

the Soul's Sincere Desire

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To the Inner Soul of America

In Appreciation

THERE are some modern-day prophets who hold that truth, like light, is impersonal, infinite, universal, and eternal, and who rejoice that they are selfless channels by means of which its radiance may reach humankind. The most exalted of these covet no personal fame for themselves, deriving their reward rather from seeing the dawn they love steadily expand and increase into high noon and flood all the plain with light.

From such Olympian light-gatherers as these I have lit my torch. The only acknowledgment I can conceive of that seems at all worthy of such pure natures is the continued spreading of their light, that it may reach a larger circle and bring joy to a greater number.

Only a few of these light-givers came to me in the form of books. More have come to me as friends bearing gifts; still more have come as eager questioners; their very needs have brought into the light new conceptions, which, had not their hunger drawn them forth, might otherwise never have been revealed. But deserving of gratitude above all the rest, a gratitude that can never be repaid in words,

is that silent band of men and women of many churches and many creeds, whose prayers have been a mighty force in bringing into manifestation Truth more exalted than the voice of him who utters it, and Light greater than the lamp that sends it forth.

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I do not know why God should have blessed me for the past three years with an almost continuous stream of answered prayer. Some of the answers were marvelous, many unexplainable, all of them joy-giving. But, greater than any particular blessing that came with any particular answer, greater than the combined blessings of all the combined answers was a gift, a blessing, that was so much larger, so much more inclusive than all the other special gifts that it encompassed all within itself. I refer to the peace and happiness and absolute liberation from the bondage of fear and anger and the life-destroying emotions that came to me and revealed to me the practicability of finding the Kingdom of Heaven in the practical world of men.

Concomitant with this great blessing came the impulse to share it with others — to pass it on that they too might have their burdens eased and their paths made smooth. But whenever I approached a friend to tell him how I prayed, my brain stumbled and words failed me. My method was so simple that it defied analysis. Like the air I breathed, it could not be captured and confined in any form.

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So two years went by. Then one day, while walking home from college, a student said to me: "I wish very much that you would tell me how you pray. Won't you tell me sometime?" It suddenly occurred to me that this was the first time anyone had put that question to me. I do not know whether it is that every question has its own answer residing in it, just as every seed contains the entire life-plan of the completed plant; or whether the commands of Jesus, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," were meant to be applied to questions we ask of each other as well as questions we ask of God when we do so in the spirit of Christian humility and love; but this I do know: late in the evening the answer to this question leaped full-fledged into my brain. For two years I had striven in vain to answer a question that no one had ever asked; and then in a twinkling, before a question asked in all sincerity and with honest purpose, the answer came.

The essay which follows contains the answer to that question. I wish to have it clearly understood, however, that I do not wish the method here described to become a formula. I offer it rather as an opening of doors and windows through which man's soul may find liberation from the confinement of the things which bind, and expand a bit to meet the ever-expanding love of God.

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I find the frame for my method in the Lord's Prayer and the Twenty-third Psalm. I say "frame" because either one of these can be recited in less than half a minute, and a prayer such as we materialistically-minded moderns need is one which will demand at least fifteen minutes of our time.

In this day of the coliseum, the gymnasium, and the "daily dozen," I know it may sound impractical and visionary to suggest that the spirit deserves as much care as the body. But is not our spiritual health as important to our well-being as our physical health? Is not the life more than the food, and the body more than the raiment? Is not the kernel within the seed and the sap within the oak — in other words, that which is within, vitalizing, propelling the life processes — more important than that which is without and can be seen and touched?

Let me stand in the market place with the physical culturists and demand, as they demand, fifteen minutes of your time every day for two months. And while I hesitate to promise, as they promise, that at the end of that time you will find yourself a new man, this I can say: at the end of that time you will find yourself in a new world. You will find yourself in a friendly universe, where religion will no longer be a thing to be believed or disbelieved, a thing to be worn or cast off, but where religion will be a part of life as blood is a part of the body.

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You will find yourself in a new world where your God no longer dwells in churches and meeting-places and forms and days, but where He governs every minute of every day of every year. You will find yourself in a new world where immortality will no longer be sought as something far away, to be found at some far distant time, for you will know that you are immortal now, and that the entire universe with all its good and with all its beauty belongs to you now and forever.

Let us take then, as our model, the zeal and steadfastness of the physical culturist, and utilize it in the field of the spirit. To associate these two fields in our mind will prove very helpful for our present purpose, for a prayer should be for the spirit exactly what calisthenics should be for the body — something to keep one in tune, fit, vital, efficient, and constantly ready for the next problem of life.

Now what are the underlying principles in Walter Camp's "daily dozen"?

1. The first principle is that the man shall stretch his muscles, as the caged lion stretches, whenever he can. And, mark you, the muscles that are seen are not so important as the muscles that are unseen — in the language of Walter Camp, "the muscles under the ribs." This should be the first principle of prayer also. One should first of all stretch the mind to take in God, not a one-sided,

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two-sided, or a three-sided view of God, but *all*. Moreover, this stretching should not be for the objective mind — which is where we can see and control it — so much as for the subjective mind, the mind that is out of sight, the mind that is “under the ribs.”

2. The next principle underlying the daily dozen, as well as all other good setting-up exercises, is to breathe deeply and freely. There is nothing that clears the brain and avenues of circulation like breathing with eleven elevenths of the lungs and not with one eleventh — breathing out the old waste poisons and breathing in the new clear life from the atmosphere which surrounds us. This should be the second step in our prayer. We should pray out the bad and pray in the good; dismiss from our mind the trouble which seems imminent and restate emphatically the great promises of God; forgive the sinner and accept forgiveness for the sin.
3. The final phase of these exercises is that they should be kept up steadily, daily, until the habit of deep breathing has been transferred to the nervous system; in other words until it becomes an automatic habit, so that a man between jobs at his office unconsciously stretches his legs under the table and continues all day to breathe deeply and freely from the depths of his lungs. This is

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also the goal of all true prayer — to make the “stretching” of the mind to see God a continuous habit all through the day, to make the deep breathing of the soul — which mentally denies entrance of the bad thought to the brain and expands the good thought — a steady automatic habit of the subconsciousness. This is in accord with St. Paul’s admonition, “Pray without ceasing.”

As stated above, we find this “frame” suggested to us in the Lord’s Prayer and the Twenty-third Psalm. The first phase — the expanding of the mind to take in all of God — is put very briefly in these short half-minute prayers; nevertheless, they were full of connotation for the ones to whom they were given. “The Lord is my shepherd.” “Our Father Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name.” Think of what the words “shepherd” and “Father” imply!

The second phase of prayer, the denial and affirmation, is suggested figuratively in the Psalm by “Thy rod and Thy staff,” and the actual denials are given in very clear-cut form: “I shall not want,” and “I will fear no evil.” Each of these is followed by a series of affirmations. In the Lord’s Prayer, this rhythmic handling of our problems is suggested by “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our

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debtors." This suggests the in-breathing and out-breathing of that prayer which is real communion with God.

The third phase — that is, keeping the prayer-thought as a continuing force throughout the day — is suggested very beautifully in both the examples we are using: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever"; "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, in earth as it is in Heaven." You can see in these statements a realization of the Kingdom *here and now*, about us, in whatever activity we may be engaged.

How then shall we apply these principles to our own prayers? Perhaps some examples may help here. The following may open your eyes a wee bit to the possibilities you yourself might work out in prayer.

Stretching the Mind to Take in All of God

1. Our Heavenly Father, we know that Thy Love is as infinite as the sky is infinite, and Thy Ways of manifesting that Love are as uncountable as the stars of the heavens.

2. Thy Power is greater than man's horizon, and Thy Ways of manifesting that Power are more numerous than the sands of the sea.

3. Thy Wisdom is greater than all hidden treasures, and yet as instantly available for our needs as the very ground beneath our feet.

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4. Thy Joy is brighter than the sun at noonday and Thy Ways of expressing that Joy as countless as the sunbeams that shine upon our path.

5. Thy Peace is closer than the atmosphere that wraps us around, and as inescapable as the very air we breathe.

6. Thy Spirit is as pure as the morning dew, and yet as impervious to all that is unlike itself as the diamond which the dew represents.

7. As Thou keepest the stars in their courses, so shalt Thou guide our steps in perfect harmony, without clash or discord of any kind, if we but keep our trust in Thee. For we know Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee. We know that, if we acknowledge Thee in all our ways, Thou wilt direct our paths. For Thou art the God of Love, Giver of every good and perfect gift, and there is none beside Thee. Thou art omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, in all, through all, and over all, the only God. And Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory, forever. Amen.

The Deep Breathing of the Soul

Before it is possible to breathe, one must be surrounded by atmosphere and atmosphere must *be in one*. Likewise, before it is possible to commune with God, which is a more conventional way of characterizing the deep breathing of the soul, one must know that God surrounds all and God is in all; that the Kingdom of Heaven is *here and now*.

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As breathing is a mere rhythmic interchange of that which is within for that which is without, a casting-out of that which seems to be bad and a receiving, in its stead, of that which seems to be good, so the breathing of the soul is a casting-out of all that would poison, cramp, or belittle life — in short all that is *unlike* God, and a taking-in of all that is pure, perfect, and joyous, and which enriches life — in short, that which is *like* God.

Without question the very finest examples of this rhythmic communion with God are to be found in the Psalms of the Old Testament. And as our New England forefathers used to begin the day by offering a prayer and reading a Psalm, why can we not emulate their example and add to it perhaps just a touch of originality by offering a prayer and improvising a psalm? Indeed, is not the psalm as much a part of worship as a prayer, and is there any more reason why present-day worshipers should be limited to the collection of Psalms preserved for us in the Old Testament than that we should be limited in our prayers to the petitions preserved for us in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the ancient Prophets?

The only new and revolutionizing idea that I am introducing into this discussion of prayer, in fact, is a plea for reinstating the psalm, the little brother of prayer, in our private and public worship. We find it now lost completely to our private worship and

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reduced to a mere form in our public worship. What I wish to see is the bringing of the psalm back in the form and manner that the old Psalmists themselves made use of, as a frank and spontaneous improvisation in the presence of a real need, an imminent calamity, a present sorrow — an actual outpouring of that particular need, trouble, or sorrow upon the outstretched arms of God, and the breathing in of His healing peace, comfort, and love. Such psalms were in themselves prayers — the finest and purest examples of prayer that the world has ever seen, of prayer which is dynamic and healing, of prayer which is a real communion with God.

As our first spiritual exercise of the morning was a stretching of the mind to take in God, so this is a breathing of the soul. And just as in physical breathing we give a quick expulsion of the poisons we wish to eliminate, and then drink in slowly of the new, fresh, life-giving, body-building ozone, holding it, first deep in the lungs, then high, turning it over, so to speak, till we have completely absorbed the life-giving oxygen, so we should give our denials with expulsive force, turning instantly to the constructive, soul-building affirmations. The trouble with most of our praying, as with our breathing, is that it is too negative. We shut ourselves up in a cramped little three-dimensional room with our negations, breathing

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in again and again the troubles that we should let vanish into thin air, instead of turning to new and fresh air — to God.

Marvelous results will come if one will turn in thought to God and Heaven, deny the existence in Heaven of the wrong thing felt or thought, and then realize that in God and Heaven the opposite condition prevails. One must dismiss from his mind completely the thought that the wrong thing felt or seen is permanent, and then follow instantly with the realization that the opposite condition exists here and now.

For money troubles, realize: There is no want in Heaven, and turn in thought to 1, 2, and 7 in Exercise I.

For poor health, realize: There is no sickness in Heaven, and affirm 1, 7, 6, 2, and 5.

For aid in thinking or writing, realize: There is no lack of ideas, and affirm 3 and 7.

For happiness: There is no unhappiness in Heaven, and affirm 1, 4, and 5.

For criticism and misunderstanding: There is no criticism in Heaven, and affirm 1, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

For friends: There is no lack of friends in Heaven, and affirm 1, 4, and 7.

For worry: There is no worry in Heaven, and affirm 4, 5, and 7.

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This is the kind of prayer the Psalmists of old had recourse to in their hours of trouble — the most beautiful example of which is the Shepherd Psalm.

FIRST PHASE

The Lord is my shepherd

SECOND PHASE

I shall not want

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures,
He leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul.
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

(Yea, though I walk through the
valley of the shadow of death)

I will fear no evil

For thou art with me.
Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.
Thou anointest my head with oil.
My cup runneth over.

THIRD PHASE

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
All the days of my life,
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

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Practising the Presence of God

And now, having finished the prayer which in form is something like a Psalm, and having finished the Psalm which is similar to a prayer, let us consider how we can turn the strength derived in the quiet hour into the daily routine of the world of action. For the test of every life is, after all, How do the hours of contemplation harmonize with the hours of action?

The value of Walter Camp's "daily dozen" is that after the fifteen minutes' exercise in the morning you find you are breathing a little deeper *all day*. We should expect the same results from our fifteen minutes of prayer every morning. We should be living in the Kingdom of God a little more vitally all day. How? Let me tell you.

Here is where we can learn a lesson from the movies. No longer does one have to depend upon newspapers for news; one can see the world's news thrown on the screen if one desires. Then why does one have to depend entirely upon one's prayers for contact with God? Cannot one see, if one knows how, the spiritual ideas of God revealed in the cinema pictures that flash by in actual life? The moment one awakes to the fact that one lives in God's world here and now, one begins to see in every event that comes a part of the beautiful symmetrical plan of

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God. Of course, as it flashes by in little separate pictures of a fraction of a second each, not every picture may seem quite perfect. Neither would every stitch of a famous tapestry appear perfect to an eye looking through a microscope.

Once reach this stage and you have found the secret of following Paul's seemingly impossible command, "Pray without ceasing." And now miracles will begin to happen around you.

When a visitor comes, accept him as a messenger from God, and before long a divine message actually will come to you. Accept every disappointment as a signpost to show you to another path which is better, and you will always find the other path is there. Gradually this practising the presence of God, or living in the Kingdom of Heaven, will become a habit. Then you will wonder why for so many years you had not been living there before.

But remember that the best way to get there is to stretch the mind frequently to take in all of God that you can, and practise frequently the deep breathing of the soul. In other words, one can enter the Kingdom only by prayer and meditation. "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

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Thoughts about Prayer

Think of God and Heaven, not of the bad thing you are tossing off into the air.

Pray if possible out of loyalty to God, for the joy of it, not for results.

Do not pray to bring things to pass; pray to see things that are already in the Kingdom.

Do not limit the avenues by which God will answer your prayers. Remember that God's ways of manifesting His love are as uncountable as the stars of the firmament.

Do not feel responsible for your prayers or the answer to them. God alone is the planner and knows best. Love, rejoice, and be thankful for the unfoldment of His plan as you see it.

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JESUS had a power of overcoming trouble, a power of triumphing over the "prince of this world," which was unique in the history of mankind. All will agree to this, even the skeptics and agnostics and those of alien faiths. Among the recorded promises which have come down to us as spoken from His lips was one that He would leave us this power: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." Up to now the world in general and His professed followers in especial have failed, as a whole, to experience that power which He said He was going to leave with us. The question that is left unanswered is, What is that power which Jesus promised He was going to leave us, and where shall we find it?

Is Jesus' power of healing the sick, of bringing peace to the troubled, and harmony out of discord a lost art? Perhaps nothing in song or story is more alluring to the imagination than the so-called "lost arts." What were they, and where are they to be found? Like the riddle of the Sphinx or the oracle of Delphi, they remain shrouded in the veil of mystery which

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all the king's horses and all the king's men of modern scientific and philosophical research are powerless to uncover.

I have come to the conclusion that the greatest of all the lost arts — lost for these twenty centuries — is the great art of living as Jesus practised it: living in such a way that trouble fell like scales from the eyes of all those about Him who were in need.

If this art is lost, where shall we go to find it? For if it is truly the greatest of all the arts it is certainly worth the seeking.

Where does one go when he has lost something? Naturally he goes to the place where it was last seen, and makes that the starting-point for his search.

Let us take for an example what is probably the commonest of lost articles in this athletically ardent nation — the lost golf-ball. Just imagine you are caddying, say, for the greatest of all masters of the game. Stroke after stroke you have seen him drive down the course. Nothing equal to it have you ever seen before. And yet in spite of his marvelous power he does not require you to go on ahead, as a servant in his hire, but he invites you to accompany him at his side — as a companion. "I call you not servants," is the beautiful phrase of the Gospel, "I have called you friends." And oh, how you glory in this friendship and want to prove yourself worthy of this great trust! And then, in an evil hour, when you should

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have been giving your undivided attention to the game, you lose sight of the ball for just one moment and when you try to see it again in its onward flight you are not able to do so, and when you go down the course to seek it, try your very best, you cannot find it.

After wasting precious minutes threshing through the deep grass of inductive speculation on one side of the course, and searching among the high trees of deductive speculation on the other, and after poking in the sand traps of logic in the fairway, you are ready to give up in despair. But if you are a good caddy you still have one recourse left. You can return to the tee and take the same stand you saw the master take when he struck the ball, you can take the same grip upon the club, and you can give exactly the same swing which he gave, while you let your eye follow the course such a stroke would inevitably carry the ball. If you do this, and then follow the track which your thought has recharted for you, you will come right to the lost ball.

That is, figuratively speaking, exactly what I did. Having assured myself, beyond peradventure of a doubt, that Jesus meant us to take Him absolutely at His word when He said, "The works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do," and having convinced myself that within Jesus' own life lay concealed the secret of doing these mighty works, I went back down the pathway

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of history to where Jesus stood before He sent the Christ Idea whirling down the ages. I went to where He stood; examined carefully, as best I was able, the way He took His stand upon this earth, the manner in which He gripped the great issues of life, the way He swung the full force of that matchless strength and harmony of thought in the great game of life; and then I let my eye follow the course which the Idea must have followed in its triumphant flight.

And this is what I found — that Jesus' attitude toward life was one of converting everything He saw and touched into parables. He stood on this earth as a symbol of a greater world. He gripped the issues of life as mere symbols of eternal and heavenly Realities. Petty problems and sorrows and disasters He converted into beautiful symbols of eternal and infinite goodness. Thus nothing was petty, nothing was trivial, nothing was without meaning in Jesus' world, for all things combined to reveal the Kingdom — the Kingdom of Heaven in which He lived and moved and had His being.

"And in . . . parables spake he unto them . . . and without a parable spake he not unto them." Jesus was one above all others who never let His lips say what His mind and heart did not authorize. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." If Jesus talked in parables, He thought in parables; if He thought in parables, He felt in

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parables — the parable point of view of the universe was at the heart of His being. From somewhere about the beginning of His ministry He adopted this parabolic method of looking at the universe and thenceforth He never departed from it. There is something tremendously significant in this fact. It reveals that this method of thinking and talking about life for Jesus was not a halfway method. He did not use it occasionally as a means to an end, but continuously, exclusively, utterly. Perhaps no teacher in all history has so completely given himself to one particular method as Jesus did to this.

To me this was the greatest discovery of my life. It took its rank, in my little universe at least, beside Newton's and Watt's discoveries that apples fall downward and steam pushes outward. And I am firmly convinced that when the religious world as a whole awakes to the full significance and meaning implied in these simple words the result will be just as transforming to the spiritual life of the world as the discovery of gravitation and of steam power has been to the scientific and material life of the world. For just as the discoveries of Watt and of Newton awakened man to the presence of a new world of physical and material forces outside of him, so the discovery of Jesus' way of looking at life will awaken man to the presence of a new world of cosmic and spiritual forces within him.

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Somewhere back in my memory I can recall seeing two books side by side on a library shelf, one entitled *The Parables of Our Lord* and the other entitled *The Miracles of Our Lord*. Either for this reason or for some other reason I early associated these two words as one would associate two companion-pictures that have hung on the wall in his childhood home, such as Sunrise and Sunset, the Parting and the Reunion, or those other heirlooms of our childhood memories — the dictionary and the family Bible that used to grace the centre table of the old living-room. But it was not till I made the discovery that I have just referred to that there came to me a realization of the deeper and closer association of cause and effect which existed between the parables and the miracles of our Lord. For in Jesus' parabolic interpretation of life actually lay the secret of the signs and wonders that signalized His healing and teaching ministry.

If all this is implied in Jesus' parabolic view of life, it behooves us to consider carefully just what manner of thing this mystery is that we call a parable — this thing that is so filled with moral and spiritual dynamite.

"A parable," says the dictionary at my hand, "is an allegorical relation of something real." There we have it: a parable deals first of all with Reality. Second, it translates this Reality in terms of the imagination. *Jesus looked at Reality through the lens*

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of the divine imagination. By means of that fact troubles vanished around Him, obstacles fell away, the lost became found, the sick became well, sinners became redeemed, and rough places became smooth. Moreover, He promised that those who followed Him and used the way He used should have similar dominion over all things on earth, and that greater works than He did should they be able to do also.

The imagination is the power we all possess of seeing harmonies, unities, and beauties in things where the non-imaginative mind sees nothing but discords, separations, ugliness. It is the tool of the mind with which we build up our affirmations — the “staff” of the Shepherd Psalm that comforts us when all other faculties fail us. To look at life imaginatively, then, to see everything about us as a great parable full of deep inner meanings — meanings of love, joy, wholeness, symmetry, and perfection — is to see life truthfully, that is to say, spiritually. It brings us into a condition of continuous prayer, a condition of cosmic consciousness, which is conducive, above all else, to bringing into our life those larger harmonies and unities that to our physical eyes appear to be miracles.

I am aware that I have here dug up from the ash-heap the stone which the theologians and the metaphysicians have for the most part rejected. And in setting it to be the head of the corner I know I shall

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meet with the scoffs and jeers of many who maintain that we should confine our attention to those things that can meet the test of logic and are capable of objective analysis. But the imagination is of all qualities in man the most godlike — that which associates him most closely with God. The first mention we read of man in the Bible is where he is spoken of as an "image." "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." The only place where an image can be conceived is in the imagination. Thus man, the highest creation of God, was a creation of God's imagination. The source and centre of all man's creative power — the power that above all others lifts him above the level of brute creation, and that gives him dominion over all the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the animals that move and creep on the earth — is his power of making images, or the power of the imagination.

The imagination of man is but the window or door which, when thrown open, lets the divine life stream into our lives. When it is thus thrown open man is brought into a condition of consciousness which, for want of a better word, is called inspiration. This heavenly inspiration is what links man to the divine and brings into existence our poets, composers, prophets, mystics, seers, and saints. This is a power that Jesus Christ had and that lifted Him above all other men — a power that He, however, in His

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immeasurable compassion and His infinite humility, wished to bestow upon others and share with them, that greater works than He had done they might do also.

These works — these mighty works, these miracles, if you will — are the direct outcome of Jesus' converting everything that He saw into parables. And a parable, we find, is merely "an allegorical relation of something real." Looked at from this angle, the performing of a miracle is not such an impossible task. It consists merely of looking at Reality through the lens of the imagination, and then letting this parable, or imaginative way of looking at Reality, bring to pass that thing which is spoken of as a miracle.

And what is Reality? Reality, in the eyes of the practical man, is made up of cold, hard facts. And what are the hard, cold facts of life? As we look about us in this world what we see all too frequently are the quarrels, bickerings, unhappiness, unfaithfulness, treachery, covetousness, and materialism everywhere. These are facts of life. But what are facts? Fact comes from the word *factum*, meaning something that we do or make. Are these facts of life identical with the realities of life? Not according to Jesus. To Him Reality does not consist of that which is *made*, but of that which eternally *is*. *Love is* — quarrels are made; *joy is* — unhappiness is made;

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truth is — lies are made; *loyalty is* — betrayals are made; *purity is* — impurity is made; *life is* — sickness is made. So Jesus went through life seeing no quarrels, no unhappiness, no lies, no impurity, no sickness. Where they appeared to be He turned the lens of His divinely inspired imagination upon them; He converted them into parables, and behold, they stood forth revealed as mere shadows or reflections — upside down — of the *reality*. And every time that Jesus converted a fact into a reality the people exclaimed that a miracle had been wrought.

Bear in mind I do not mean to imply that Jesus went about disregarding and overlooking the facts of life. Rather He looked at them so much more steadily, so much more understandingly than the rest of mankind that He *looked right straight through them* into the underlying Reality of which they were the mere counterfeits or reflections. This is what the parabolic point of view consists of. He looked steadily at the dead girl until He could utter with absolute conviction, based upon perfectly clear understanding, this startling parable: "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth." He looked through the palsied sufferer until He could pronounce with conviction another parable, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." For to Jesus a parable meant simply the going back behind the fact to the Reality that the fact represents. It does not mean watering the leaf that is waving

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conspicuously in the sunshine, but watering the roots that no one can see. It does not mean healing a man's skin, but healing his soul. It does not mean dealing with the seen, but with the unseen; not with the carnal, but with the spiritual. Once perform the inner watering, the inner cleansing, and the outer healing will follow as a matter of course. "Whether is easier, to say. . . . Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?"

And here let me pause a moment to clear up a misunderstanding in regard to the imagination that may have cropped up in the thought of many of my readers. There are some who have always thought that the imagination was something which makes believe that which is not. This is fancy — not imagination. Fancy would convert that which is real into pretense and sham; imagination enables one to see through the *appearance* of a thing to what it really *is*. Let me illustrate.

You who are reading this essay are probably sitting in a room with a perfectly flat floor beneath you. A carpenter, a contractor, and an architect brought their combined skill into action to see that the floor was flat — set level with the world. When you look out of the window, you very likely see the streets and gardens about you as also flat. For three thousand years — and perhaps far longer — all mankind believed the world was flat. Why?

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Because they believed the evidence of their eyes. At last there came a man who looked at the world with his imagination, and he saw that it was round.

As you are reading you look out of the window and see the sun setting behind the western hills. You say the sun is going down. For thousands of years all mankind believed that this was so — in short, that the earth was the centre of the universe, and the sun, moon, and stars revolved around it. At length there arose a man who used his imagination sufficiently to see through the appearance of things to the Reality. Because he insisted that the sun stood still and the earth revolved around it — in short, tried to duplicate Joshua's miracle of making the sun stand still — his theory was regarded as a heresy.

Now did Columbus create a miracle by proving that the earth was round when all the kings and all the kings' men "knew" it was flat? And when he proved it was round did he actually make it round? No. It was round all the time — he merely demonstrated to mankind that it was round. Did Copernicus make the sun stand still and the earth revolve around it? No, he created no miracle — he merely demonstrated and proved what was actually so. And, like Jesus, "he marveled because of their unbelief."

And in like manner we may ask, Did Jesus perform a miracle when He said the leper was made

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whole? No, He merely demonstrated it. Did He break a natural law when He said, "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth"? No, He merely demonstrated that Life is the Reality, and Death is merely a shadow or counterfeit of Life.

Then can we create miracles? Yes, we can if we use our imagination and look steadfastly through appearances of things to the Reality behind them. We cannot create miracles by our fancy — by trying to make believe we see things that we do not and cannot see because they do not exist. We can create miracles by faith — by knowing the Reality that exists behind the things that only seem to exist. Faith will indeed move mountains.

And what is the greatest of all Realities, the Reality around which all lesser Realities centre, as it were? The Great Reality, the realization of which was at the core of all Jesus' miracles, was the truth that Man is eternally united with all that is good — in other words, with God and His Kingdom — and eternally separated from all that is bad. Merely to see this Reality and see it clearly enough will make the sick whole, the sorrowful happy, the sinful redeemed, and the lost found.

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I COME now to where all this has led me: If Jesus talked, thought, and felt in parables, He must also have prayed in parables. In other words, when He asked for physical and material blessings He must first have translated these needs into symbols of spiritual values and prayed not for the material facts but for the spiritual Realities which these facts represented. When He prayed for things that are seen He used the language of the unseen. Interesting evidence for believing that this is exactly what Jesus did is furnished us in some old records unearthed in Egypt, which contain a saying ascribed to our Lord: "Ask for great things, and the small things will be given unto you; ask for heavenly things, and the earthly things will be given to you." I can paraphrase this as follows: Seek spiritual values, and earthly things, expressing those values, will be given to you. Or, as Paul would put it: "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." Which is simply to say in another way, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

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Let us apply this method of prayer to two of the commonest things in American life, two things that are quite generally thought to be so worldly and mundane that they fall outside the proper scope and field of prayer. I refer to our sports and our business. Here, if anywhere, we certainly agree that the parable method will be brought to its severest test. How can a man in either of these fields with any sense of propriety go to God in prayer unless he can first pass his desires through the filter of Jesus' parabolic vision and bring them forth purified of all dross and sediment of personal desire — that is to say, of Self? Imagine two rival athletic coaches both praying for victory. Imagine the presidents of two rival business firms praying for a monopoly of the trade in their line. How can either prayer be answered without disregarding, annulling, or violating the hallowed sanctity of the high office of prayer?

Just let us imagine a scene up in Heaven when two such conflicting prayers are received there. God gathers His angels together and says, "Down there are two earnest men asking for victories. Search through our stockrooms and our treasuries and gather together all the victories you can find and send them down to them." Presently the angels come back and report, "We don't find any such thing up here as victories. But we do find an old record

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which relates how an angel, the most beautiful of all those who sang before Thee, once made the request to be first in Heaven. If memory serves us right, Thou didst recommend that he journey down to a lower realm, where such requests might more appropriately be granted." Needless to say that the prayers of the two men, while not reprov'd in so emphatic a manner as was Satan, nevertheless remain unanswered.

Then how may one pray for athletic victories?

First of all by seeking the Reality back of the idea of victory. What is the real object of these contests? To improve the condition — physical, mental, and spiritual — of the men, and tone up the morale or condition of consciousness of the institution they represent. Will victory help this? It certainly will help it if achieved honestly and fairly, but it is in no wise indispensable or even essential. I find — by looking hard at Reality — that the physical condition of the men depends chiefly, not on the muscle fibre, but on the condition of the heart and the circulation of the blood. When I trace the heart back to its symbolical, that is to say, its parabolic meaning, — a meaning associated with it ever since the time of Homer, — I find it is the symbol of love; and likewise the circulation of the blood is the symbol of the circulation of joy through the consciousness. Love and joy for his athletic team

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are what the coach should pray for, not for victory. To summarize this briefly: —

To pray just for victory is bad — actually unmoral, if not immoral.

To pray for the team members to do their best is only a little better, for it leaves each member thinking of his own little “best,” his own little personal responsibility to do his bit. It does not get back to the roots of things — to realities.

To pray for a condition of consciousness — a spiritual quality, not physical — that will enable an athlete to do his best is far better, as it goes down to the roots of things, to the Spirit, to the abiding trust that all are one body in Christ Jesus, and that all power comes from the Father.

This was all summed up by Jesus when He said, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness,” including love and joy, “and all these things,” victory and self-expression, “shall be added unto you.”

I had occasion to apply this truth last spring to a track team I was coaching, with amazing results; but, lest I clutter up this article with signs and wonders, I shall proceed to make clear the principles upon which it is based. For is not this method of prayer eminently logical and scientific? Do not physical scientists present to us situations that are analogous to this in their little outer universe of Time and Space?

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Light, as we all know, comes to us from the sun. And yet scientists tell us that what comes to us as light is not light at all until it strikes the atmosphere that is wrapped about the earth. Then it suddenly breaks up into innumerable sunbeams, and we say that light is here. If anyone traveling through space should meet the sunbeams that are coming from the sun he would not recognize them as sunbeams. To him they would not appear as light at all, but as something else. Now let us imagine the people of this world getting together and deciding to petition the sun to send more light. They would send up a radiogram, "O Sun, send us more light!" The Sun would call together his servants and say, "The good people down below are asking for more light. Search all our stockrooms carefully, and if we have any on hand send it to them at once." So the servants of the Sun would hunt carefully and finally come to him and say, "We have searched far and wide and find no such thing as light. We find vibration, motion, all kinds of beautiful rhythms, but no such thing as light." Yet the people down below, in their blindness and ignorance, would continue to cry, "More light! Give us more light!" and the only answer they could receive is the comment of James, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss."

Indeed, I used this very illustration one day to a college president who had telegraphed me that he

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was coming to talk about the problem of praying for a large endowment campaign that was fraught with immense possibilities, if it succeeded, as well as immense peril, if it failed, to the college whose destinies he guided. We were talking together in a downtown hotel and I used the above illustration as applied to money problems. Then I added:—

“You have a problem of raising many hundreds of thousands of dollars. For many days you have been thinking and living and praying in terms of dollars. Let us stop and see just what these dollars represent. Are they not ideas—ideas of culture, inspiration, beauty, freedom, wisdom, and truth? Have not men obtained such ideas seated on wooden benches in country schoolhouses? Have they not received them when seated on one end of a log with a Mark Hopkins on the other? Have they not received them while gathered on the shore, with their Master seated in a boat? Ideas are really what the world wants, what the students want, what you want; and the thousands of dollars you need for endowment, for buildings, for equipment, are merely the means by which you would have these ideas released in the largest possible way in order to do the greatest possible good to the greatest number. I know that if you could go back to Mark Hopkins on one end of a log and a boy on the other you would gladly do it. But as a matter of fact that would

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require more money — not for the logs, but for a sufficient number of Mark Hopkinses to go around for the boys and the logs — than the actual money you are looking for now.

“At any rate you know and I know that the real thing you want is ideas, and not money. If one should pray to his Heavenly Father for money, what would happen? Suppose the Father should gather the angels about him and say, ‘They seem to want money down below there. Look through our treasuries and our storehouses and find that which they seek and send it to them, for it is my good pleasure to grant every request of my children.’ Presently the angels would return and report, ‘We have searched all the inner treasuries of the Kingdom and we find no such thing as money. We have nothing up here that moth and rust can corrupt or that thieves can steal. All we can find are ideas — beautiful, glorious ideas — of abundance, of ease, of leisure, of service, of truth, of beauty. Shall we send them?’ ‘No,’ the Lord might reply; ‘wait until they ask for them.’

“Again the only answer they who are asking could receive would be the words of James: ‘Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss.’

“But suppose we should ask, seek, and knock for spiritual ideas, and not for material things — what would happen? Simply this: that a veritable

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downpour of ideas — almost a hurricane or blizzard of ideas, if you please — would be shed down upon us, and as soon as these ideas struck the atmosphere of this earth they would — many of them, at least — be converted into good round hard practical dollars, the means by which these ideas of truth, culture, beauty, and happiness could be released in up-to-date colleges in this modern, complex, cosmopolitan age. For one thing we must give God credit. He has sometimes been accused of being a tyrant, and once — by the author of Job — of being a practical joker. But no one at any time has ever accused God of being an ignoramus or a fool. He knows our practical modern needs better than we do ourselves. Not until we set our affection on things above rather than on things of the earth will He grant the requests of His children.

“‘When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.’ ”

And now I am called upon to answer a sensible and sincere question. Is there not a certain amount of hypocrisy and subterfuge in asking for one thing in secret, as it were, and desiring another thing to be given to us openly? In asking for ideas, for instance, and desiring money; in asking for love and joy, and desiring victory?

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There is the very issue, my friend. As long as one asks for one thing and *desires* another his prayers remain unanswered. Not until the athletic coach has persuaded himself in his own heart that the pearl without price that he desires above all other things for his athletes is that they be filled to overflowing with love and joy, entirely regardless of whether victory or defeat shall accompany this love and joy, can he begin to see the real *power* that such love and joy can release in his men. Not until the college president genuinely desires first and foremost that actual ideas shall come to his college, if need be from teachers in homespun talking to boys on broken benches, and ceases to press down on the thought that these ideas must be presented in great million-dollar buildings and paid for by great million-dollar endowments, can he begin to see the real supply contained in *the spiritual idea* made manifest.

But how can I explain why so many petitions asked in the old way — without a parable — have been answered? Always for this reason and for no other: they were first translated — if not consciously in the mind, then unconsciously in the heart of the petitioner — into a parable. The petitioner was looking at the inner spiritual Reality and not at the outward material manifestation of Fact or Thing. In other words, such prayers were answered only when they were offered in simple trust and always

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with that complete surrender to the will of God — uttered or unexpressed — contained in the simple words, “Not my will, but thine, be done.” “Thy will” — whether the seeker knows it or not — is always the spiritual will, just as “my will” is always the material will. Thus this simple statement, when uttered from the heart and not from the lips only, is a veritable Aladdin’s lamp for converting a petition for material things into a petition for spiritual things. In other words, it grants to God the privilege of substituting His will for ours — that is to say, of translating our literal language of the flesh into the parabolic language of the spirit, and thus releasing the spiritual powers and forces so that they may become manifest in whatever way seems necessary to meet the need that our petition contains.

What I am trying to make clear is that we must pray *not so much in another language as in another spirit*. I am convinced that Jesus Himself used both the new spirit and the new language, as His continuous use of the parable in both His thinking and His speaking gives us good reason to infer. Moreover, I am convinced that He has given us good authority for following His example and using the new language as well as the new spirit when He said, “Neither do men put new wine into old wine-skins: else the skins burst, and the wine is spilled,

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and the skins perish: but they put new wine into fresh wine-skins, and both are preserved."

And this assurance I can offer to all those who are willing to give themselves to the Jesus method of prayer: *You will find yourself lifted into a purer realm*, where it will be easier to let the gross material of this earthly world drop from your consciousness, and where you can more easily give your thought, not to the Facts, which are *made*, but to the Realities, which are *not made, but eternal*. You will find yourself lifted into a rarer atmosphere where soon you will not be seeking for treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal, but you will be seeking — in language as well as in thought — for those treasures which are in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your language and your treasure are, there will your heart be also.

Greater than the prayer is the spirit in which it is uttered. Greater than speaking in parables, than thinking in parables, yes, even than praying in parables, is *living* in parables. This is the secret underlying the parable method of speech of Jesus — it is the parable method of living. He allied Himself spiritually — or, if you will, mystically — with the universe, just as a scientist allies himself with it mentally. And as a scientist talks of and about the

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great powers of nature that are unseen, Jesus lived, moved, and had His being knowing Himself to be one with the powers that are unseen, and gave expression to them in His life. He moved amid these spiritual forces with a grace and ease that are the marvel of the ages.

And this art — which He mastered in such a magnificent manner—upon the testimony of Jesus Himself can be ours if we are willing to pay the price: to take up our cross, follow in His footsteps, and look upon life as He looked upon it. And He looked upon life imaginatively — that is to say, spiritually. For the imagination sees things not in the flesh but in the spirit; not in imperfection but in perfection; not in ugliness but in beauty; not in discord but in harmony; not in parts but in wholes. Jesus came to make men spiritual, beautiful, harmonious, and whole. To that end He talked to them in parables, He thought for them in parables, He *prayed* for them in parables; “and without a parable spake He not unto them.”

Now I come to that part of my message which is directed not primarily to the individual, but chiefly to those collective groups of religious bodies in this nation into whose keeping the divine fire of the Holy Spirit has been largely entrusted. And every word I speak is conceived in love, and every thought that goes out from me is born of prayer.

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For I am like one who has been for a long while standing in an art gallery, shut away from the noisy world without. All around me hang the marvelous portraits and landscapes that Jesus has painted for us in His incomparable parables — pictures painted by the spoken word, conceived and colored in the depths of His divinely inspired imagination. Before me hangs the picture of the Samaritan, member of a despised race, bringing help and succor to one who had hated and despised him. Beside it hangs a picture of the righteous ruler, paying exactly the same recompense to all the workers in the vineyard, regardless of whether they represented faiths or creeds that had served him one hour or twelve. I see the prodigal and outcast son returning and being received into the open arms of a forgiving father. I see all about me the marvelous results of a Master Artist who has been painting pictures lovingly, patiently, conceived and inspired by an imagination great and broad enough to look out upon all types of humanity and have compassion upon them.

Having lived in this atmosphere of beauty, of harmony, of glory, I have become, like the Lady of Shalott, oblivious to things outside. But as I turn at last from this great, compassionate, harmonious, imaginative world that is within to the little world of chaos, discord, and logic that is without, when I lean far out the casement window and look around,

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what is it that comes into view to bring a catch in the throat and a dimness before the eyes? Far off down the winding ages I see Catholics who have no imagination burning Protestants; and Protestants who have no imagination burning Dissenters; and Dissenters who have no imagination burning Quakers; and Dissenters and Protestants joining forces to burn Catholics; and Jews burned and massacred by unimaginative Protestants and Catholics alike. And in the foreground we find Fundamentalists who have no imagination fighting Modernists who have no imagination, and one half of a congregation without imagination forming into a clique to quarrel with the other half formed into a clique, until one is tempted to raise his hands and exclaim: "If the blind lead the blind, shall not both fall into the ditch?"

The pity of it is that all these acts of the stunted, dwarfed, and crucified imagination, which bring discord, hate, and misunderstanding into the world, are done in the very name of Him who told the parables of the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan.

How can we account for this failure of the Christian Church to live up to the marvelous tenets of its Founder? Is it not because for centuries we have considered religion as a science — not as an art? Is it not because we have taught it in precepts and not in parables? Is it not because we have looked at it

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in the cold light of reason, and failed to live it in the warm light of imagination? Is it not because we have based our conduct upon the dogmas and creeds and formulæ of Aquinas, of Luther, of Calvin, of Jonathan Edwards, and not upon the simple parables of Jesus?

I am led to cry out: When, O men of the churches, were we told to cast out the imagination from our midst? Is it not time to take the stone which the builders have rejected and make it the head of the corner? Is it not time that we cease making of our religion a science merely, and make of it an art, as Jesus made it an art — an art of harmony, coöperation, sympathy, understanding, and brotherhood?

Strange it is that we have singled out and set apart the field of religion alone of all the branches of human activity for this glorification of science! In all other branches of human activity the art phase is stressed and the scientific basis considered subordinate. In business and in sports a man is not classified according to what he believes about a thing; he is classified according to the efficiency with which he does a thing.

What should we think of a golf-player turning to another and saying, "I am sorry, but you cannot play with me. I don't like your stance or the way you grip your clubs. This course is reserved for Presbyterians — you belong to the Baptists. You

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get over on your own course!" The actual test in golf is how far and how true a man can drive the ball. *And the only test in the art of religion, as contrasted with the science of religion, is how far a man can give his allegiance to the spiritual conception of the universe, and by his own life and conduct try to make the will of God prevail.*

Science talks *of* and *about* God, of and about Love, of and about Joy, of and about Peace, Truth, Wisdom, Purity, Harmony. Art *expresses* God, Love, Joy, Peace, Truth, Harmony, and Wisdom. Science investigates and correlates, unifies and explains life's great affirmations; Art grows into, becomes one with, and expresses life's great affirmations. A man may learn the laws of a science in a day; he can grow in an art for all eternity.

There may be many disagreements over the laws or methods underlying an art, but there is only one test of the art itself — does it get results? In the realm of science there may be as many hypotheses as there are scientists; in the realm of art there can be but one test: *does it manifest itself in life?* Does the orator make you weep, make you laugh, make you act? Then don't ask what theory of elocution he used. Did the boat's crew win the race? Then don't ask what theory of stroke they used. Did the picture smite you with beauty? Then don't ask what was the school of painting it represents. Did the good

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man throw open the windows for you and let God's blessed Spirit enter and fill your home? Did he make you realize you are a spiritual being living in a spiritual universe? Then don't ask what is his creed or to what church he belongs. Don't ask what mansion he lives in, for in our Father's house are many mansions. Suffice it to know that he belongs to the Father's house; that he lives in the consciousness of God's all-pervading Presence; that in God he lives and moves and has his being.

Brother Lawrence, that sweet-souled Catholic, was one who practised the presence of God as it was rarely given to man to practise it. Phillips Brooks also, in another age and another environment, lived the God-conscious life. The science, the "ology," the technique of their methods differed, and yet the results were the same. By their fruits they were brothers. Had they lived in the same age, in the same city, they would undoubtedly have found each other out — they would have become comrades in heart and partners in bringing the Kingdom of Heaven into the community where Providence had brought them together. Would that we had more like them to-day!

Could the Allies ever have won the war if Frenchmen had refused to fight in the same sector with Englishmen, and Belgians had refused to fight side by side with Americans? It was not until all united

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in harmony, in spite of the fact that each naturally represented a different theory or creed of military training and discipline, that the successful outcome of the World War was possible. And I prophesy that not until Catholics, Christian Scientists, Methodists and Unitarians, Fundamentalists and Modernists, can forget the differences underlying the science of their creeds and unite in the common cause of *living their religion* — that is to say, practising the art of living in allegiance to the spiritual conception of the universe — may we hope to see the power of Mammon broken and the victory achieved that will bring peace on earth and good will to men.

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PRAYER is governed by the same laws that govern the growth of the flower in the crannied wall; it is controlled by the same laws that control the flow of a stream, the art of a game, the life of a bee. For as God is in all things, so are His laws prevailing in all things; and as God is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, so are His mighty laws the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. As prayer is life raised to its highest degree, so the laws of prayer are the laws of life raised to their highest expression. A man who learns and practises the laws of prayer correctly should be able to play golf better, do business better, work better, love better, serve better. For to learn how to pray is to learn how to live.

And to make this lesson very intimate, simple, practical, let us learn how to pray as we would learn how to play golf—naturally, joyously, as a part of the day's happiest experience. Let us go away from our lesson in prayer refreshed and unself-conscious, as we would go home from a golf game, an auto trip, or a fishing-excursion. I would that we might feel such complete freedom from all restraint that we should find ourselves talking about it easily,

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spontaneously — yes, enthusiastically, over our tea-cups, at the club, on street corners, in hotel lobbies, just as we would talk of any other interesting and natural experience of life. For it is the same, or should be the same, as all our other vital experiences, with this one difference, that there will be a quality of reverence surrounding it, greater perhaps than in the average experience, but a reverence that is such a part and parcel of our genuine selves that it can find its most appropriate and natural expression in simple, glowing enthusiasm and eagerness to serve rather than in timid reticence, silent withdrawal, and stern asceticism.

For the art of prayer, as we are going to learn it, derives its inspiration from the baptism of Jesus — not from the baptism of John. For John, you remember, “came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber.”

For prayer, as Jesus saw it, was not a withdrawal from life and a fasting from the good things that life affords. It was a glorious taking-in of the completeness, the fullness of life; an actual hunger, if you will, for those infinite riches of the Spirit that, when properly understood, often result in surrounding one with good things on this earth as well — especially those good things which Macbeth, after he had lost the

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power to pray, felt he had forfeited: "honor, love, obedience, troops of friends." And where on this earth can be found riches more precious than these?

So I invite you, my friend, to join with me in a little game of golf. Leave the book unopened, the letter unanswered, the business unattended to. Those who think that the book, the letter, and the business must have the first attention should be reminded that all these things will be made much easier after they have come for a while further into God's out-of-doors, where the day is full of sunshine and the night is full of stars.

And what shall you bring with you to this game? Merely the willingness to give your attention, your thought. In other words, be sure to bring your brain bag with its neat assortment of clubs, those marvelously constructed powers and capacities constructed by the great Manufacturer, the Creator of all things. Bring besides a purpose, round and smooth and hard, which you would like to drive down the course of life toward ultimate success. A bag of clubs and a ball, a set of capacities and a wish — these are all that the game requires.

And now we have arrived at the starting-point. The first thing to do is to tee-up your ball, ready for the first stroke. A great box of sand tempts you to overdo this job, and if left alone your first mistake will be to half-bury your ball in the sand. Lest you

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do this, let me tell you what this sand represents: it represents trouble. Not until you have driven your ball into a sand bunker some day and wasted a dozen strokes trying to get it out will you realize the full significance of the truth I am telling you. But in the meantime take my word for it and use this sand carefully, sparingly, that is to say, scientifically. Make it serve you, not crush you. Just as a flag cannot grow without mire nor a reed without water, neither can one start a game of golf without sand nor a life of prayer without trouble. After a man gets out on the fairway he does not always have to use trouble to raise and sharpen his stroke; but, strange as it may seem, I have never seen a man make an efficient start in a life of prayer without having, first of all, to tee-up his purpose upon a little mound of trouble. Trouble is actually one of the greatest blessings that can come to a man who wishes to learn the game aright, provided he knows how to use it and not let it use him.

With the sand you make, as I said before, a tee. When properly made we call this tee a "lie." Use your imagination, your parable method of looking at life, — as you have learned in an earlier chapter, — and convert your trouble, or tee, into a lie. And remember that the more sand you find in the box, the better the lie you will be able to make, which means the better the start you will be able to make in your

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game. Now, having picked your best driver, you are ready to learn the big rules of the game.

The first rule you must heed is: "Don't top the ball." The instinct that leads you to do this is the grandfather of all the troubles of golf-playing. It is the instinct to draw the club up to yourself. It is the intrusion of the little self-thought into a great and ancient game that began long before you were born and will continue long after you are gone.

You may have smiled years ago when you read in Rostand's *Chantecler* how the pompous little cock thought that the sun's rising each morning awaited his summons. You may now smile again when you top the ball, for it manifests the same exaggerated illusion of self intruding into your golf stroke.

This intrusion in prayer expresses itself in the ever recurring question: "What does this mean to me? What glory, what gain shall I get out of it?" One of the reasons for Jesus' extraordinary power is traceable directly to the complete overthrowing of this insidious temptation in the Wilderness at the very beginning of His public ministry. Later He gave powerful and uncompromising utterance to the law which was revealed to Him in that hour, when He said: —

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

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The classic example of the man who hesitated to take the self-thought out of his dealings with God was Jonah, and to this day, when a message is laid upon us to deliver to our fellow men, we have our choice — to become a Jonah or a Moses, that is to say, to make ourselves a barrier or a channel. It was not until Jonah was willing to sacrifice self, even to the extent of being cast into the raging sea of annihilation, that he ceased to be a "Jonah," in the figurative sense, and became a saviour of men.

In contrast, note what a selfless channel Simon Peter was from the first moment that Jesus called him to become one of the fishers of men. Nowhere is this more forcefully brought out than in that Gospel which many commentators believe that Peter dictated to Mark during a sojourn in Rome. Only twice in the four Gospels is there a record of Jesus' pronouncing eulogies upon mortal men — one was upon John the Baptist, the other was upon Peter. The first was recorded in detail by the amanuensis of Peter, but the second, that which more than anything else must have made Peter's heart swell with joy, he withheld from Mark's gospel. On the other hand, the rebuke which Jesus gave Peter when he would have dissuaded Jesus from submitting to His appointed suffering, and the warning he received by the first crowing of the cock, were given in their entirety by Mark.

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This modesty, which prompted the elimination of all personal allusions that would tend to glorify the writer, was characteristic of all the other inspired Gospel writers. An example of this is Matthew's conspicuous failure to mention the banquet he gave to Jesus immediately after he had been called, although the other Gospel writers deemed it important enough to be given a prominent place in their immortal records.

That their own Master was the purest example of this beautiful freedom from all personal vanity may be gathered from the following utterances: "I can of mine own self do nothing." "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do." And again, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God." The Gospel records are full of such utterances.

This modesty or subordination of the little I or self to the great I AM, or God, is characteristic of all the writers of that great book, the Bible. Perhaps it is partly due to the anonymity of the writers that one has said, "The Bible comes out of profounder depths of human experience than any other book."

The time may be past when anonymity shall be a virtue in poets, historians, and dramatists; but the time will never be past when the impersonal, selfless prayer will not hold power over the egotistical, self-seeking prayer. Let us take care lest we, in the very

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midst of the most unselfish work for the most unselfish causes, may not find ourselves one day praying the prayer of the Pharisee in the temple, forgetting that the simple, selfless prayer of the publican is more acceptable at the throne of Heaven. Rather than that such a thing should happen, let it be said of us as it was of Jesus by the railers before the Cross: "He saved others; himself he cannot save."

The next two rules are so allied to the first, as well as to each other, that they must be introduced with one breath. They are: "Don't pull the stroke, and don't slice the ball." If you pull the stroke the ball will curve in one direction and become lost in the high trees of Anger at one side of the course. If you slice the ball it will curve in the other direction and be lost in the high grass of Worry at the other side of the course. Both these "don'ts" are so closely related that we might say they are the lineal children of the inhibition that rises from the thought of self.

If this is true of golf, how much more true it is of prayer. Anger and worry, those twin offspring of the thought of self, have blocked more prayers, ruined more churches, retarded more the spiritual development of the race than all the other vices put together. Anger is a sign that we do not love God, for "inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Worry is

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the sign that we do not trust God, or that we ascribe more power to something else than we do to God. Anything which affects the flow of love and trust toward God blocks the perfect flow of prayer. Jesus was particularly outspoken in his denunciation of both these sins.

A man once said to me, "I wish that when Jesus gave the Lord's Prayer to his disciples, he had added a footnote, telling them how to give it." As a matter of fact, that is exactly what Jesus did. This is his footnote: —

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Is it not a striking fact that the only comment He made on this prayer was to the effect that it would work perfectly, provided the one who gave it had first rid himself completely of every unforgiving thought toward his fellow men, and that it would not function at all unless he did so purify himself.

In another place, when speaking of anger, He restated the same thought in different words: —

Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift.

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Thus we see that when Jesus discussed prayer in this immortal sermon He ended it with the emphatic injunction that anger must be absent from it; and when He discussed anger he stated emphatically that it must never be taken with the gift of prayer to the altar. From whichever angle he approached these two subjects he never neglected to make it plain that anger and effective prayer, like water and oil, could never mix.

If anger, that is to say, "hating God," blocks the perfect prayer, then worry, or "doubting God," is almost equally inimical to the perfect effect of prayer. Jesus' clarion call for perfect trust, which stands as the climax to the great Sermon on the Mount, is too fixed in our memory to require repetition here. Suffice it to say that the opening sentence should be emblazoned in every schoolroom and in every church until all who doubt God learn to trust Him: — "Be not anxious."

That John, the beloved disciple, considered fear one of the major sins is evidenced from the fact that he placed it first when enumerating the sins that separate man from God: —

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

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John was especially the disciple of love, and he held that love and fear could not abide together. He says, "Perfect love casteth out fear." He might have added, "Absolute fear casteth out love." Without love we cannot have perfect prayer. James also adds his word concerning the impossibility of combining fear and prayer on the altar of God: —

But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

If we begin a prayer with fear in our hearts and end with fear totally gone, completely annihilated, we may rest assured that our prayer is answered — if not in our way, at least in God's way. If when we end our prayer our fear remains, we may know then that our prayer is not yet answered, and that more and purer prayer is needed. Often we are confronted with situations from which there appears to be no extrication, and from which it seems impossible that fear should be banished. But remember that Jesus has many times repeated His miracle of stilling the tempest, and can do it within the night of our heart just as easily as He did it in the night of Galilee.

How can we have this perfect trust? By knowing that every need has its own fulfillment, just as every seed has its own fruition; by using Jesus' parable method, and looking through the need to the reality