of God in them, it is their Sin and Folly. And hence it follows, (3.) That although set forms of Prayer may be Lawful unto some, as is pretended, yet are they necessary unto none; that is, unto no true Believers, as unto acceptable Evangelical Prayer. But whoever is made Partaker of

the Work of the Spirit of God herein, which he does infallibly effect in every one who through him is enabled to cry Abba Father, as every Child of God is, he will be able to pray according to the mind and Will of God, if he neglect not the Aid and Assistance offered unto him for that purpose. Wherefore to plead for the necessity of forms of Prayer unto Believers, beyond what may be doctrinal or instructive in them, is a fruit of inclination unto Parties, or of Ignorance, or of the want of a due Attendance unto their own Experience.

Of what use forms of Prayer may be unto those that are not Regenerate, and have not therefore received the Spirit of Adoption, belongs not directly unto our disquisition. Yet I must say, that I understand not clearly the Advantage of them unto them, unless a contrivance to relieve them in that condition, without a due endeavour after a deliverance from it, may be so esteemed. For these Persons are of Two sorts, (1.) Such as are openly under the Power of Sin, their minds being not Effectually influenced by any Convictions. These seldom pray, unless it be under Dangers, Fears, Troubles, Pains, or other Distresses. When they are smitten, they will cry, even to the Lord they will cry, and not else. And their Design is to treat about their especial occasions, and the present sense which they have thereof. And how can any man conceive that they should be supplied with forms of Prayer, expressing their Sense, Conceptions and Affections in their particular Cases? And how ridiculously they may mistake themselves in reading these Prayers, which are no way suited unto their Condition, is easily supposed. A form to such Persons may prove little better than a Charm, and their minds be diverted by it from such a performance of Duty as the Light of Nature would direct to. Jonahs Mariners in

the Storm cryed every one unto his God, and called on him also to do so too, Chapter 1:5, 6. The Substance of their Prayer was, that God would think upon them that they might not perish. And men in such Conditions, if not diverted by this pretended Relief, which indeed is none, will not want words to express their minds so far as there is any thing of Prayer in what they do; and beyond that, whatever words they are supplied withal, they are of no use nor advantage unto them. And it is possible when they are left to work naturally towards God, however unskilled and rude their Expressions may be, a deep sense may be left upon their minds, with a Reverence of God, and Remembrance of their own Error, which may be of use to them. But the bounding and directing of the workings of Natural Religion by a form of words, perhaps little suited unto their Occasions, and not at all to their Affections, tends only to stifle the operation of an awakened Conscience, and to give them up unto their former security.

(2.) Others, such as by Education and the Power of Convictions from the word by one means or other, are so far brought under a sense of the Authority of God, and their own Duty, as conscientiously according unto their Light to attend unto Prayer, as unto other Duties also. Now the Case of these men will be more fully determined afterwards, where the whole of the use of Forms of Prayer will be spoken unto. For the present I shall only say, that I cannot believe, until further Conviction, that any one whose Duty it is to pray, is not able to express his Requests and Petitions in Words so far as he is affected with the matter of them in his mind; and what he does by any Advantage beyond that, belongs not to Prayer. Men may by Sloth and other vitious distempers of mind, especially of a negligence in getting their Hearts and Consciences

duly affected with the Matter and Object of Prayer, keep themselves under a real or supposed disability in this matter. But whereas Prayer in this sort of Persons is an effect of common Illumination and Grace, which are also from the Spirit of God, if Persons do really and sincerely endeavour a due sense of what they pray for and about, he will not be wanting to help them to express themselves so far as is necessary for them, either privately or in their Families. But those who will never enter the Water but with Flags or Bladders under them, will scarce ever learn to swim. And it cannot be denied but that the constant and unwearied use of set forms of Prayer may become a great occasion of quenching the Spirit, and hindring all progress or growth in Gifts or Graces. When every one has done what he can, it is his best, and will be accepted of him, it being according unto what he has, before that which is none of his.

CHAPTER 8



The Duty of External Prayer by Virtue of a spiritual Gift explained and Vindicated.

WHAT we have hitherto discoursed concerning the Work of the Spirit of Grace and Supplication enabling Believers to pray or to cry Abba Father, belongs principally unto the internal spiritual nature of the Duty and the Exercise of Grace therein, wherein we have occasionally only diverted unto the Consideration of the Interest of Words; and the use of set formes, either freely or imposed. And indeed what has been evinced from Scripture Testimony herein, does upon the matter render all further dispute about these things needless. For if the things mentioned be required unto all acceptable Prayer, and if they are truly effected in the minds of all Believers by the Holy Ghost, it is evident how little use there remains of such pretended Aids.

But moreover, Prayer falls under another Consideration, namely, as to its external Performance, and as the Duty is discharged by any one in lesser or greater Societies, wherein upon his words and expressions do depend their Conjunction with him, their Communion in the Duty, and consequently their Edification in the whole. This is the Will of God, that in Assemblies of his

Appointment, as Churches and Families, and occasional meetings of two or three or more in the name of Christ, one should pray in the name of himself and the rest that joyn with him. Thus are Ministers enabled to pray in Church-Assemblies, as other Christians in occasional meetings of the Disciples of Christ in his name; Parents in their Families; and in Secret, every Believer for himself.

There is a Spiritual Ability given unto men by the Holy Ghost, whereby they are enabled to express the matter of Prayer as taught and revealed in the manner before described, in words fitted and suited to lead on their own minds and the minds of others unto an Holy Communion in the Duty, to the Honor of God, and their own Edification. I do not confine the use of this Ability unto Assemblies; every one may, and usually is to make use of it according to the measure which he has received for himself also. For if a man have not an Ability to pray for himself in private and alone, he can have none to pray in public and Societies. Wherefore take Prayer as Vocal, without which Adjunct it is not compleat, and this Ability belongs to the Nature and Essence of it. And this also is from the Spirit of God.

This is that which meets with such Contradiction and opposition from many, and which has other things set up in Competition with it, yea to the Exclusion of it, even from Families and Closets also. What they are, we shall afterwards examine. And judged it is by some, not only to be separable from the Work of the Spirit of Prayer, but no way to belong thereunto. A fruit they say it is of Wit, Fancy, Memory, Elocution, Volubility and readiness of Speech, namely, in them in whom on other Accounts they will acknowledge none of these things to be, at least in no considerable degree. Some

while since indeed they defended themselves against any esteem of this Ability, by crying out that all those who thus prayed by the Spirit as they call it, did but babble and talk nonsense. But those who have any sobriety and modesty are convinced, that the generality of those who do pray according to the Ability received, do use words of Truth and soberness in the exercise thereof. And it is but a sorry relief that any can find in cavilling at some expressions, which perhaps good and wholesom in themselves, yet suit not their Palats; or if they are such as may seem to miss of due order and decency, yet is not their failure to be compared with the Extravagancies, (considering the nature of the Duty) of some in supposed quaint and elegant expressions used in this Duty. But herein they betake themselves unto this Countenance, That this Ability is the effect of the natural Endowments before mentioned only, which they think to be set off by a Boldness and Confidence, but a little beneath an intolerable Impudence. Thus it seems is it with all who desire to pray as God enables them, that is, according to his mind and will, if any thing in the Light of Nature, the common Voice of mankind, Examples of Scripture, express Testimonies and Commands, are able to declare what is so. I shall therefore make way unto the declaration and Confirmation of the Truth asserted, by the ensuing Observations.

1. Every man is to pray or call upon God according as he is able, with respect unto his own Condition, Relations, Occasions and Duties. Certainly there is not a man in the World who has not forfeited all his Reason and Understanding unto Atheism, or utterly buried all their Operations under the fury of brutish Affections, but he is convinced that it is his Duty to pray to the Deity he owns, in words of his own, as well as he is able. For this,

and none other, is the genuine and natural notion of Prayer. This is implanted in the Heart of Mankind, which they need not be taught, nor directed unto. The Artificial help of constant forms is an Arbitrary Invention. And I would hope that there are but few in the World, especially of those who are called Christians, but that at one time or other, they do so pray. And those who for the most part do betake themselves to other Reliefs, (as unto the reading of Prayers composed unto some good End and Purpose, though not absolutely to their occasions, as to the present state of their minds, and the things they would pray for, which is absolutely impossible) cannot as I conceive but sometimes be conscious to themselves, not only of the weakness of what they do, but of their neglect of the Duty which they profess to perform. And as for such who by the prevalency of Ignorance, the Power of Prejudice, and infatuation of Superstition, are diverted from the Dictates of Nature and Light of Scripture directions, to say a Pater-noster, it may be an Ave or a Credo for their Prayer, intending it for this or that end, the benefit it may be of this or that Person, or the obtaining of what is no way mentioned or included in what they utter; there is nothing of Prayer in it, but a mere taking the name of God in vain, with the horrible Prophanation of an Holy Ordinance.

Persons tyed up unto such Rules and Forms never pray in their Lives, but in their occasional Ejaculations, which break from them almost by Surprizal. And there has not been any one more effectual means of bringing Unholiness with an ungodly Course of Conversation into the Christian World, than this one of teaching men to satisfy themselves in this Duty by their Saying, Reading, or Repetition of the words of other men, which it may be they understand not, and certainly are not in a due manner affected withal.

For it is this Duty, whereby our whole Course is principally influenced. And let men say what they will, our Conversation in walking before God, which principally regards the frame and disposition of our Hearts, is influenced and regulated by our Attendance unto, and Performance of this Duty. He whose Prayers are Hypocritical is an Hypocrite in his whole Course; and he who is but negligent in them, is equally negligent in all other Duties. Now whereas our whole Obedience unto God ought to be our reasonable service, Romans 12:1. how can it be expected that it should be so, when the foundation of it is laid in such an irrational supposition, that men should not pray themselves what they are able, but read the Forms of others instead thereof, which they do not understand?

2. All the Examples we have in the Scripture of the Prayers of the Holy men of Old, either under the Old Testament or the New, were all of them the effects of their own Ability in expressing the gracious Conceptions of their minds, wrought in them by the Holy Ghost in the way and manner before described. I call it their own Ability, in opposition to all outward Aids and Assistances From others, or an antecedaneous prescription of a Form of Words unto themselves. Not one Instance can be given to the contrary. Sometimes it is said, they spread forth their Hands, sometimes that they listed up their voices, sometimes that they fell upon their knees and cryed; sometimes that they poured out their Hearts when overwhelmed, all according unto present occasions and circumstances. The Solemn Benediction of the Priests instituted of God, like the present Forms in the Administration of the Sacraments, were of another Consideration, as shall be shewed. And as for those who by immediate Inspiration gave out and wrote discourses in the form of Prayers, which were in part Mystical, and

in part Prophetical, we have before given an Account concerning them. Some plead indeed, that the Church of the Jews under the Second Temple had sundry Forms of Prayers in use among them, even at the time when our Saviour was conversant in the Temple and their Synagogues. But they pretend and plead what they cannot prove; and I challenge any Learned man to give but a tolerable Evidence unto the Assertion. For what is found to that purpose among the Talmudists, is mixed with such ridiculous fables (as the first, suiting the number of their Prayers to the number of the Bones in the back of a man) as fully defeats its own Evidence.

(3.) The Commands which are given us to pray thus according unto our own Abilities, are no more nor less than all the Commands we have in the Scripture to pray at all. Not one of them has any regard or respect unto outward Forms, Aids or helps of Prayer. And the manner of Prayer it self is so described, limited and determined, as that no other kind of Prayer can be intended. For whereas we are commanded to pray in the Spirit, to pray earnestly and servently, with the mind and understanding, continually with all manner of Prayer and Supplication, to make our Requests known unto God, so as not to take care ourselves about our present concerns, to pour out our Hearts unto God, to cry Abba Father by the Spirit and the like; I do not understand how those things are suited unto any kind of Prayer, but only that which is from the Ability which men have received for the entire discharge of that Duty. For there are evidently intimated in these Precepts and Directions, such various Occasional Workings of our Minds and Spirits, such Actings of Gracious Affections, as will not comply with a constant use of a prescribed Form of Words.

(4.) When we speak of mens own Ability in this matter, we do include therein the conscientious diligent use of all means which God has appointed for the Communication of this Ability unto them, or to help them in the due use, exercise and improvement of it. Such means there are, and such are they to attend unto.

As (1.) The diligent searching of our own Hearts in their Frames, Dispositions, Inclinations and Actings, that we may be in some measure acquainted with their state and condition towards God. Indeed the Heart of man is absolutely unsearchable unto any but God himself, that is, as unto a compleat and perfect knowledge of it. Hence David prays, that God would search and try him, and lead and conduct him by his Grace according unto what he found in him, and not leave him wholly to act or be acted according unto his own Apprehensions of himself, Psalm 139:23, 24. But yet where we do in sincerity inquire into them, by the help of that spiritual Light which we have received, we may discern so much of them as to guide us aright in this and all other Duties. If this be neglected, if men live in the dark unto themselves, or satisfie themselves only with an acquaintance with those things which an accusing Conscience will not suffer them to be utterly ignorant of, they will never know either how to pray, or what to pray for in a due manner. And the want of a due discharge of this Duty, which we ought continually to be exercised in, especially on the account of that unspeakable Variety of spiritual changes which we are subject unto, is a cause of that barrenness in Prayer which is found among the most, as we have observed. He that would abound in all manner of Supplication which is enjoined us, who would have his

Prayers to be proper, useful, fervent, must be diligent in the search and consideration of his own Heart, with all its dispositions and inclinations, and the secret guilt which it does variously contract.

(2.) Constant diligent Reading of the Scriptures is another Duty that this Ability greatly depends upon. From the Precepts of God therein may we learn our own wants, and from his Promises the Relief which he has provided for them. And these things (as has been shewed) supply us with the matter of Prayer. Moreover we thence learn what words and expressions are meet and proper to be used in our Accesses unto God. No words nor expressions in themselves or their signification are meet or acceptable herein, but from their Analogie unto those in the Scripture which are of Gods own Teaching and Directions. And where men are much conversant in the Word, they will be ready for and furnished with meet Expressions of their Desires to God always. This is one means whereby they may become so to be. And other Helps of the like nature, might be insisted on.

(5.) There is an use herein of the Natural Abilities of Invention, Memory and Elocution. Why should not men use in the Service and Worship of God what God has given them, that they may be able to serve and worship him? Yea, it sett's off the Use and Excellency of this Spiritual Gift, that in the Exercise of it, we use and act our Natural Endowments and Abilities, as spiritualised by Grace, which in the way, set up in Competition with it, cannot be done. The more the Soul is engaged in its Faculties and Powers, the more intent it is in and unto the Duty.

Nor do I deny but that this Gift may be varied in degrees and divers Circumstances according unto these Abilities, though it have a Being of its own, distinct from them. Even in Extraordinary

Gifts, as in the receiving and giving out of immediate Revelations from God, there was a variety in outward Modes and Circumstances which followed the diversity and variety of the Natural Abilities and Qualifications of them who were employed in that Work. Much more may this Difference both be, and appear, in the Exercise of ordinary Gifts, which do not so absolutely influence and regulate the faculties of the mind, as the other.

And this difference we find by Experience among them who are endowed with this spiritual Ability. All men who have the Gift of Prayer, do not pray alike, as to the matter of their Prayers or the manner of their praying; but some do greatly excel others, some in one thing, some in another. And this does in part, proceed from that Difference that is between them in the natural Abilities of Invention, Judgment, Memory, Elocution, especially as they are improved by Exercise in this Duty. But yet neither is this absolutely so, nor does the difference in this matter, which we observe in constant Experience, depend solely hereon. For if it did, then those, who having received this spiritual Ability, do excel others in those natural Endowments, would also constantly excel them in the Exercise of the Gift it self; which is not so, as is known to all who have observed any thing in this matter. But the Exercise of these Abilities in Prayer depends on the especial Assistance of the Spirit of God. And for the most part the Gift, as the Scion ingrafted or inoculated, turns the nature of those Abilities into it self, and modifieth them according unto its own efficacy and virtue, and is not it self changed by them. Evidently that which makes any such difference in the discharge of this Duty, as wherein the Edification

of others is concerned, is the frequent conscientious Exercise of the Gift received, without which, into whatever stock of Natural Abilities it may be planted, it will neither thrive nor flourish.

(6.) Spiritual Gifts are of two sorts,

(1.) Such as are distinct from all other Abilities, having their whole Foundation, Nature and Power in themselves. Such were the extraordinary Gifts of Miracles, Healing, Tongues, and the like. These were entire in themselves, not built upon or adjoined unto any other Gifts or Graces whatever. (2.) Such as were Adjuncts of, or annexed unto, any other Gifts or Graces, without which they could have neither place nor use. As the Gift of Utterance depends on Wisdom and knowledge. For Utterance without knowledge, or that which is any thing but the way of expressing sound knowledge unto the Benefit of others, is folly and babling. And of this latter sort is the Gift of Prayer, as under our present Consideration with respect unto the Interest of words in that Duty. And this we affirm to be a peculiar Gift of the Holy Ghost, and shall now farther prove it so to be. For,

(1.) It is an inseparable Adjunct of that Work of the Spirit, which we have described, and is therefore from him who is the Author of it. For he who is the Author of any thing as to its Being, is the Author of all its Inseparable Adjuncts. That the Work of enabling us to pray, is the Work of the Spirit has been proved; and it is an immeasurable Boldness for any to deny it, and yet pretend themselves to be Christians. And he is not the Author of any one part of this Work, but of the whole, all that whereby we cry Abba Father. Hereunto the Expressions of the desires of our Souls, in Words suited unto the Acting of our own Graces and the Edification of others, does inseparably belong. When we are com-

manded to pray, if our Necessity, Condition, Edification, with the Advantage and benefit of others, do require the use of Words in Prayer, then are we so to pray. For Instance, When a Minister is commanded to pray in the Church or Congregation, so as to go before the Flock in the discharge of that Duty, he is to use words in Prayer. Yet are we not in such cases required to pray any otherwise than as the Spirit is promised to enable us to pray, and so as that we may still be said to pray in the Holy Ghost. So therefore to pray, falls under the Command and Promise, and is a Gift of the Holy Spirit.

And the nature of the thing it self, that is the Duty of Prayer, does manifest it. For all that the Spirit of God works in our Hearts with respect unto this Duty, is in order unto the Expression of it; for what he does is to enable us to pray. And if he gives not that Expression, all that he does besides, may be lost as to its principal End and Use. And indeed all that he does in us, where this is wanting, or that in fixed Meditation, which in some particular cases is equivalent thereunto, riss not beyond that frame which David expresses by his keeping Silence, whereby he declares an Estate of trouble, wherein yet he was not freely brought over to deal with God about it, as he did afterwards by Prayer, and found Relief therein.

That which with any Pretense of Reason can be objected hereunto, namely, that not any part only, but the whole Duty of Prayer as we are commanded to Pray, is an effect in us of the Holy Spirit as a Spirit of Grace and Supplication, or that the Grace of Prayer and the Gift of Prayer as some distinguish, are inseparable, consists in two unsound Consequences, which as is supposed, will thence ensue. As (1.) That every one who has the Grace of Prayer,

as it is called, or in whom the Holy Spirit works the Gracious Disposition before described, has also the Gift of Prayer, seeing these things are inseparable. And (2.) That every one who has the Gift of Prayer, or who has an Ability to pray with Utterance, unto the Edification of others, has also the Grace of Prayer, or the actings of saving Grace in Prayer, which is the thing intended. But these things it will be said, are manifestly otherwise, and contrary to all Experience.

Ans. (1.) For the first of these Inferences, I grant it follows from the Premises, and therefore affirm that it is most true under the ensuing Limitations. (1.) We do not speak of what is called the Grace of Prayer in its Habit or Principle, but in its actual Exercise. In the first respect, it is in all that are sanctified, even in those Infants that are so from the Womb. It does not hence follow that they must also have the Gift of Prayer, which respects only Grace in its Exercise. And thus our meaning is, that all those in whom the Spirit of God does graciously act Faith, Love, Delight, Desire, in a way of Prayer unto God, have an Ability from him to express themselves in Vocal Prayer.

(2.) It is required hereunto that such Persons be found in a way of Duty; and so meet to receive the influential Assistance of the Holy Spirit. Whoever will use, or have the Benefit of any Spiritual Gift, must himself in a way of Duty, stir up by constant and frequent Exercise, the Ability wherein it does consist. Stir up the Gift of God that is in you, 2 Timothy. 1:6. And where this Duty is neglected, which neglect must be accounted for, it is no wonder if any Persons who yet may have, as they speak, the Grace of Prayer, should not yet have the Gift or a faculty to express their Minds and Desires in Prayer by Words of their own. Some think there is no

such Ability in any, and therefore never look after it in themselves, but despise whatever they hear spoken unto that purpose. What Assistance such Persons may have in their Prayers from the Spirit of Grace, I know not; but it is not likely they should have much of his Aid or help in that wherein they despise him. And some are so accustomed unto, and so deceived by pretended helps in Prayer, as making use of, or reading Prayers by others composed for them, that they never attempt to pray for themselves, but always think they cannot do, that which indeed they will not. As if a Child being bred up among none but such impotent Persons as go on Crutches, as he grows up, should refuse to try his own strength, and resolve himself to make use of Crutches also. Good Instruction or some sudden Surprizal with fear, removing his prejudice, he will cast away this needless help, and make use of his Strength. Some Gracious Persons brought up where Forms of Prayer are in general use, may have a Spiritual Ability of their own to Pray, but neither know it, nor ever try it, through a Compliance with the Principles of their Education; Yea so as to think it impossible for them to pray any otherwise. But when Instruction frees them from this Prejudice, or some suddain surprizal with fear or Affliction cast them into an Entrance of the Exercise of their own Ability in this kind, their former Aids and Helps quickly grow into disuse with them.

(3.) The Ability which we ascribe unto all who have the Gracious Assistance of the Spirit in Prayer, is not absolute, but suited unto their Occasions, Conditions, Duties, Callings and the like. We do not say, that every one who has received the Spirit of Grace and Supplication, must necessarily have a Gift, enabling him to pray as becomes a Minister in the Congregation, or any Person

on the like solemn occasion; no, nor yet it may be to pray in a Family, or in the Company of many, if he be not in his Condition of life called thereunto. But every one has this Ability according to his Necessity, Condition of Life and Calling. He that is only a private Person has so, and he who is the Ruler of the Family has so, and he that is a Minister of the Congregation has so also. And as God enlarges mens Occasions and Calls, so he will enlarge their Abilities, provided they do what is their Duty to that End and Purpose; For the slothful, the negligent, the fearful, those that are under the Power of Prejudices, will have no share in this Mercy. This therefore is the summ of what we affirm in this particular. Every Adult Person who has received, and is able to exercise Grace in Prayer, any saving Grace, without which Prayer it self is an Abomination, if he neglect not the improvement of the Spiritual Aids communicated unto him, does so far partake of this Gift of the Holy Spirit as to enable him to pray according as his own occasions and Duty do require. He who wants mercy for the Pardon of Sin, or Supplies of Grace for the Sanctification of his Person, and the like; If he be sensible of his Wants, and have gracious desires after this supply wrought in his Heart, will be enabled to ask them of God in an acceptable manner, if he be not woefully and sinfully wanting unto himself and his own Duty.

Secondly, As to the second Inference, namely, that if this Ability be inseparable from the gracious assistance of the Spirit of Prayer, then whosoever has this Gift and Ability, he has in the exercise of it that Gracious Assistance, or he has received the Spirit of Grace, and has saving Graces, acted in him: I answer, (1.) It does not follow on what we have asserted. For although wherever is the Grace of Prayer, there is the Gift also in its measure; yet it follows

not, that where the Gift is, there must be the Grace also. For the Gift is for the Graces sake, and not on the contrary. Grace cannot be acted without the Gift, but the Gift may without Grace.

(2.) We shall assent that this Gift does grow in another soyl, and has not its root in it self. It follows on, and ariss from, one distinct part of the Work of the Holy Spirit, as a Spirit of Supplication, from which it is inseparable. And this is his Work on the mind, in acquainting itwith the things that are to be prayed for, which he does both in the inward Convictions of mens own Souls, and in the Declaration made thereof in the Scripture. Now this may in some be only a common work of Illumination which the Gift of Vocal Prayer may flow from and accompany, when the Spirit of Grace and Supplication works no farther in them. Wherefore it is acknowledged that men in whom the Spirit of Grace did never reside nor savingly operate, may have the Gift of utterance in Prayer unto their own and others Edification. For they have the Gift of Illumination, which is its foundation, and from which it is inseparable. Where this spiritual Illumination is not granted in some measure, no Abilities, no Industry can attain the Gift of Utterance in Prayer unto Edification. For Spiritual Light is the matter of all spiritual Gifts, which in all their variety, are but the various exercise of it. And to suppose a man to have a Gift of Prayer without it, is to suppose him to have a Gift to pray for he knows not what; which real or pretended Enthusiasms we abhor. Wherefore, wherever is this Gift of Illumination and Conviction, there is such a foundation of the Gift of Prayer, as that it is not ordinarily absent in some measure, where due use and exercise are observed.

Add unto what has been spoken, That the Duty of Prayer ordinarily is not compleat, unless it be expressed in words. It is called pleading with God, filling our mouths with Arguments, crying unto him, and causing him to hear our voice; which things are so expressed, not that they are any way needful unto God, but unto us. And whereas it may be said that all this may be done in Prayer by internal meditation, where no use is made of the voice, or of words, as it is said of Hanna that she prayed in her Heart, but her voice was not heard, 1 Samuel. 1:13. I grant, in some cases it may be so, where the Circumstances of the Duty do not require it should be otherwise; or where the vehemency of Afflictions which cause men to cry out and roar, will permit it so to be. But withal I say that in this Prayer by Meditation, the things and matter of Prayer are to be formed in the mind into that sence and those sentences which may be expressed; and the mind can conceive no more in this way of Prayer than it can express. So of Hanna it is said, when she prayed in her Heart, and as she said her self out of the abundance of her meditation, ver. 16. that her lips moved though her voice was not heard; she not only framed the sense of her Supplications into Petitions, but tacitely expressed them to her self. And the obligation of any Person unto prescribed Forms, is as destructive of Prayer by inward Meditation, as it is of Prayer Conceived and Expressed; For it takes away the Liberty, and prevents the Ability of framing Petitions or any other parts of Prayer in the mind, according to the sense which the Party praying has of them. Wherefore if this expression of Prayer in words do necessarily belong unto the Duty it self, it is an effect of the holy Spirit, or he is not the Spirit of Supplication unto us.

Secondly, Utterance is a peculiar Gift of the Holy Ghost; so it is mentioned 1 Corinthians. 1:5. 2 Corinthians. 8:7. Ephesians 6:19. Colossians 4:3. And hereof there are two parts, or there are two Duties to be discharged by virtue of it. (1.) An Ability to speak unto men in the name of God in the preaching of the Word. (2.) An Ability to speak unto God for ourselves, or in the name and on the behalf of others. And there is the same reason of Utterance in both these Duties. And in each of them it is equally a peculiar Gift of the Spirit of God: See 1 Corinthians. 1:5. 2 Corinthians. 8:7. Ephesians 6:19. Colossians 4:3. The word used in these places is [illegible]Speech, which is well rendred, Utterance, that is [illegible], *Facultas & Libertas dicendi*; an ability, and liberty to speak out the things we have conceived. [illegible], Ephesians 6:19. Utterance in the opening of the mouth with Boldness, or rather freedom of Speech. This in sacred things, in Praying and Preaching, is the Gift of the Holy Spirit; and as such, are we enjoyned to pray for it, that it may be given unto us or others, as the Edification of the Church does require. And although this Gift may by somebe despised, yet the whole Edification of the Church depends upon it; yea the Foundation of the Church was laid in it, as it was an extraordinary Gift, Acts 2:4. and its superstructure is carryed on by it. For it is the sole means of public or solemn intercourse between God and the Church. It is so if there be such a thing as the Holy Ghost, if there be such things as spiritual Gifts. The matter of them is Spiritual Light, and the manner of their Exercise is Utterance.

This Gift or Ability, as all others of the like nature, may be considered either as to the Habit, or as to the external Exercise of it. And those who have received it in the Habit, have yet experience of

great variety in the Exercise, which in natural and moral habits, where the same preparations preceed, does not usually appear. For as the Spirit of Grace is free, and acts arbitrarily, with respect unto the Persons unto whom he communicates the Gift it self; for he divides to every man as he will; so he acts also as he pleases in the Exercise of those Gifts and Graces which he does bestow. Hence Believers do sometimes find a greater Evidence of his gracious working in them in Prayer, or of his Assistance to pray, as also enlargement in Utterance, than at other times; for in both he breaths and acts as he pleass. These things are not their own, not absolutely in their own power, nor will either the Habitual Grace they have received, enable them to pray Graciously, nor their Gift of Utterance unto Edification, without his actual Excitation of that Grace and his Assistance in the Exercise of that Gift. Both the conceiving and utterance of our desires in an acceptable manner are from him, and so are all spiritual enlargements in this Duty. Vocal Prayer whether private or public, whereof we speak, is the uttering of our Desires and Requests unto God; called The making of our Requests known unto him, Philippians 4:6. This Utterance is a Gift of the Holy Ghost, so also is Prayer as to the manner of the performance of it by words in Supplication. And if any one say he cannot so pray suitable unto his own occasions, he does only say, that he is a stranger to this Gift of the Holy Ghost, and if any one will not, by him it is despised. And if these things are denyed by any, because they understand them not, we cannot help it.

Thirdly, It is the Holy Spirit that enables men to discharge and perform every Duty that is required of them in a due manner, so that without his enabling of us we can do nothing as we should. As this has been sufficiently confirmed in other Discourses on this

Subject, so we will not always contend with them by whom such Fundamental Principles of Christianity are denied, or called into question. And he does so, with respect unto all sorts of Duties, whether such as are required of us by virtue of especial Office and calling, or on the more general account of an holy conversation according to the Will of God: And Vocal Prayer is a Duty under both these considerations.

For (1.) It is the Duty of the Ministers of the Gospel by virtue of especial Office; Supplications, Prayers, Intercessions and Giving of thanks are to be made in the Assemblies of the Church, 1 Timothy. 2:1. Herein it is the Office and Duty of Ministers to go before the Congregation, and to be as the mouth of the Church unto God. The nature of the Office and the due discharge of it, with what is necessary unto the Religious Worship of public Assemblies, manifest it so to be. The Apostles, as their Example, gave themselves continually unto Prayer and the Ministry of the Word, Acts 6:4. It is therefore the Gift of the Holy Ghost whereby these are enabled so to do. For of themselves they are not able to do any thing. This is one of those good Gifts, which is from above and comes down from the Father of Lights, Jam. 1:17. And these Gifts do they receive for the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ, Ephesians 4:12. Utterance therefore in Praying and Preaching, is in them the Gift of the Holy Ghost with respect [〈1 page duplicate〉][〈1 page duplicate〉] unto their Office. And that such a Gift, as those who are utterly destitute of it, cannot discharge their office unto the Edification of the Church.

Let men pretend what they please, if a spiritual Ability in praying and preaching belong not necessarily unto the office of the Ministry, no man can tell what does so, or what the office signifies

in the Church. For no other Ordinance can be administred without the Word and Prayer, nor any part of Rule it self in a due manner. And to deny these to be Gifts of the Holy Ghost, is to deny the Continuance of his dispensation unto and in the Church, which at once overthrows the whole Truth of the Gospel, and the sole Foundation that the Ministry of it is built upon.

(2.) The like may be spoken with respect unto Duties to be performed by virtue of our general vocation. Such are the Duties of Parents and Masters of Families. I know not how far any are gone in ways of prophaneness, but hope none are carried unto such a length, as to deny it to be the Duty of such Persons to pray with their Families as well as for them. The Families that call not on the name of the Lord are under his Curse. And if this be their Duty, the performance of it must be by the Aid of the Spirit of God, by virtue of the general rule we proceed upon.

Fourthly, The Benefit, Profit, Advantage and Edification of particular Persons, of Families, but especially of the Church in its Assemblies in and by the use and exercise of this Gift, are such and so great, as that it is impious not to ascribe it to the operation of the Holy Spirit. Men are not of themselves without his especial Aid, Authors or Causers of the principal spiritual benefit and Advantage which the Church receives in the World. If they are so, or may be so, what need is there of him or his Work for the Preservation and Edification of the Church? But that it has this blessed effect and fruit, we plead the experience of all who desire to walk before God in sincerity, and leave the determination of the question unto the Judgment of God himself: Nor will we at present refuse in our Plea, a consideration of the different condition as to an holy Conversation, between them who constantly in their life

and at their death give this Testimony, and theirs by whom it is opposed and denied. We are none of us to be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, nor of any effect of his Grace. It must therefore be said that the Experience which Believers of all sorts, have of the spiritual benefit and advantage of this Ability, both in themselves and others, is not to be moved or shaken by the Cavils or Reproaches of such, who dare profess themselves to be strangers thereunto.

Fifthly, The Event of things may be pleaded in Evidence of the same truth. For were not the Ability of praying a Gift of him, who divides to every one according unto his own will, there would not be that difference as to the participation of it among those, who all pretend unto the Faith of the same Truth, as there is openly and visibly in the World. And if it were a matter purely of mens natural Abilities, it were impossible that so many, whose concern it is in the highest degree to be interested in it, should be such strangers to it, so unacquainted with it, and so unable for it. They say indeed, it is but the mere improvement of natural Abilities with confidence and exercise. Let it be supposed for once, that some of them at least, have confidence competent unto such a Work, and let them try what success mere Exercise will furnish them withal. In the mean time I deny that without that Illumination of the mind, which is a peculiar Gift of the Holy Ghost, the Ability of Prayer treated of, is attainable by any. And it will be a hard thing to persuade Persons of any ordinary consideration, that the difference which they do or may discover between men as to this Gift and Ability, proceeds meerly from the difference of their natural and acquired Abilities, wherein as it is strenuously pretended, the advantage is commonly on that side which is most defective herein.

Some perhaps may say, that they know there is nothing in this Faculty but the exercise of natural endowments with boldness and elocution, and that because they themselves were expert in it, and found nothing else therein, on which ground they have left it for that which is better. But for evident reasons we will not be bound to stand unto the Testimony of those men, although they shall not here be pleaded. In the mean time we know that from him which has not, is taken away that which he had. And it is no wonder if Persons endowed sometimes with a Gift of Prayer proportionable unto their Light and Illumination, improving neither the one nor the other, as they ought, have lost both their Light and Gift also. And thus suitably unto my design and purpose I have given a delineation of the Work of the Holy Ghost, as a Spirit of Grace and Supplication, promised unto and bestowed on all Believers, enabling them to cry Abba Father.

CHAPTER 9



Duties inferred from the preceding Discourse.

THE issue of all inquiries in these things, is, How we may improve them unto Obedience in the Life of God. For if we know them, happy are we if we do them, and not otherwise. And our practice herein may be reduced unto these two heads, (1.) A due and constant returning of Glory unto God on the account of his Grace in that free Gift of his, whose Nature we have enquired into. (2.) A constant Attendance unto the Duty which we are graciously enabled unto thereby. And,

(1.) We ought continually to bless God and give Glory to him for this great privilege of the Spirit of Grace and Supplication granted unto the Church. This is the principal means on their part, of all holy intercourse with God, and of giving Glory unto him. How does the World which is destitute of this fruit of divine bounty, grope in the dark and wander after vain imaginations, whilst it knows not how to manage its convictions, nor how at all to deal with God about its concerns? That World which cannot receive the Spirit of Grace and Truth, can never have ought to do with God in a due manner. There are by whom this Gift of God is despised, is reviled, is blasphemed; and under the shades of many

pretenses do they hide themselves from the Light in their so doing. But they know not what they do, nor by what Spirit they are acted. Our Duty it is to pray that God would pour forth his Spirit even on them also, who will quickly cause them to look on him whom they have pierced and mourn.

And it appears two ways how great a Mercy it is to enjoy and improve this privilege, (1.) In that both the Psalmist and the Prophet pray directly in a Spirit of Prophecy and without limitation, that God would pour out his fury on the Families that call not on his name, Psalm 79:6. Jeremiah 10:25. and (2.) In that the whole work of Faith in Obedience is denominated from this Duty of Prayer. For so it is said, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved, Romans 10:13. For Invocation or Prayer in the Power of the Spirit of Grace and Supplications, is an infallible evidence and fruit of saving Faith and Obedience; and therefore is the Promise of Salvation so eminently annexed unto it; Or it is placed by a Synecdoche, for the whole Worship of God and Obedience of Faith. And it were endless to declare the benefits that the Church of God, and every one that belongs thereunto, has thereby. No Heart can conceive that Treasury of Mercies which lye in this one privilege, in having Liberty and Ability to approach unto God at all times according unto his Mind and Will. This is the Relief, the Refuge, the Weapons, and assured Refreshment of the Church in all Conditions.

(2.) It is a matter of Praise and Glory to God in an especial manner, that he has granted an Ampliation of this Privilege under the Gospel. The Spirit is now poured forth from above, and enlarged in his dispensation both intensively and extensively. Those on whom he is bestowed, do receive him in a larger measure than

they did formerly under the Old Testament. Thence is that Liberty and boldness in their access unto the Throne of Grace and their crying Abba Father, which the Apostle reckons among the great privileges of the Dispensation of the Spirit of Christ, which of old they were not partakers of. If the difference between the Old Testament State and the New, lay only in the outward letter and the Rule thereof, it would not be so easily discerned on which side the advantage lay; especially methinks it should not be so by them, who seem really to prefer the Pomp of Legal worship, before the plainness and simplicity of the Gospel. But he who understands what it is, not to receive the Spirit of Bondage to fear, but to receive the Spirit of Adoption whereby we cry Abba Father, and what it is to serve God in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter, understands their difference well enough. And I cannot but admire that some will make use of Arguments, or a pretense of them, for such helps and Forms of Prayer as seem not compliant with the Work of the Spirit of Supplication before described, from the Old Testament, and the practice of the Church of the Jews before the time of our Saviour, though indeed they can prove nothing from thence. For do they not acknowledge that there is a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit on the Church under the New Testament than of the Old? To deny it, is to take away the principal difference between the Law and the Gospel. And is not the performance of Duties to be regulated according to the supplies of Grace? If we should suppose that the People being then carnal, and obliged to the observation of carnal ordinances, did in this particular stand in need of Forms of Prayer, which indeed they did not, of those which were merely so, and only so; nor had, that we know of, any use of them; does it follow, that therefore

Believers under the New Testament, who have unquestionably a larger portion of the Spirit of Grace and Supplication poured on them, should either stand in need of them, or be obliged unto them? And it is in vain to pretend a different dispensation of the Spirit unto them and us, where different fruits and effects are not acknowledged. He that has been under the Power of the Law, and has been set free by the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus, knows the difference, and will be thankful for the Grace that is in it.

Again, it is extensively enlarged, in that it is now communicated unto Multitudes; whereas of old it was confined unto a few. Then the dews of it only watered the land of Canaan, and the Posterity of Abraham according to the Flesh; now the showers of it are poured down on all Nations, even all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours. In every Assembly of Mount Zion, through the World, called according to the mind of Christ, Prayers and Supplications are offered unto God, through the effectual working of the Spirit of Grace and Supplication, unless he be despised. And this is done in the accomplishment of that great Promise, Malachi 1:11. For from the rising of the Sun to the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place Incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure Offering; for my name shall be great among the Heathens, saith the Lord of hosts. Prayer and Praises in the Assemblies of the Saints, is the pure Offering and that Sacrifice which God promiss shall be offered unto him. And this Oblation is not to be kindled without the Eternal Fire of the Spirit of Grace. No Sacrifice was to be offered of old, but with fire taken from the Altar. Be it what it would, if it were offered with strange fire, it was

an Abomination; Hence they were all called [illegible] the firings of the Lord. And this was in a Resemblance of the Holy Ghost. Whence Christ is said to offer himself to God, through the eternal Spirit. And so must we do our Prayers. In the fruits and effects of his Workslyes all the Glory and Beauty of our Assemblies and Worship. Take them away and they are contemptible, dead and carnal. And he carrieth this Work into the Families of them that do believe. Every Family apart is enabled to pray and serve God in the Spirit; and such as are not, do live in darkness all their Dayes. He is the same to Believers all the World over, in their Closets or their Prisons. They have all, where ever they are, an Access by one Spirit unto the Father, Ephesians 2:18. And for this enlargement of Grace, God justly expects a revenue of Glory from us.

(3.) It is assuredly our Duty to make use of the Gift of the Spirit as that which is purchased for us by Christ, and is of inestimable advantage unto our Souls. There are two ways whereby men may be guilty of the neglect of this heavenly favor; (1.) They are so when the Gift it self is not valued nor sought after nor endeavoured to be attained. And this is done under various pretenses: some imagine that it is no Gift of the Spirit, and so despise it; others think that either by them it is not attainable, or that if it be attained, it will not answer their labor in it, and diligence about it, which it does require; and therefore take up with another way and means, which they know to be more easy, and hope to be as useful. By many the whole Duty is despised, and consequently all Assistance in the performance of it is so also. None of those do I speak unto at present. But (2.) We are guilty of this neglect when we do not constantly and diligently on all Occasions make use of it for the End for which it is given us; yea abound in the exercise of it. Have you an Ability

to pray always freely given you by the Holy Ghost, why do you not pray always, in private, in Families, according to all occasions and opportunities administered? Of what concernment unto the Glory of God, and in our Life unto him, Prayer is, will be owned by all. It is that only single Duty wherein every Grace is acted, every Sin opposed, every good thing obtained, and the whole of our Obedience in every instance of it, is concerned. What difficulties lye in the way of its due performance, what discouragements rise up against it, how unable we are of ourselves in a due manner to discharge it, what Aversation there is in corrupted nature unto it, what Distractions and Weariness are apt to befall us under it, are generally known also unto them who are any way exercised in these things. Yet does the Blessedness of our present and future Condition much depend thereon. To relieve us against all these things, to help our Infirmities, to give us Freedom, Liberty and Confidence in our Approaches to the Throne of Grace, to enable us as Children to cry Abba Father, with Delight and Complacency, is this Gift of the Spirit of Grace and Supplication given unto us by Jesus Christ. Who can express how great a folly and Sin it is, not to be found in the constant exercise of it? Can we more by any means grieve this Holy Spirit and endamage our own Souls? Has God given unto us the Spirit of Grace and Supplication, and shall we be remiss, careless, and negligent in Prayer? Is not this the worst way whereby we may quench the Spirit, which we are so cautioned against? Can we go from day to day in the neglect of Opportunities, occasions and just seasons of Prayer? How shall we answer the Contempt of this gracious Aid offered us by Jesus Christ? Do others go from day to day in a neglect of this Duty, in their Closets and Families? blame them not, or at least they are not worthy of so

much blame as we. They know not how to pray, they have no Ability for it. But for those to walk in a neglect hereof, who have received this Gift of the Holy Ghost enabling them thereunto, making it easy unto them, and pleasant unto the inner man, how great an Aggravation is it of their Sin? Shall others at the tinkling of a Bell, rise and run unto prayers to be said or sung, wherein they can have no spiritual interest, only to pacify their Consciences and comply with the prejudices of their Education? and shall we be found in the neglect of that Spiritual Aid which is graciously afforded unto us? How will the blind Devotion and Superstition of multitudes, with their diligence and pains therein, rise up in Judgment against such negligent Persons? We may see in the Papacy, how upon the ringing of a Bell, or the lifting up of any Ensign of Superstition, they will some of them rise at Midnight; others in their Houses, yea in the Streets, fall on their knees unto their Devotions: Having lost the conduct of the Spirit of God, and his gracious Guidance unto the performance of Duty in its proper seasons, they have invented ways of their own to keep up a frequency in this Duty after their manner, which they are true and punctual unto. And shall they who have received that Spirit which the World cannot receive, be treacherous and disobedient unto his Motions, or what he constantly inclines and enables them unto? Besides all other Disadvantages which will accrew hereby unto our Souls, who can express the horrible Ingratitude of such a Sin? I press it the more, and that unto all sorts of Prayer, in private, in Families, in Assemblies for that end, because the Temptations and Dangers of the daies wherein we live do particularly and eminently call for it. If we would talk less, and pray more about them, things would be better than they are in the World; at least we should be

better enabled to bear them and undergo our portion in them with the more satisfaction. To be negligent herein, at such a Season, is a sad token of such a security as foreruns destruction.

(4.) Have any received this Gift of the Holy Ghost, let them know that it is their Duty to cherish it, to stir it up and improve it; it is freely bestowed, but it is carefully to be preserved. It is a Gospel Talent given to be traded withal, and thereby to be increased. There are various degrees and measures of this Gift, in those that do receive it. But what ever Measure any one has, from the greatest to the least, he is obliged to cherish, preserve and improve. We do not assert such a Gift of Prayer, as should render our Diligence therein unnecessary; or the Exercise of our natural Abilities useless. Yea the end of this Gift is to enable us to the diligent exercise of the Faculties of our Souls in Prayer in a due manner. And therefore as it is our Duty to use it, so it is to improve it. And it is one Reason against the restraint of Forms, because there is in them too little exercise of the Faculties of our Minds in the worship of God. Therefore this being our Duty, it may be enquired by what way or means we may stir up this Grace and Gift of God, so at least, as that if through any weakness or infirmity of mind, we thrive not much in the outward part if it; yet that we decay not, nor lose what we have received. The Gifts of the Holy Ghost are the fire that kindls all our Sacrifices to God. Now although that fire of old on the Altar first came down from Heaven, or forth from the Lord, Levit. 9:24. yet after it was once there placed, it was always to be kept alive with care and diligence; for otherwise it would have been extinguished as any other fire, Levit. 6:12, 13. Hence the Apostle warns Timothy, [illegible], 2 Timothy. 1:6. to excite and quicken

the fire of his Gift; blowing off the ashes and adding fuel unto it. Now there are many things that are useful and helpful unto this end: As,

(1.) A constant Consideration and Observation of ourselves, our own Hearts, with our spiritual state and condition. Thence are the matters of our Requests or Petitions in Prayer to be taken, Psalm 16:7. And as our state in general by reason of the Depths and Deceitfulness of our Hearts, with our Darkness in spiritual things, is such as will find us matter of continual search and Examination all the daies of our lives, as is expressed in those Prayers, Psalm 19:12. Psalm 139:23, 24. So we are subject unto various Changes and Alterations in our spiritual frames and actings every day; as also unto Temptations of all sorts. About these things according as our occasions and necessities do require, are we to deal with God in our Supplications, Philippians 4:6. How shall we be in a readiness hereunto, prepared with the proper matter of Prayer, if we neglect a constant and diligent Observation of ourselves herein, or the state of our own Souls? This being the food of the Gift, where it is neglected, the Gift it self will decay. If men consider only a Form of Things in a course, they will quickly come to a Form of Words.

To assist us in this search and examination of ourselves, to give Light into our state and wants, to make us sensible thereof, is part of the Work of the Spirit, as a Spirit of Grace and Supplication; and if we neglect our Duty towards him herein, how can we expect that he should continue his Aid unto us, as to the outward part of the Duty? Wherefore let a man speak in Prayer with the Tongues of men and Angels, to the highest Satisfaction, and it may be, good Edification of others; yet if he be negligent, if he be not wise and

watchful in this Duty of considering the state, Actings and Temptations of his own Soul, he has but a perishing decaying outside and shell of this Gift of the Spirit. And those by whom this self-search and judgement is attended unto, shall ordinarily thrive in the Power and life of this Duty. By this means may we know the beginnings and entrances of Temptation; the deceitful Actings of indwelling Sin, the risings of particular Corruptions, with the Occasions yielding them advantages and Power; the Supplies of Grace which we dayly receive and waies of deliverance. And as he who prays without a due consideration of these things, prays at Random, fighting uncertainly as one beating the Air; so he whose Heart is filled with a sense of them, will have always in a readiness the due matter of Prayer, and will be able to fill his mouth with Pleas and Arguments whereby the Gift it self will be cherished and strengthened.

(2.) Constant searching of the Scripture unto the same purpose is another subservient Duty unto this of Prayer it self. That is the Glass, wherein we may take the best view of ourselves, because it at once represents both what we are, and what we ought to be; what we are in ourselves, and what we are by the Grace of God; what are our Frames, Actions and Ways, and what is their defect in the Sight of God. And an higher instruction what to pray for, or how to pray, cannot be given us, Psalm 19:7, 8, 9. Some imagine that to search the Scriptures, thence to take Forms of speech, or Expressions accommodated unto all the parts of Prayer, and to set them in order or retain them in memory, is a great help to Prayer. Whatever it be, it is not that which I intend at present. It is most true if a man be mighty in the Scriptures, singularly conversant and exercised in them, abounding in their senses and expressions,

and have the help of a faithful Memory withal, it may exceedingly further and assist him in the exercise of this Gift unto the edification of others. But this Collection of Phrases, speeches, and expressions, where perhaps the mind is barren in the sense of the Scripture, I know not of what use it is. That which I press for, is a diligent search into the Scripture as to the things revealed in them. For therein are our Wants in all their Circumstances and Consequences discovered and represented unto us, and so are the Supplies of Grace and Mercy which God has provided for us; the former with Authority to make us sensible of them, and the latter with that Evidence of Grace and faithfulness, as to encourage us to make our Requests for them. The Word is the Instrument whereby the Holy Spirit reveals unto us our wants, when we know not what to ask, and so enables us to make Intercessions according to the mind of God, Romans 8. Yea who is it, who almost at any time reading the Scripture with a due Reverence of God, and Subjection of Conscience unto him, that has not some particular matter of Prayer or Praise effectually suggested unto him? And Christians would find no small advantage on many accounts, not here to be insisted upon, if they would frequently, if not constantly turn what they read into Prayer or Praise unto God, whereby the Instructions unto Faith and obedience would be more confirmed in their Minds, and their Hearts be more engaged into their practice. An example hereof we have, Psalm 119. wherein all Considerations of Gods will and our Duty are turned into Petitions.

(3.) A due Meditation on Gods glorious Excellencies, tends greatly to the cherishing of this gracious Gift of the Holy Spirit. There is no example that we have of Prayer in the Scripture, but the entrance into it consists in Expressions of the Name, and most

commonly of some other glorious Titles of God; whereunto the Remembrance of some mighty acts of his Power, is usually added. And the nature of the thing requires it should be so. For besides that God has revealed his Name unto us, for this very purpose that we might call upon him by the Name which he owns and takes to himself, it is necessary we should by some external description determine our minds unto Him, to whom we make our Addresses, seeing we cannot conceive any Image or Idea of him therein. Now the End hereof is twofold, (1.) To ingenerate in us that Reverence and Godly fear, which is required of all that draw nigh to this infinitely Holy God, Lev. 10:3. Hebrews 12:29. The most signal encouragement unto Boldness in Prayer and an Access to God thereby, is in Hebrews 10:19, 20, 21, 22. with Chapter 4:16. Into the Holy place we may go with Boldness, and unto the Throne of Grace. And it is a Throne of Grace that God in Christ is represented unto us upon. But yet it is a Throne still, whereon Majesty and Glory do reside. And God is always to be considered by us as on a Throne. (2.) Faith and confidence are excited and acted unto a due Frame thereby. For Prayer is our betaking ourselves unto God as our shield, our Rock, and our Reward, Proverbs 18:10. Wherefore a due previous consideration of those Holy properties of his Nature, which may encourage us so to do, and assure us in our so doing, is necessary. And this being so great a part of Prayer the great Foundation of Supplication and Praise, frequent Meditation on these holy Excellencies of the Divine Nature, must needs be an excellent preparation for the whole Duty, by filling the Heart with a sense of those things, which the Mouth is to express, and making ready those Graces for their exercise, which is required therein.

(4.) Meditation on the Mediation and Intercession of Christ, for our Encouragement, is of the same importance and tendency. To this End spiritually is he proposed unto us, as abiding in the discharge of his Priestly Office, Hebrews 4:15, 16. Chapter 10:19, 20, 21, 22. And this is not only an Encouragement unto, and in our Supplications, but a means to increase and strengthen the Grace and Gift of Prayer it self. For the Mind is thereby made ready to exercise it self about the effectual Interposition of the Lord Christ at the Throne of Grace in our behalf, which has a principal place and consideration in the Prayers of all Believers. And hereby principally may we try our Faith of what Race and kind it is, whether truly Evangelical or no. Some relate or talk that the Eagle tries the Eyes of her young ones, by turning them to the Sun, which if they cannot look steadily on, she rejects them as spurious. We may truly try our Faith by immediate Intuitions of the Sun of Righteousness. Direct Faith to act it self immediately and directly on the Incarnation of Christ and his Mediation, and if it be not of the right kind and race, it will turn its Eye aside unto any thing else. Gods essential Properties, his Precepts and Promises it can bear a fixed consideration of; but it cannot fix it self on the Person and Mediation of Christ with steadiness and satisfaction. There is indeed much profession of Christ in the World, but little Faith in him.

(5.) Frequency in Exercise is the immediate way and means of the Increase of this Gift, and its improvement. All spiritual Gifts are bestowed on men to be employed and exercised: For the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every one to profit withal, 1 Corinthians. 12:7. God both requirs that his Talents be traded withal, that his Gifts be employed and exercised, and will also call

us to an account of the discharge of the trust committed unto us in them, see 1 Peter. 4:10, 11. Wherefore the Exercise of this and of the like Gifts tends unto their improvement on a double account. For (1.) whereas they reside in the mind after the manner and nature of an Habit or a Faculty, it is natural that they should be increased and strengthened by Exercise, as all Habits are by a multiplication of Acts proceeding from them. So also by desuetude they will weaken, decay, and in the issue be utterly lost and perish. So is it with many as to the Gift of Prayer. They were known to have received it in some good measure of usefulness unto their own Edification and that of others. But upon a neglect of the Use and Exercise of it in public and private, which seldome goes alone without some secret or open enormities, they have lost all their Ability, and cannot open their mouths on any Occasion in Prayer, beyond what is prescribed unto them, or composed for them. But the just hand of God is also in this matter, depriving them of what they had, for their abominable neglect of his Grace and Bounty therein. (2.) The Increase will be added unto by virtue of Gods blessing on his own appointment. For having bestowed their Gifts for that End, where Persons are faithful in the discharge of the trust committed unto them, He will graciously add unto them in what they have. This is the eternal Law concerning the dispensation of Evangelical Gifts, Unto every one that has shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that has not, shall be taken away, even that which he has, Mat. 25:29. It is not the mere having or not having of them that is intended, but the using or not using of what we have received; as is plain in the Context. Now I do not say that a man may or ought to exercise himself in Prayer meerly with this design, that he may preserve and improve his

Gift. It may indeed in some cases be lawful for a man to have Respect hereunto, but not only. As where a Master of a Family has any one in his Family who is able to discharge that Duty and can attend unto it; yet he will find it his Wisdom not to omit his own performance of it, unless he be contented his Gift, as to the use of his Family, should wither and decay. But all that I plead is, that he who conscientiously, with respect unto all the ends of Prayer, does abound in the exercise of this Gift, he shall assuredly thrive and grow in it, or at least preserve it in answer unto the measure of the Gift of Christ. For I do not propose these things, as though every man in the diligent use of them, may constantly grow and thrive in that part of the Gift which consists in Utterance and Expression. For there is a measure of the Gift of Christ assigned unto every one whose bounds he shall not pass, Ephesians 4:7. But in these paths and ways, the Gift which they have received, will be preserved, kept thrifty and flourishing; and from the least beginnings of a Participation of it, they will be carried on unto their own proper measure, which is sufficient for them.

(6.) Constant fervency and Intention of mind and Spirit in this Duty, works directly towards the same End. Men may multiply Prayers as to the outward Work in them, and yet not have the least spiritual Advantage by them. If they are dull, dead and slothful in them, if under the Power of customariness and formality, what issue can they expect? Fervency and Intention of mind quickens and enlarges the faculties, and leaves vigorous Impressions upon them of the things treated about, in our Supplications. The whole Soul is cast into the mould of the matter of our Prayers, and is thereby prepared and made ready for continual fresh spiritual Engagements about them. And this fervency we intend, consists

not in the Vehemency or Loudness of words, but in the Intention of the mind. For the earnestness or vehemency of the voice is allowable only in two cases: (1.) When the Edification of the Congregation does require it, which being numerous, cannot hear what is spoken unless a man lift up his voice. (2.) When the vehemency of Affections will bear no restraint, Psalm 20:2. Hebrews 5:7. Now as all these are means whereby the Gift of Prayer may be cherished, preserved and improved; so are they all of them the ways whereby Grace acts it self in Prayer, and have therefore an equal respect unto the whole Work of the Spirit of Supplication in us.

5. Our Duty it is to use this Gift of Prayer unto the ends for which it is freely bestowed on us. And it is given, (1.) with respect unto themselves who do receive it; and, (2.) with respect unto the Benefit and Advantage of others. And with respect unto them that receive it, its End is, and it is a blessed means and help, to stir up, excite, quicken and act all those Graces of the Spirit whereby they have Communion with God in this Duty. Such are Faith, Love, Delight, Joy and the like. For (1.) under the conduct of this Gift, the mind and Soul are led into the consideration of, and are fixed on the proper objects of those Graces, with the due occasions of their exercise. When men are bound unto a Form, they can act Grace only by the things that are expressed therein, which whatever any apprehend, is strait and narrow, compared with the extent of that divine Intercourse with God, which is needful unto Believers in this Duty. But in the Exercise of this Gift there is no concernment of Faith or Love, or delight, but it is presented unto them, and they are excited unto a due exercise about them. Unto this end therefore, is it to be used; namely as a means to stir up

and act those Graces and holy Affections, in whose working and exercise the Life and efficacy of Prayer does consist. (2.) Although the Exercise of the Gift it self, ought to be nothing but the Way of those Graces acting themselves towards God in this Duty, (for Words are supplied only to cloath and express gracious Desires, and when they wholly exceed them, they are of no Advantage;) yet as by virtue of the Gift the mind is able to comprehend and manage the things about which those Graces and gracious desires are to be exercised; so in the use of Expressions they are quickned and ingaged therein. For as when a man has heard of a miserable object, he is moved with compassion towards it, but when he coms to behold it, his own Eye affects his heart, as the Prophet speaks, Lam. 3:17. whereby his compassion is actually moved and increased; so although a man has a comprehension in his mind of the things of Prayer, and is affected with them, yet his own Words also will affect his Heart, and by Reflection stir up and enflame spiritual Affections. So do many even in private, find advantage in the use of their own Gift, beyond what they can attain in mere Mental Prayer, which must be spoken unto afterwards.

Again, this Gift respects others and is to be used unto that End. For as it is appointed of God to be exercised in Societies, Families, Church-Assemblies, and occasionally for the good of any; so it is designed for their Edification and profit. For there is in it an Ability of expressing the Wants, Desires and Prayers of others also. And as this discharge of the Duty is in a peculiar manner incumbent on Ministers of the Gospel, as also on Masters of Families and others as they are occasionally called thereunto; so they are to attend unto a fourfold direction therein: (1.) Unto their own experience, if such persons are Believers themselves they have experi-

ence in their own Souls of all the general concernments of those in the same condition. As Sin works in one, so it does in another; as Grace is effectual in one, so it is in another; as he that prays, longs for Mercy and Grace, so do they that joyn with him. Of the same kind with his Hatred of Sin his Love to Christ, his Labouring after Holiness and Conformity to the Will of God, are also those in other Believers. And hence it is that Persons praying in the Spirit according to their own experience, are oftentimes supposed by every one in the Congregation rather to pray over their Condition than their own. And so it will be whilst the same Corruption in kind, and the same Grace in kind, with the same kind of Operations, are in them all. But this extends not it self unto particular Sins and Temptations, which are left unto every one to deal about between God and their own Souls.

(2.) Unto Scripture Light. This is that which lively expresss the spiritual state and Condition of all sorts of Persons, namely, both of those that are unregenerate, and of those which are converted unto God. Whatever that expresss concerning either sort, may safely be pleaded with God in their behalf. And hence may abundant matter of Prayer be taken for all occasions. Especially may it be so in a peculiar manner from that holy Summary of the Churches desires to God, given us in the Lords Prayer. All we can duly apprehend, spiritually understand, and draw out of that Myne and Heavenly Treasury of Prayer, may be safely used in the name and the behalf of the whole Church of God. But without understanding of the things intended, the Use of the words prosits not.

(3) Unto an Observation of their ways and walking, with whatever overt discovery they make of their Condition and Temptations. He who is constantly to be the mouth of others to

God, is not to pray at Random, as though all Persons and Conditions were alike unto him. None prays for others constantly by virtue of especial Duty, but he is called also to watch over them and observe their ways. In so doing he may know That of their state, which may be a great Direction unto his Supplications with them and for them. Yea without this no man can ever discharge this Duty aright in the behalf of others, so as they may find their particular concernments therein. And if a Minister be obliged to consider the Ways, Light, Knowledge, and walking of his Flock in his preaching unto them, that what he teaches may be suited unto their Edification; he is no less bound unto the same consideration in his Prayers also with them and for them, if he intends to pray unto their use and profit. The like may be said of others in their capacity. The Wisdom and Caution which are to be used herein, I may not here insist upon.

(4.) Unto the Account which they receive from themselves concerning their Wants, their state and Condition. This in some cases Persons are obliged to give unto those whose Duty it is to help them by their Prayers, James 5:16. And if this Duty were more attended unto, the minds of many might receive inconceivable Relief thereby.

6. Let us take heed, (1.) That this Gift be not solitary, or alone; and (2.) That it be not solitarily acted at any time. When it is solitary, that is, where the Gift of Prayer is in the Mind, but no Grace to exercise in Prayer in the Heart; it is at best but a part of that Form of Godliness which men may have, and deny the Power thereof, and is therefore consistent with all sorts of secret Lusts and Abominations. And it were easy to demonstrate that whatever Advantage others may have by this Gift in them who are destitute

of saving Grace, yet themselves are many ways worsted by it. For hence are they lifted up with spiritual pride, which is the ordinary Consequent of all unsanctified Light; and hereby do they countenance themselves against the Reflections of their Consciences on the guilt of other Sins, resting and pleasing themselves in their own performances. But to the best Observation that I have been able to make, of all spiritual Gifts which may be communicated for a time unto Unsanctified minds, this does soonest decay and wither. Whether it be that God takes it away Judicially from them, or that themselves are not able to bear the Exercise of it, because it is diametrically opposite unto the lusts wherein they indulge themselves; for the most part it quickly and visibly decaies, especially in such as with whom the continuance of it by reason of open Sins and Apostasie might be a matter of danger or Scandal unto others. (2.) Let it not be acted solitarily. Persons in whom is a principle of spiritual Life and Grace, who are endowed with those Graces of the Spirit which ought to be acted in all our Supplications, may yet even in the use and exercise of this Gift neglect to stir them up and act them. And there is no greater Evidence of a weak, sickly spiritual Constitution, than often to be surprized into this miscarriage. Now this is so▪ when men in their Prayers ingage only their Light, Invention, Memory and Elocution, without especial actings of Faith and delight in God. And he who watchs his Soul and its actings, may easily discern when he is sinfully negligent in this matter, or when outward Circumstances and Occasions have made him more to attend unto the Gift, than unto Grace in Prayer; for which he will be humbled. And these few things I thought meet to add concerning the due use and improvement of this Gift of the Spirit of God.

CHAPTER 10



Of Mental Prayer as pretended unto by some in the Church of Rome.

HAVING described or given an account of the Gift of Prayer, and the use of it in the Church of God, and the Nature of the Work of the Spirit therein; it will be necessary to consider briefly what is by some set up in Competition with it, as a more Excellent way in this part of Divine Worship. And in the first place Mental Prayer as described by some devout persons of the Church of Rome, is preferred above it. They call it pure spiritual Prayer, or a quiet repose of Contemplation; that which excludes all Images of the Fancy, and in time all perceptible actuations of the Understanding, and is exercised in single Elevations of the Will, without any force at all, yet with admirable Efficacy; and to dispose a Soul for such Prayer there is previously required an entire Calmness and even Death of the Passions, a perfect purity in the spiritual affections of the will, and an entire abstraction from all Creatures, Cressy Church Hist. Pref. parag. 42, 43.

1. The Truth is, I am so fixed in a dislike of that mere outside formal course of reading or singing Prayers, which is in use in the Roman Church (which though in Mr. Cressy's esteem, it have a

shew of a very civil Conversation with God, yet is it indeed accompanied with the highest contempt of his infinite purity and all Divine Excellencies) and do so much more abhor that Magical incantation which many among them use in the Repetition of Words which they understand not, or of applying what they repeat, to another End than what the words signifie, as saying so many Prayers for such an End or purpose, whereof it may be there is not one word of mention in the Prayers themselves; that I must approve of any search after a real internal intercourse of Soul with God in this Duty. But herein men must be careful of two things: (1.) That they assert not what they can fancy, but what indeed in some measure they have an Experience of. For men to conjecture what others do experience (for they can do no more) and thence to form Rules or Examples of Duty, is dangerous always, and may be pernicious unto those who shall follow such Instructions. And herein this Author fails, and gives nothing but his own Fancies of others pretended Experience. (2.) That what they pretend unto an Experience of, be confirmable by Scripture Rule or Example. For if it be not so, we are directed unto the Conduct of all extravagant imaginations in every one who will pretend unto spiritual Experience. Attend unto these Rules, and I will grant in Prayer all the ways whereby the Soul or the Faculties of it, can rationally act it self towards God in an Holy and spiritual manner. But if you extend it unto such kind of actings as our Nature is not capable of, at least in this World, it is the open fruit of a deceived Fancy, and makes all that is tendred from the same hand to be justly suspected. And such is that instance of this Prayer, that it is in the Will and its Affections without any actings of the Mind or Understanding. For although I grant that the Adhesion of the Will

and Affections unto God by Love, Delight, Complacency, Rest and Satisfaction in Prayer, belongs to the Improvement of this Duty; yet to imagine that they are not guided, directed, acted by the Understanding in the contemplation of Gods Goodness, Beauty, Grace and other Divine excellencies, is to render our Worship and Devotion, brutish or irrational; whereas it is and ought to be our Reasonable service.

And that this very Description here given us of Prayer, is a mere effect of Fancy and Imagination, and not that which the Author of it was led unto by the conduct of spiritual Light and Experience, is evident from hence, that it is borrowed from those Contemplative Philosophers, who after preaching of the Gospel in the World, endeavoured to refine and advance Heathenism into a Compliance with it; at least is fansied in imitation of what they ascribe unto a perfect mind. One of them, and his expressions in one place may suffice for an instance. Plotinus Ennead. 6. lib. 9. Cap. 10. For after many other ascriptions unto a Soul that has attained Union with the chiefest Good, he adds: [illegible]. A mind thus risen up is no way moved, no anger, no desire of any thing is in it (a perfect rest of the Affections.) Nay, neither Reason nor Understanding (are acted) nor, if I may say so, it self; but being Ecstasied and filled with God, it comes into a quiet, still, immoveable repose and state, no way declining (by any sensible actings) from its own Essence, nor exercising any reflect act upon it self, is wholly at rest, as having attained a perfect state, or to this purpose; with much more to the same. And as it is easy to find the substance of our Authors Notion in these words, so the Reader may see it

more at large declared in that last Chapter of his *Enneads*. And all his Companions in design about that time speak to the same purpose.

2. The spiritual intense fixation of the mind, by contemplation on God in Christ, until the Soul be as it were swallowed up in admiration and delight, and being brought unto an utter loss through the infiniteness of those Excellencies which it does admire and adore, it returns again into its own Abasements; out of a sense of its infinite distance from what it would absolutely and eternally embrace, and with all the inexpressible Rest and satisfaction which the will and Affections receive in their approaches unto the Eternal fountain of goodness; are things to be aimed at in Prayer, and which through the riches of Divine condescension, are frequently enjoyed. The Soul is hereby raised and ravished, not into Ecstasies or unaccountable Raptures, not acted into Motions above the Power of its own Understanding and Will, but in all the Faculties and Affections of it through the effectual workings of the Spirit of Grace, and the lively impressions of Divine Love, with intimations of the Relations and kindness of God, is filled with Rest, in joy unspeakable and full of Glory. And these spiritual acts of Communion with God, whereof I may say with Bernard, *Rara Hora, Brevis Mora*, may be enjoyed in mental or Vocal Prayer indifferently. But as the Description here given of Mental spiritual Prayer, has no countenance given it from the Scriptures, yea those things are spoken of it which are expressly contrary thereunto, as perfect purity, and the like; and as it cannot be confirmed by the Rational Experience of any, so it no way takes off from the Necessity and usefulness of Vocal Prayer, whereunto it is opposed. For still the use of Words is necessary in this Duty, from the nature of the Duty

it self, the command of God, and the Edification of the Church. And it is fallen out unhappily as to the Exaltation of the conceived excellency of this Mental Prayer, that our Lord Jesus Christ not only instructed his Disciples to pray by the use of Words, but did so himself, and that constantly, so far as we know, Mat. 26:39, 42. Yea, when he was most intense and engaged in this Duty, instead of this pretended still Prayer of Contemplation, he prayed [illegible]with a strong outcry, Hebrews 5. which Psalm 22. is called the voice of his Roaring. And all the Reproaches which this Author casts on servent, earnest Vocal Prayer, namely that it is a tedious, loud, impetuous and an uncivil conversation with God, a mere artificial slight and facility, may with equal Truth be cast on the outward manner of the praying of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was oft-times long, sometimes loud and vehement. And unto the Examples of their Lord and Master we may add that of the Prophets and Apostles, who mention nothing of this pretended Elevation, but constantly made use of, and desired God to hear their voices, their cry, their Words in their Supplications; the words of many of them, being accordingly recorded: Wherefore Words proper, suggested by the Spirit of God, and taken either Directly or Analogically out of the Scripture, do help the mind and enlarge it with Supplications. *Interdum voce nos ipsos ad devotionem & acrius incitamus*, August. Epist. 121. ad Probam. The use of such Words, being first led unto by the desires of the mind, may and does lead the mind on to express its further desires also, and encrease those which are so expressed. It is from Gods Institution and Blessing that the Mind and Will of praying do lead unto the Words of Prayer, and the words of Prayer do lead on the mind and will, enlarging them in desires and Supplications. And without this

Aid, many would oftentimes be straitned in acting their Thoughts and Affections towards God, or distracted in them, or diverted from them. And we have experience that an obedient, sanctified persistency in the use of gracious words in Prayer, has prevailed against violent Temptations and injections of Satan, which the mind in its silent Contemplations was not able to grapple with; And holy Affections are thus also excited hereby. The very words and Expressions which the Mind chuss to declare its thoughts, conceptions and desires about Heavenly things, do reflect upon the Affections encreasing and exciting of them. Not only the things themselves fixed on, do affect the Heart, but the Words of Wisdom and sobriety whereby they are expressed, do so also. There is a recoiling of Efficacy, if I may so speak, in deep impressions on the Affections, from the words that are made use of to express those Affections by. But we treat of Prayer principally, as it is to be performed in Families, Societies, Assemblies, Congregations, where this Mental Prayer would do well to promote the Edification which is attainable in the silent Meetings of the Quakers.

And because this kind of Prayer, as it is called, is not only recommended unto us, but preferred before all other ways and methods of Prayer, and chosen as an instance to set off the Devotion of the Church of Rome, to invite others thereunto, I shall a little more particularly inquire into it. And I must needs say that on the best view I can take, or Examination of it, it seems to be a matter altogether useless, uncertain, an effect of, and Entertainment for vain Curiosity, whereby men intrude themselves into those things which they have not seen, being vainly puffed up by their own fleshly mind. For to call over what was before intimated, in things that are Practical in Religion, no man can understand any thing whereof he

can have no experience. Nothing is rejected by virtue of this Rule, whereof some men through their own default have no Experience; but every thing is so justly, whereof no man in the discharge of his Duty can attain any Experience. He that speaks of such things unto others, if any such there might be, belonging unto our Condition in this World, must needs be a Barbarian unto them, in what he speaks; and whereas also he speaks of that wherein his own Reason and Understanding have no interest, he must be so also unto himself. For no man can by the use of Reason however advanced by spiritual Light, understand such actings of the Souls of other men or his own, as wherein there is no exercise of Reason or Understanding; such as these Raptures are pretended to consist in. So whereas one of them says, *sundus animae meae tangit fundum Essentiae Dei*; it had certainly been better for him to have kept his Apprehensions or Fancy to himself, than to express himself in words which in their own proper sense are Blasphemous, and whose best defensative is, that they are unintelligible. And if it be not unlawful, it is doubtless inexpedient for any one in things of Religion, to utter what it is impossible for any Body else to understand, with this only Plea that they do not indeed understand it themselves; it being what they enjoyed without any acts or actings of their own Understanding. To allow such pretenses is the ready way to introduce Babel into the Church, and Expose Religion to scorn. Some pretending unto such Raptures among ourselves I have known, wherein for a while they stirred up the Admiration of weak and credulous Persons; but through a little observation of what they did, spake, and pretended unto, with an Examination of all by the unerring Rule, they quickly came into contempt. All I intend at present is, that whatever be in this pretense, it is altogether

useless unto Edification, and therefore ought the declaration of it, to be of no regard in the Church of God. If the Apostle would not allow the use of Words, though miraculously suggested unto them that used them, without an immediate interpretation of their signification, what would he have said of such words and things as are capable of no interpretation, so as that any man living should understand them? For those by whom at present they are so extolled and commended unto us, do themselves discourse at Random, as blind men talk of Colours, for they pretend not to have any Experience of these things themselves. And it is somewhat an uncouth way of procedure to enhance the value of the Communion of their Church, and to invite others unto it, by declaring that there are some amongst them who enjoyed such spiritual Ecstasies, as could neither by themselves, nor any others be understood. For nothing can be so, wherein or whereabout there is no exercise of Reason or Understanding. Wherefore the old Question *cui bono*, will discharge this pretense from being of any value or esteem in Religion with considerate men.

Again, As the whole of this kind of Prayer is useless as to the Benefit and Edification of the Church or any member of it; so it is impossible there should ever be any certainty about the Raptures wherein it is pretended to consist, but they must everlastingly be the subject of contention and dispute. For who shall assure me that the Persons pretending unto these Duties or Enjoyments are not mere pretenders? Any man that lives, if he have a mind unto it, may say such things, or use such expressions concerning himself. If a man indeed shall pretend and declare that he does, or enjoys such things as are expressed in the Word of God as the Duty or privilege of any, and thereon are acknowledged by all to be things

in themselves true and real, and likewise attainable by Believers, he is ordinarily, so far as I know, to be believed in his Profession, unless he can be convicted of falshood by any thing inconsistent with such Duties or Enjoyments. Nor do I know of any great Evil in our credulity herein, should we happen to be deceived in or by the Person so professing, seeing he speaks of no more than all acknowledge it their Duty to endeavour after. But when any one shall pretend unto spiritual actings or Enjoyments which are neither prescribed nor promised in the Scripture, nor are investigable in the Light of Reason, no man is upon this mere profession obliged to give credit thereunto; Nor can any man tell what evil effect or Consequences his so doing may produce. For when men are once taken off from that sure Ground of Scripture, and their own understandings, putting themselves afloat on the uncertain Waters of fancies or conjectures, they know not how they may be tossed; nor whither they may be driven. If it shall be said, that the Holiness and Honesty of the Persons by whom these especial privileges are enjoyed, are sufficient Reason why we should believe them in what they profess; I answer, they would so in a good measure, if they did not pretend unto things repugnant unto Reason and unwarranted by the Scripture, which is sufficient to crush the Reputation of any mans Integrity. Nor can their Holiness and Honesty be proved to be such, as to render them absolutely impregnable against all Temptations, which was the preeminence of Christ alone. Neither is there any more strength in this Plea, but what may be reduced unto this Assertion, that there neither are, nor ever were any Hypocrites in the World undiscoverable unto the Eyes of men. For if such there may be, some of these pretenders may be of their Number, notwithstanding the appearance of their Holiness and

Honesty. Besides, if the Holiness of the best of them were examined by Evangelical Light and Rule, perhaps it would be so far from being a sufficient countenance unto other things, as that it would not be able to defend its own Reputation. Neither is it want of charity, which makes men doubtful and unbelieving in such cases; but that Godly Jealousy and Christian prudence which require them to take care that they be not deceived or deluded, do not only warrant them to abide on that guard, but make it their necessary Duty also. For it is no new thing that pretenses of Raptures, Ecstasies, Revelations and unaccountable extraordinary Enjoyments of God, should be made use of unto corrupt Ends, yea abused to the worst imaginable. The experience of the Church both under the Old Testament and the New, witness hereunto as the Apostle Peter declares, 2 Peter. 2:1. For among them of old, there were multitudes of false pretenders unto visions, dreams, Revelations and such spiritual Ecstasies, some of whom wore a rough Garment to deceive, which went not alone but accompanied with all such appearing austerities, as might beget an opinion of Sanctity and Integrity in them. And when the Body of the People were grown corrupt and superstitious, this sort of men had credit with them above the true Prophets of God; Yet did they for the most part shew themselves to be Hypocritical Liars. And we are abundantly warned of such Spirits under the New Testament, as we are foretold that such there would be, by whom many should be deluded. And all such pretenders unto extraordinary intercourse with God, we are commanded to try by the unerring Rule of the word, and desire only Liberty so to do.

But suppose that those who assert these Devotions and Enjoyments of God in their own Experience, are not false pretenders unto what they profess, nor design to deceive; but are persuaded in their own minds of the reality of what they endeavour to declare, yet neither will this give us the least security of their Truth. For it is known that there are so many ways, partly natural, partly Diabolical, whereby the Fancies and Imaginations of persons may be so possessed with false images and apprehensions of things, and that with so vehement an efficacy as to give them a confidence of the Truth and Reality, that no assurance of them can be given by a persuasion of the sincerity of them by whom they are pretended. And there are so many ways whereby men are disposed unto such a frame and actings, or are disposed to be imposed on by such delusions, especially where they are prompted by Superstition, and are encouraged doctrinally to an Expectation of such imaginations, that it is a far greater wonder that more have not fallen into the same Extravagancies, than that any have so done. We find by Experience that some have had their imaginations so fixed on things evil and noxious by Satanical delusions, that they have confessed against themselves, things and crimes that have rendered them obnoxious unto Capital punishments; whereof they were never really and actually guilty. Wherefore seeing these acts or Duties of Devotion are pretended to be such as wherein there is no sensible actuation of the mind or understanding, and so cannot rationally be accounted for, nor rendered perceptible unto the understanding of others, it is not unreasonable to suppose that they are only fond imaginations of deluded Fancies, which superstitious, credulous Persons have gradually raised

themselves unto, or such as they have exposed themselves to be imposed on withal by Satan, through a groundless, unwarrantable desire after them, or Expectation of them.

But what ever there may be in the height of this contemplative Prayer as it is called, it neither is Prayer, nor can on any account be so esteemed. That we allow of Mental Prayer and all actings of the mind in Holy Meditation, was before declared. Nor do we deny the usefulness or necessity of those other things of mortifying the Affections and Passions, of an entire resignation of the whole Soul unto God with complacency in him, so far as our nature is capable of them in this World. But it is that incomparable Excellency of it in the silence of the Soul, and the pure adhesion of the Will without any actings of the understanding that we inquire into. And I say whatever else there may be herein, yet it has not the nature of Prayer, nor is to be so esteemed, though under that name and notion it be recommended unto us. Prayer is a Natural Duty, the notion and understanding whereof is common unto all mankind. And the concurrent voice of Nature deceiveth not. Whatever therefore is not compliant therewith, at least what is contradictory unto it, or inconsistent with it, is not to be esteemed Prayer. Now in the common sense of mankind, this Duty is that acting of the mind and Soul, wherein from an acknowledgement of the Sovereign Being, self-sufficiency, Rule and Dominion of God, with his infinite Goodness, Wisdom, Power, Righteousness and Omniscience and Omnipresence, with a sense of their own Universal dependance on him, his will and pleasure as to their Beings, Lives, Happiness, and all their concernments, they address their desires with Faith and trust unto him according as their state and condition does require; or ascribe praise and glory unto him for what he is in himself, and

what he is to them. This is the general notion of Prayer, which the Reason of mankind centers in; neither can any man conceive of it under any other notion whatever. The Gospel directs the performance of this Duty in an acceptable manner with respect unto the Mediation of Christ, the Aids of the Holy Ghost, and the Revelation of the Spiritual Mercies we all do desire; but it changes nothing in the general nature of it. It does not introduce a Duty of another kind, and call it by the name of that, which was known in the Light of Nature, but is quite another thing. But this general nature of Prayer all men universally understand well enough, in whom the first innate principles of natural Light are not extinguished or woefully deprived. This may be done among some by a long traditional course of an Atheistical and Brutish Conversation. But as large and extensive as are the convictions of men concerning the Being and Existence of God, so are their Apprehensions of the Nature of this Duty. For the first actings of Nature towards a Divine Being, are in Invocation. Jonahs Mariners knew how, Every one to call on his God, when they were in a storm. And where there is not Trust or Affiance in God acted, whereby men glorify him as God, and where Desires or praises are not offered unto him, neither of which can be without express acts of the Mind or Understanding, there is no Prayer, whatever else there may be. Wherefore this contemplative Devotion, wherein as it is pretended, the Soul is ecstasied into an advance of the Will and affections above all the actings of the mind or understanding, has no one property of Prayer as the nature of it is manifest in the Light of Nature and common Agreement of mankind. Prayer without an actual Acknowledgement of God in all his Holy Excellencies, and the actings of Faith in Fear, Love, Confidence and gratitude, is a

Monster in Nature or a By-blow of imagination, which has no Existence in *rerum natura*. These Persons therefore, had best find out some other name wherewith to impose this kind of Devotion upon our Admiration; for from the whole precincts of Prayer or invocation on the name of God, it is utterly excluded: and what place it may have in any other part of the worship of God, we shall immediately inquire.

But this Examination of it by the Light of Nature will be looked on as most absurd and impertinent. For if we must try all matters of Spiritual Communion with God, and that in those things which wholly depend on Divine supernatural Revelation by this Rule and Standard, our measures of them will be false and perverse. And I say, no doubt they would. Wherefore we call only that concern of it unto a Trial hereby, whose true notion is confessedly fixed in the Light of Nature. Without extending that line beyond its due bounds, we may by it, take a just measure of what is Prayer, and what is not; for therein it cannot deceive nor be deceived: And this is all which at present we engage about. And in the pursuit of the same inquiry we may bring it also unto the Scripture, from which we shall find it as foreign as from the Light of Nature. For as it is described, so far as any thing intelligible may be from thence collected, it exceeds or deviates from whatever is said in the Scripture concerning Prayer, even in those places where the Grace and privileges of it are most emphatically expressed; and as it is exemplified in the Prayers of the Lord Christ himself, and all the Saints recorded therein. Wherefore the Light of Nature, and the Scripture do by common consent exclude it from being Prayer in any kind. Prayer in the Scripture-representation of it, is the Souls Access and Approach unto God by Jesus Christ through the Aids of his Holy

Spirit, to make known its requests unto him with Supplication and Thanksgiving. And that whereon it is recommended unto us are its external Adjuncts, and its internal Grace and efficacy. Of the first sort, Earnestness, fervency, importunity, constancy and perseverance are the principal. No man can attend unto these or any of them in a way of Duty, but in the Exercise of his mind and understanding. Without this, whatever looks like any of them, is brutish fury or obstinacy.

And as unto the internal form of it, in that description which is given us of its nature in the Scripture, it consists in the especial exercise of Faith, Love, Delight, Fear, all the Graces of the Spirit as occasion does require. And in that Exercise of these Graces wherein the Life and Being of Prayer does consist, a continual regard is to be had unto the Mediation of Christ, and the free Promises of God, through which means he exhibits himself unto us as a God hearing Prayer. These things are both plainly and frequently mentioned in the Scripture, as they are all of them exemplified in the Prayers of those holy Persons which are recorded therein. But for this contemplative Prayer as it is described by our Author and others, there is neither precept for it, nor Direction about it, nor Motive unto it, nor Example of it in the whole Scripture. And it cannot but seem marvellous to some at least, that whereas this Duty and all its concernments are more insisted on therein, than any other Christian Duty or privilege what ever, that the Height and Excellency of it, and that in comparison whereof all other kinds of Prayer, all the actings of the mind and Soul in them are decried, should not obtain the least intimation therein.

For if we should take a view of all the particular places wherein the nature and excellency of this Duty are described, with the Grace and privilege wherewith it is accompaied, such as for instance, Ephes. 6:18. Philippians 4:6. Hebrews 4:16. Chapter 10:19, 20, 21, 22. there is nothing that is consistent with this contemplative Prayer. Neither is there in the Prayers of our Lord Jesus Christ, nor of his Apostles, nor of any Holy men from the beginning of the World, either for themselves or the whole Church, any thing that gives the least countenance unto it. Nor can any man declare, what is, or can be the Work of the Holy Spirit therein, as he is a Spirit of Grace and Supplication; nor is any Gift of his mentioned in the Scripture, capable of the least exercise therein: so that in no sense it can be that praying in the Holy Ghost which is prescribed unto us. There is therefore no Example proposed unto our imitation, no mark set before us, nor any direction given for the attaining of this pretended Excellency and perfection. Whatever is fancied or spoken concerning it, it is utterly foreign to the Scripture, and must owe it self unto the deluded imagination of some few Persons.

Besides, the Scripture does not propose unto us any other kind of Access unto God under the New Testament, nor any nearer approaches unto him, than what we have in and through the Mediation of Christ and by Faith in him: but in this pretense there seems to be such an immediate Enjoyment of God in his Essence aimed at, as is regardless of Christ, and leaves him quite behind. But God will not be All in all immediately unto the Church, until the Lord Christ has fully delivered up the Mediatory Kingdom unto him. And indeed the silence concerning Christ, in the whole of what is ascribed unto this contemplative Prayer, or rather the

Exclusion of him from any concernment in it as Mediator, is sufficient with all considerate persons, to evince that it has not the least interest in the Duty of Prayer, name or thing.

Neither does this Imagination belong any more unto any other part or exercise of Faith in this World; and yet here we universally walk by Faith and not by sight. The whole of what belongs unto it may be reduced unto the two heads of what we do towards God, and what we do enjoy of him therein. And as to the first, all the actings of our Souls towards God belong unto our Reasonable service, Romans 12:1. more is not required of us in a way of Duty. But that is no part of our Reasonable service, wherein our Minds and understandings have no concernment. Nor is it any part of our Enjoyment of God in this life. For no such thing is any where promised unto us, and it is by the Promises alone that we are made partakers of the Divine Nature, or have any thing from God communicated unto us. There seems therefore to be nothing in the Bravery of these affected expressions, but an endeavour to fancy somewhat above the measure of all possible attainments in this life, falling unspeakably beneath those of future Glory. A kind of Purgatory it is in Devotion, somewhat out of this World and not in another; above the Earth, and beneath Heaven, where we may leave it in Clouds and darkness.

CHAPTER 11



Prescribed forms of Prayer Examined.

THERE are also great Pleas for the use of prescribed limited Forms of Prayer, in opposition to that spiritual Ability in Prayer, which we have described and proved to be a Gift of the Holy Ghost. Where these Forms are contended for by men, with respect unto their own use and practice only, as suitable to their Experience, and judged by them a serving of God with the best that they have; I shall not take the least notice of them, nor of any Dissent about them. But whereas a perswasion not only of their lawfulness but of their necessity is made use of unto other ends and purposes, wherein the Peace and Edification of Believers is highly concerned, it is necessary we should make some inquiry thereinto. I say it is only with respect unto such a sense of their nature, and necessity of their use, as give Occasion, or a supposed Advantage, unto men, to oppose, deny and speak evil, of that way of Prayer, with its Causes and Ends, which we have described, that is, that any way consider these Forms of Prayer, and their Use. For I know well enough, that I have nothing to do to Judge or Condemn the Persons or Duties of Men in such Acts of Religious Worship, as they chuse for their best, and hope for Acceptance in, unless they are expressly Idolatrous. For unless it be in such Cases,

or the like, which are plain either in the Light of Nature, or Scripture Revelation, it is a silly Apprehension, and tending to Atheism, that God does not require of all Men, to regulate their Actings towards Him, according to that Sovereign Light, which he has erected in their own Minds.

What the Forms intended are, how composed, how used, how in some Cases imposed, are things so known to all, that we shall not need to speak to them. Prayer is God's Institution; and the Reading of these Forms, is that which Men have made, and set up in the Likeness thereof, or in Compliance with it. For it is said, That the Lord Christ having provided the Matter of Prayer, and commanded us to pray, it is left unto us or others, to Compose Prayer, as unto the Manner of it, as we or they shall see cause. But besides that there is no Appearance of Truth in the Inference, the direct contrary rather insuing on the Proposition laid down; it is built on this Supposition, That besides the provision of matter of Prayer, and the Command of the Duty, the Lord Christ has not moreover promised, does not communicate unto his Church, such Spiritual Aids and Assistances, as shall enable them, without any other outward pretended Helps, to pray according unto the Mind of God: Which we must not admit, if we intend to be Christians. In like manner he has provided the whole Subject Matter of Preaching, and commanded all his Ministers to Preach: But it does not hence follow, that they may all or any of them make one Sermon, to constantly read in all Assemblies of Christians, without any variation; unless we shall grant also, that he ceass to Give gifts unto Men, for the Work of the Ministry. Our Inquiry therefore will

be, what Place or Use they may have therein, or in our Duty, as performed by Virtue thereof; which may be expressed in the ensuing Observations:

1. The Holy Ghost as a Spirit of Grace and Supplications is no where, that I know of, promised unto any to help or assist them in composing Prayers for others; and therefore we have no ground to pray for him or his Assistance unto that End in particular; nor foundation to build Faith or Expectation of receiving him, upon. Wherefore he is not in any especial or gracious manner concerned in that Work or Endeavour. Whether this be a Duty that falls under his care as communicating gifts in general for the Edification of the Church, shall be afterwards Examined. That which we plead at present is, that he is no where peculiarly promised for that End, nor have we either command or direction to ask for his Assistance therein. If any shall say that he is promised to this purpose, where he is so, as a Spirit of Grace and Supplication; I answer, besides what has been already pleaded at large in the Explication and vindication of the proper sense of that Promise; that he is promised directly, to them that are to pray, and not to them that make Prayers for others, which themselves will not say is praying. But supposing it a Duty in general so to compose Prayers for our own or the use of others, it is lawful and warrantable to pray for the Aid and Guidance of the Holy Ghost therein; not as unto his peculiar Assistances in Prayer, not as he is unto Believers a Spirit of Supplication, but as he is our Sanctifier, the Author and efficient cause of every gracious Work and Duty in us.

It may be, the Prayers composed by some Holy men under the Old Testament by the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost for the use of the Church, will be also pretended. But as the

Inspiration or Assistance which they had in their Work was a thing quite of another kind than any thing that is ordinarily promised, or that any Persons can now pretend unto; so whether they were dictated unto them by the Holy Ghost to be used afterwards by others as mere Forms of Prayer, may be yet farther enquired into.

The great Plea for some of these external Aids of Prayer, is by this one Consideration utterly removed out of the way. It is said that some of these Prayers were prepared by great and Holy men, Martyrs it may be some of them, for the Truth of the Gospel and Testimony of Jesus. And indeed had any men in the World a Promise of especial Assistance by the Spirit of God in such a Work, I should not contend but the Persons intended were as likely to partake of that Assistance, as any others in these latter Ages. Extraordinary supernatural Inspiration they had not; And the Holy Apostles who were always under the Influence and Conduct of it, never made use of it unto any such purpose, as to prescribe Forms of Prayer, either for the whole Church or single Persons. Whereas therefore, there is no such especial Promise given unto any, this Work of composing Prayer, is foreign unto the Duty of Prayer, as unto any Interest in the gracious Assistance which is promised thereunto, however it may be a common Duty and fall under the help and Blessing of God in general. So some men from their acquaintance with the matter of Prayer above others, which they attain by spiritual Light, Knowledge and Experience, and their Comprehension of the Arguments which the Scripture directs unto, to be used and pleaded in our Supplications, may set down and express a Prayer, that is, the matter and outward Form of it, that shall declare the substance of things to be prayed for, much more accommodate to the conditions, wants and desires of

Christians, than others can who are not so clearly enlightened as they are, nor have had the Experience which they have had For those Prayers, as they are called, which men without such Light and Experience compose of phrases and Expressions gathered up from others, taken out of the Scripture, or invented by themselves, and cast into a contexture and method, such as they suppose suited unto Prayer in general, be they never so well worded, so quaint and elegant in Expressions, are so empty and jejune, as that they can be of no manner of use unto any, unless to keep them from praying whilst they live. And such we have Books good store filled withal, easy enough to be composed by such as never in their lives prayed according to the mind of God. From the former sort much may be learned, as they Doctrinally exhibite the Matter and Arguments of Prayer. But the Composition of them for others to be used as their Prayers, is that which no man has any Promise of peculiar spiritual Assistance in, with respect unto Prayer in particular.

2. No man has any Promise of the Spirit of Grace and Supplication to enable him to compose a Form or forms of Prayer for himself. The Spirit of God helps us to pray, not to make Prayers in that sense. Suppose men, as before, in so doing, may have his Assistance in general, as in other Studies, and Endeavours; yet they have not that especial Assistance which he gives as a Spirit of Grace and Supplication, enabling us to cry Abba Father. For men do not compose Forms of Prayer, however they may use them, by the immediate actings of Faith, Love, and Delight in God, with those other Graces, which he Excites and Acts in those Supplications which are according to the Divine Will. Nor is God the immediate object of the actings of the Faculties of the Souls of

men in such a Work. Their Inventions, Memories, Judgments are immediately exercised about their present composition, and there they rest. Wherefore whereas the exercise of Grace immediately on God in Christ, under the Formal notion of Prayer, is no part of mens Work or design when they compose and set down Forms for themselves or others, if any so do, they are not under a Promise of especial Assistance therein in the manner before declared.

3. As there is no Assistance promised unto the composition of such Forms, so it is no institution of the Law or Gospel. Prayer it self, is a Duty of the Law of Nature, and being of such singular and indispensable use unto all Persons, the Commands for it are reiterated in the Scripture, beyond those concerning any other particular Duty whatever. And if it has respect unto Jesus Christ with sundry Ordinances of the Gospel, to be performed in his name, it falls under a New Divine Institution. Hereon are Commands given us to pray, to pray continually without ceasing, to pray and faint not, to pray for ourselves, to pray for one another, in our Closets, in our Families, in the Assemblies of the Church. But as for this Work, of making or composing Forms of Prayers for ourselves to be used as Prayers, there is no Command, no Institution, no mention in the Scriptures of the Old Testament or the New. It is a Work of Humane Extract and Original, nor can any thing be expected from it, but what proceeds from that fountain. A Blessing possibly there may be upon it, but not such as issueth from the especial Assistance of the Spirit of God in it, nor from any Divine Appointment or Institution whatever. But the Reader must observe, that I do not urge these things to prove Forms of Prayer

Unlawful to be used, but only at present declare their Nature and Original, with respect unto that Work of the Holy Spirit, which we have described.

4. This being the Original of Forms of Prayer, the Benefit and Advantage which is in their Use, which alone is pleadable in their behalf, comes next under Consideration. And this may be done with respect unto two sorts of Persons: (1.) Such as have the Gift or Ability of Free Prayer bestowed on them, or however have attained it. (2.) Such as are mean and low in this Ability, and therefore incompetent to perform this Duty without that Aid and Assistance of them. And unto both sorts they are pleaded to be of Use and Advantage.

1. It is pleaded that there is so much Good and so much Advantage in the use of them, that it is expedient that those who can pray otherwise unto their own and others Edification, yet ought sometimes to use them. What this Benefit is, has not been distinctly declared, nor do I know, nor can divine wherein it should consist. Sacred things are not to be used meerly to shew our Liberty. And there seems to be herein a neglect of stirring up the Gift, if not also of the Grace of God, in those who have received them. The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every one to profit withal. And to forgo its exercise on any just occasion, seems not warrantable. We are bound at all times in the Worship of God to serve him with the best that we have. And if we have a made in the Flock and do sacrifice that which in comparison thereof, is a corrupt thing, we are deceivers. Free Prayer unto them who have an Ability for it, is more suited to the nature of the Duty in the Light of Nature it self, to Scripture-Commands and Examples, than the use of any prescribed Forms. To omit therefore the Exercise of a

spiritual Ability therein, and voluntarily to divert unto the other Relief; which yet, in that case at least, is no Relief; does not readily present its advantage unto a sober Consideration. And the Reader may observe that at present I examine not what men or Churches may agree upon by common consent, as judging and avowing it best for their own Edification, which is a matter of another consideration; but only of the Duty of Believers as such in their Respective Stations and Conditions.

2. It is generally supposed that the Use of such Forms are of singular Advantage unto them that are low and mean in their Ability to pray of themselves. I propose it thus, because I cannot grant that any who sincerely believe that there is a God, is sensible of his own wants, and his absolute dependance upon him, is utterly unable to make Requests unto him for relief, without any help, but what is suggested unto him by the working of the natural Faculties of his own Soul. What men will wilfully neglect is one thing, and what they cannot do, if they seriously apply themselves unto their Duty, is another. Neither do I believe that any man who is so far instructed in the Knowledge of Christ by the Gospel, as that he can make use of a composed Prayer with Understanding, but also that in some measure he is able to call upon God in the name of Christ, with respect unto what he feels in himself and is concerned in; and farther no mans Prayers are to be extended. I speak therefore of those who have the least measure and lowest degree of this Ability, seeing none are absolutely uninterested therein. Unto this sort of Persons I know not of what use these Forms are, unless it be to keep them low and mean all the Days of their Lives. For whereas both in the state of nature and the state of Grace, in one whereof every man is supposed to be, there are cer-

tain Heavenly sparks suited unto each condition; the main Duty of all men, is to stir them up and increase them. Even in the Remainers of lapsed nature, there are Coelestesigniculi, in-notices of Good and Evil, Accusations and Apologies of Conscience. These none will deny, but that they ought to be stirred up, and increased; which can be no otherwise done but in their sedulous exercise. Nor is there any such effectual way of their Exercise, as in the Souls application of it self unto God with respect unto them, which is done in Prayer only. But as for those whom in this matter we principally regard, that is, professed Believers in Jesus Christ, there is none of them but have such Principles of spiritual Life, and therein of all obedience unto God, and communion with him, as being improved and exercised, under those continual supplies of the Spirit which they receive from Christ their Head, will enable them to discharge every Duty, that in every Condition or Relation is required of them, in an acceptable manner. Among these is that of an Ability for Prayer; and to deny them to have it, supposing them true Believers, is expressly to contradict the Apostle, affirming that because we are Sons, God sends forth the Spirit of his Son into our Hearts, whereby we cry Abba Father. But this Ability, as I have shewed, is no way to be improved, but in and by a constant exercise. Now whether the use of the Forms enquired into, which certainly taks men off from the Exercise of what Ability they have, do not tend directly to keep them still low and mean in their Abilities, is not hard to determine.

But suppose these spoken of, are not yet real Believers, but only such as profess the Gospel, not yet sincerely converted unto God, whose Duty also it is to pray on all occasions: These have no such principle or Ability to improve, and therefore this Advantage

is not by them to be neglected. I answer; that the matter of all spiritual Gifts is spiritual Light; according therefore to their measure in the Light of the knowledge of the Gospel, such is their measure in spiritual Gifts also. If they have no spiritual Light, no insight into the knowledge of the Gospel, Prayers framed and composed according unto it will be of little use unto them. If they have any such Light, it ought to be improved by Exercise in this Duty which is of such indispensable necessity unto their Souls.

5. But yet the Advantage which all sorts of Persons may have hereby, in having the matter of Prayer prepared for them and suggested unto them, is also insisted on. This they may be much to seek in, who yet have sincere desires to pray, and whose Affections will comply with what is proposed unto them. And this indeed would carry a great Appearance of Reason with it, but that there are other ways appointed of God unto this End; and which are sufficient thereunto, under the Guidance, conduct and assistance of the Blessed Spirit, whose Work must be admitted in all parts of this Duty, unless we intend to frame Prayers that shall be an abomination to the Lord. Such are mens diligent and sedulous consideration of themselves, their spiritual state and condition, their wants and desires; a diligent consideration of the Scripture, or the Doctrine of it in the Ministry of the Word, whereby they will be both instructed in the whole matter of Prayer, and convinced of their own concernment therein, with all other Helps of coming to the knowledge of God and themselves; all which they are to attend unto, who intend to pray in a due manner. To furnish men with Prayers to be said by them, and so to satisfy their Consciencs whilst they live in the neglect of these things, is to deceive them, and not to help or instruct them. And if they do consci-

entiously attend unto these things, they will have no need of those other pretended helps. For men to live and converse with the World, not once enquiring into their own ways, or reflecting on their own hearts (unless under some charge of Conscience accompanied with fear or danger,) never endeavouring to examine, try or compare their state and condition with the Scripture, nor scarce considering either their own wants or Gods Promises, to have a Book lye ready for them wherein they may read a Prayer, and so suppose they have discharged their Duty in that matter, is a course which surely they ought not to be countenanced or encouraged in. Nor is the perpetual Rotation of the same words and Expressions, suited to instruct or carry on men in the knowledge of any thing, but rather to divert the mind from the due consideration of the things intended, and therefore commonly issues in Formality. And where men have words or Expressions prepared for them, and suggested unto them, that really signify the things wherein they are concerned, yet if the Light and knowledge of those Principles of Truth, whence they are derived, and whereinto they are resolved, be not in some measure fixed and abiding in their Minds, they cannot be much benefited or edified by their Repetition.

6. Experience is pleaded in the same case; and this with me, where Persons are evidently conscientious, is of more moment than an hundred notional Arguments that cannot be brought to that Trial. Some therefore say that they have had spiritual Advantage, the Exercise of Grace, and Holy Intercourse with God in the use of such Forms, and have their Affections warmed and their Hearts much bettered thereby. And this they take to be a clear Evidence and token that they are not disapproved of God; Yea, that they are a great advantage, at least unto many, in Prayer.

Answ. Whether they are approved or disapproved of God, whether they are Lawful or Unlawful, we do not consider; but only whether they are for spiritual Benefit and Advantage for the good of our own Souls and the Edification of others, as set up in competition with the Exercise of the Gift before described. And herein I am very unwilling to oppose the Experience of any one who seems to be under the conduct of the least beam of Gospel Light. Only I shall desire to propose some few things to their consideration. As,

1. Whether they understand aright the difference that is between natural Devotion occasionally excited, and the due actings of Evangelical Faith and Love with other Graces of the Spirit in a way directed unto by Divine Appointment? All men who acknowledge a Deity or Divine Power which they adore, when they address themselves seriously to perform any Religious Worship thereunto in their own way, be it what it will, will have their Affections moved and excited suitably unto the Apprehensions they have of what they worship; Yea though in particular it have no Existence but in their own Imaginations. For these things ensue on the general notion of a Divine Power, and not on the Application of them to such Idols, as indeed are nothing in the World. There will be in such Persons, Dread, and Reverence, and Fear; as there was in some of the Heathen unto an unspeakable Horror, when they entered into the Temples, and meerly imaginary presence of their Gods, the whole Work being begun and finished in their Fancies. And sometimes great joys, satisfactions and delights do ensue on what they do. For as what they so do, is suited to the best Light they have, and men are apt to have a complacency in their own inventions as Micah had Judg. 17:13. and upon inveterate prejudices which are the Guides of most men in Religion; their Consciences

find Relief in the discharge of their Duty. These things I say are found in Persons of the Highest and most dreadful Superstitions in the World, yea heightened unto inexpressible Agitations of Mind in Horror on the one side, and Raptures or Ecstasies on the other. And they are all tempered and qualified according to the mode and way of Worship, wherein men are engaged; but in themselves they are all of the same nature, that is natural, or effects and impressions upon Nature. So it is with the Mahumetans who excel in this Devotion; and so it is with Idolatrous Christians who place the Excellency and Glory of their profession therein. Wherefore such Devotion, such affections will be excited by Religious offices in all that are sincere in their use, whether they be of Divine Appointment or no. But the actings of Faith and Love on God through Christ according to the Gospel or the Tenour of the New Covenant, with the effects produced thereby in the Heart and Affections, are things quite of another kind and nature: and unless men do know how really to distinguish between these things, it is to no purpose to plead Spiritual Benefit and Advantage in the use of such Forms, seeing possibly it may be no other, but of the same kind with what all false Worshippers in the World have or may have Experience of.

2. Let them diligently inquire whether the effects on their Hearts which they plead, do not proceed from a precedent preparation, a good design, and upright Ends occasionally excited. Let it be supposed, that those who thus make use of, and plead for Forms of Prayer especially in public, do in a due manner prepare themselves for it by Holy Meditation, with an endeavour to bring their Souls into an holy Frame of Fear, Delight and Reverence of God; let it also be supposed that they have a good End and design

in the Worship they address themselves unto, namely the Glory of God, and their own spiritual Advantage; the Prayers themselves, though they should be in some things irregular, may give occasion to exercise those Acts of Grace which they were otherwise prepared for. And I say yet farther,

3. That whilst these Forms of Prayer are clothed with the general notions of Prayer, that is, are esteemed as such in the minds of them that use them, are accompanied in their use with the Motives and Ends of Prayer, express no matter unlawful to be insisted on in Prayer, directing the Souls of men to none but lawful Objects of Divine Worship and Prayer, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and whilst men make use of them with the true design of Prayer looking after due assistance unto Prayer, I do not judge there is any such evil in them as that God will not communicate his Spirit to any in the use of them, so as that they should have no holy Communion with him in and under them. Much less will I say that God never therein regards their Persons, or rejects their praying as unlawful. For the Persons and Duties of men may be accepted with God when they walk and act in sincerity according to their Light, though in many things, and those of no small importance, sundry irregularities are found both in what they do, and in the manner of doing it. Where Persons walk before God in their Integrity, and practise nothing contrary to their Light and conviction in his Worship, God is merciful unto them, although they order not every thing according to the Rule and measure of the Word. So was it with them who came to the Passover in the Days of Hezekiah; they had not cleansed themselves, but did eat the Passover otherwise than it was written, 2 Chorn. 30:18. For whom the good King made the Solemn Prayer suited to their occasion, The good Lord pardon

every one that prepares his Heart to seek the Lord God of his Fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary; and the Lord hearkened unto Hezekiah and healed the People, ver. 18, 19, 20. Here was a Duty for the substance of it appointed of God; but in the manner of its performance there was a failure, they did it not according to what was written, which is the sole rule of all Religious Duties. This God was displeased withal, yet graciously passed by the offense, and accepted them whose Hearts were upright in what they did. In the mean time I do yet judge, that the use of them is in it self obstructive of all the principal Ends of Prayer and sacred Worship. Where they are alone used, they are opposite to the Edification of the Church, and where they are imposed to the absolute exclusion of other Prayer, are destructive of its Liberty, and render a good part of the purchase of Christ of none effect.

Things being thus stated, it will be enquired whether the use of such Forms of Prayer is lawful or no. To this Inquiry some thing shall be returned briefly in way of Answer, and an End put unto this discourse. And I say,

1. To compose and write Forms of Prayer to be Directive and Doctrinal helps unto others, as to the matter and method to be used in the right discharge of this Duty, is lawful and may in some cases be useful. It were better, it may be, if the same thing were done in another way suited to give direction in the case, and not cast into the Form of a Prayer which is apt to divert the mind from the due consideration of its proper End and use, unto that which is not so. But this way of Instruction is not to be looked on as unlawful meerly for the Form and method whereinto it is cast, whilst its true use only is attended unto.

2. To Read, Consider and Meditate upon such written Prayers, as to the matter and Arguments of Prayer expressed in them, composed by Persons from their own Experience and the Light of Scripture directions, or to make use of Expressions set down in them where the Hearts of them that read them are really affected, because they find their state and Condition, their wants and desires declared in them, is not unlawful, but may be of good use unto some; though I must acknowledge I never heard any expressing any great benefit which they had received thereby. But it is possible that some may so do. For no such Freedom of Prayer is asserted as should make it unlawful for men to make use of any proper means the better to enable them to pray. Nor is any such Ability of Prayer granted, as to supersede the Duty of using means for the Increase and furtherance of it.

3. To set up and prescribe the use of such Forms universally in opposition and unto the Exclusion of free Prayer by the Aid of the Spirit of Grace, is contrary not only to many Divine precepts before insisted on, but to the Light of nature it self requiring every man to pray, and on some occasions necessitating them thereunto. But whatever be the practice of some men, I know not that any such Opinion is pleaded for, and so shall not farther oppose it.

4. It is not enquired whether Forms of Prayer, especially as they may be designed unto and used for other Ends and not to be read instead of Prayer, have in their Composition any thing of intrinsecal evil in them; for it is granted they have not: But the Inquiry is, whether in their use as Prayers they are not hindrances unto the right discharge of the Duty of Prayer according to the mind of God, and so may be unlawful in that respect. For I take it as granted that they are no where appointed of God for such an

Use, no where commanded so to be used; whence an argument may be formed against their having any Interest in Divine acceptable Worship, but it is not of our present Consideration. For if on the accounts mentioned, they appear not contrary unto, or inconsistent with, or are not used in a way exclusive of that Work of the Holy Spirit in Prayer which we have described from the Scripture, nor are reducible unto any Divine prohibition, whilst I may enjoy my own Liberty, I shall not contend with any about them. Nor shall I now engage into the Examination of the Arguments that are pleaded in their behalf, which some have greatly multiplied, as I suppose, not much to the Advantage of their cause. For in things of Religious Practice one Testimony of Scripture rightly explained and applied, with the Experience of Believers thereon, is of more weight and value than a thousand dubious Reasonings, which cannot be evidently resolved into those Principles. Wherefore some few additional Considerations shall put an issue unto this Discourse.

1. Some observe that there are Forms of Prayer composed and prescribed to be used both in the Old Testament and the New. Such, they say, was the Form of Blessing prescribed unto the Priests on solemn Occasions, Numbers. 6:24, 25, 26. And the Psalms of David, as also the Lords Prayer in the New Testament. (1.) If this be so, it proves that Forms of Prayer are not intrinsically evil, which is granted, yet may the use of them be unnecessary. (2.) The Argument will not hold, so far as it is usually extended, at least; God himself has prescribed some Forms of Prayer to be used by some Persons on some occasions, therefore men may invent yea and prescribe those that shall be for common and constant use. He who forbad all Images or all use of them in sacred

things, appointed the making of the Cherubims in the Tabernacle and Temple. (3.) The Argument from the practice in use under the Old Testament in this matter, if any could thence be taken, when the People were carnal, and tyed up unto Carnal Ordinances, unto the Duty and practice of Believers under the New Testament, and a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit, has been before disproved. (4.) The words prescribed unto the Priests were not a Prayer properly, but an Authoritative Benediction, and an instituted sign of Gods blessing the People; For so it is added in the Explication of that Ordinance, They shall put my name upon the Children of Israel, and I will bless them, ver. 27. (5.) Davids Psalms were given out by immediate Inspiration, were most of them Mystical and Prophetical, appointed to be used in the Church, as all other Scriptures, only some of them in a certain manner, namely, of Singing; and that manner also determined by Divine Appointment. (6.) That any Form of Prayer is appointed in the New Testament to be used as a Form, is neither granted nor can be proved. (7.) Give us Prayers composed by Divine inspiration with a command for their use, with the Time, Manner and Form of their usage, which these instances prove to be lawful, if they prove any thing in this case, and there will be no contest about them. (8.) All and every one of the Precedents or Examples which we have in the whole Scripture of the Prayers of any of the People of God, Men or Women, being all accommodated to their present occasions, and uttered in the Freedom of their own Spirits, do all give Testimony unto free Prayer, if not against the use of Forms in that Duty.

2. Moreover, it seems that when any one prays, his Prayer is a Form unto all that join with him, whether in Families or Church-Assemblies; which some lay great weight upon, though I am not

able to discern the Force of it in this case. For (1.) The question is solely about him that prays and his discharge of Duty according to the mind of God, and not concerning them who join with him. (2.) The conjunction of others with him that prays according to his Ability, is an express command of God. (3.) Those who so join are at Liberty when it is their Duty to pray themselves. (4.) That which is not a Form in it self, is not a Form to any; for there is more required to make it so, than meerly that the words and Expressions are not of their own present Invention. It is to them, the Benefit of a Gift bestowed for their Edification in its present Exercise according to the Mind of God. That only is a Form of Prayer unto any, which he himself uss as a Form; for its nature depends on its use. (5.) The Argument is incogent; God has commanded some to pray according to the Ability they have received, and others to join with them therein; therefore it is lawful to invent Forms of Prayer for ourselves or others to be used as Prayers by them or us.

3. That which those who pretend unto moderation in this matter plead, is, that Prayer it self is a commanded Duty; but Praying by or with a prescribed Form is only an outward manner and Circumstance of it, which is indifferent, and may or may not be used as we see occasion. And might a general Rule to this purpose be duely established, it would be of huge importance. But (1.) It is an easy thing to invent and prescribe such outward Forms and manner of outward Worship, as shall leave nothing of the Duty prescribed but the empty name. (2.) Praying before an image, or Worshipping God or Christ by an image is but an outward mode of Worship, yet such as renders the whole Idolatrous. (3.) Any outward mode of Worship, the Attendance whereunto, or the Observance whereof, is prejudicial unto the due performance of

the Duty whereunto it is annexed, is inexpedient; and what there is hereof in the present instance, must be judged from the preceding discourse.

FINIS.

THANKS FOR READING



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