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ART. I.—*The Inspired Theory of Prayer.*

As one of the evidences that Christianity, even when most purely conceived as a supernatural power, is preëminently rational, we may reckon the freedom of Christ and the apostles, especially the apostle Paul, in speaking of the manner of its operation. It thus appears that our rational exercises are usefully employed, not only under the influence of saving grace, but upon the work of grace itself. Accordingly, the church has presumed that a just speculative view of the doctrine of justification by faith will promote the saving exercise of faith; and that a definite and rational doctrine drawn out from what the Scriptures teach concerning the atonement of Christ, will be used by the Holy Spirit to help us in receiving and applying the atonement itself. The benefit of the sacraments is undoubtedly increased by a just and reasonable view of the manner of their operation. From the apostle's great pains to give, in 1 Cor. xv., the theory of the resurrection, we might presume that a well-formed philosophical doctrine on that subject, adjusted to the apostle's outline, would help the practical influence of the scriptural view on the mind and heart of the church. In like manner, we may hope that a rational expansion of the suggestions of the Scriptures, and particularly

of St. Paul in Romans viii. 26, 27, on the theory of prayer, will help to sustain the interest of the people of God in their devotions, and to make their prayer more fervent and effectual. Respecting prayer there is a doctrine to be understood, as well as a duty to be done.

The outline of the apostle on this subject is very brief, but very suggestive. “The Spirit helpeth our infirmities [in prayer], for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God.” The view will be unfolded in a natural way by explaining the infirmity of Christians in prayer; the office of the Spirit as a help to this infirmity; the manner in which the help is given; and the relation of this work of the Spirit, both to the conscious desires of the suppliant, and the course of Providence in the world.

In the first place, this divine provision of help for the people of God presupposes their own infirmity. It assumes that men without this aid are not able to maintain their vital communion with God, particularly in the form of direct supplication. This infirmity is not alone the general infirmity of man considered as a sinner by nature, and without supernatural grace. It is not alone the natural and total indisposition and inability for any mental exercise, which can receive the approval and blessing of God. It is the remaining and necessary infirmity of the spiritual man in his earthly state, without minute and infallible foresight of the course of providence, which proceeds without variableness or shadow of turning. He knoweth not what he should pray for as he ought, in order that his prayer may coincide with the preëstablished course of providence, which will reveal the will of God.

The apostacy of man from God, by the first transgression, broke up the living communion between them, and introduced an enmity which maintains the separation, and hinders the proposed reconciliation. The opposition of the natural man to all good is overcome by degrees in this life, and only imperfectly to the last. As grace advances, the man becomes less averse to communion with God, and more reconciled to a habit

of prayer; his prayers improve in their spiritual character, and have a growing power in promoting the kingdom of Christ. In this whole course of improvement, from the first, the man is the subject of this gracious operation by which the Spirit helps the infirmity of the children of God in prayer.

Now in order that the believer might be fully qualified, in and of himself, to maintain the perfect kind of prayer which shall be a uniform condition of progress in the work of God, he would need to know perfectly the nature and measure of his own sin, and all the best means of removing it by the appointed degrees, in all the circumstances of his life. He must also know the exact nature and all the varying phases of all the evil in the world; and the best way of overcoming it, by a course of moral discipline with nations and with individuals, that will reveal the manifold wisdom of God. In other words, he must have an exact and ever-present knowledge of the plan of God in detail, and of the stages of its execution; and thus be able to anticipate in prayer each step in the course of providence by which that part of the redeeming work is to be accomplished. This knowledge man does not possess by nature, nor does the Christian acquire it by the Spirit which enlightens and renews him. By this infirmity of knowledge the Christian knows not what he should pray for as he ought.

As this is called an infirmity by the apostle, and treated as a defect to be supplied by a special provision, it must disqualify for perfect prayer. It does not totally disqualify for useful exercises of devotion, or for asking good from the Lord agreeably, in some respects, to his will, and therefore with benefit to ourselves; for if it did, there could be no acceptable prayer in the world. But it disables us for asking those things which it would be fit and proper, suitable to the established order of things, that we should pray for. We are unable to ask so as to coincide, in all respects, with his plan of operation. Yet in order to the perfect effect of prayer, we certainly must ask only for those things which are agreeable to the eternal foreordination of God. No other things than those can ever occur; and prayer that is offered for any other things cannot be specifically answered. On this account it is that the help of the Spirit is needed, and on this account it is given. It is

necessary that prayer, which is certainly appointed, and always to be reckoned as one of the guiding conditions of the works of God, should harmonize with the chain of causes which mark the inflexible line of the divine operation in the world.

On account of this infirmity, there cannot be, without the aid of the Spirit, any efficacious prayer among men. Leaving out of view the other defects, even of Christian people, which vitiate all their intercourse with God, and their prayers perhaps most of all, it would be enough to destroy all good effect of prayer, if they were without this spiritual intercession, and should not know what to pray for as they ought. Even an occasional blind coincidence with the coming event, would argue no influence of the prayer in producing the event. And besides this, the language of the apostle implies, that in order to the virtue of any prayer, there must be, in some mind connected with the prayer, an intelligent apprehension of the things which God has provided to bestow; and this apprehension the human suppliant does not possess. The apostle presupposes that the law of the spiritual kingdom requires this knowledge as the condition of all effectual prayer. He thus not only suggests, in the strongest possible way, the utter inability of the natural man to offer any effectual prayer to God; but also teaches that Christians themselves have not the necessary knowledge. The man is unable to specify the particular thing which it may be the will of God to bestow; and must therefore feel that when he asks a particular favour he cannot know, by the result, whether his prayer is effectual or not.

This infirmity is revealed and recognised in many ways. There are those who have stronger presentiments respecting the uniformity of the divine operations in nature, than they have respecting the office and power of prayer in the kingdom of grace; and among these there is great difficulty in maintaining either a theoretical belief or a practical trust in the utility of prayer. In such minds the natural speech of reason is, He is of one mind, who can turn him? and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him? Such thoughts are, in themselves, impious; but they are a confession that ignorance of the divine will concerning future events would be fatal to all prayer among men, were it not for the intercession of the

Spirit. All Christians, moreover, even those who most firmly believe in the duty and the value of prayer, are more or less troubled with speculative difficulties about relying on answers to specific petitions; and there is among all such a restless desire to discover, if possible, the law by which this reliance may be sustained and regulated. Hence some insist that, according to the Saviour's promise, Christians receive every thing they pray for, when they *believe* that they will receive it. And this being assumed, it follows, and Christians are sometimes exhorted accordingly, that the reason for so much ineffectual prayer is the want of this particular belief that the precise thing asked for will be given. Such exhortation, if followed, leads to the unprofitable endeavour to obtain an assured faith respecting the particular things suggested as the special matters for prayer. In general, however, the exhortation has no other effect than to make some unhappy because they have not this faith, and others perhaps fancy that they have it. It is all an attempt, however, to avoid the acknowledged difficulty arising from the fact that we know not what we should pray for as we ought, and is one of the ways in which this want of knowledge is vaguely recognised. The infirmity is acknowledged, also, in the universal admission, not only that most of the special petitions of Christians are not granted in form, but that most of the utility of prayer is really found in benefits not answering to the petitions, yet bestowed in consequence of them; as in the case of the apostle Paul, whose prayer for the removal of his affliction obtained not the removal of the evil, but the grace sufficient to bear it. And it amounts to an impressive confession of this infirmity, that all Christians, not so much from any remembrance of the revealed theory of prayer, as from a present sense of their weakness in such intercourse with God, confess their dependence on the present and special help of the Spirit in teaching them how to pray. In these and other ways, it appears that the infirmity of Christians in prayer, in the sense and extent we have ascribed to it above, is everywhere and always recognised in the consciousness of the church.

This is a radical and fatal defect. It has its foundation in the sinful nature of man. To see this in strong light, consider

how an analogous infirmity would impair the other forms of earthly life. The beasts of the field and the fowls of the air have unerring discernment in selecting what their Maker has provided for their nourishment and comfort. Each species or individual judges for itself of the quality and quantity of its supply, amidst the immense variety and abundance to which it has access. Nature is its guide. The ox does not crop the wormwood and the ivy, nor too much of the nutritious grass. The brutes have all their supports, and their means of development and happiness, among the objects of sense; and they need no supernatural help for any infirmity of their instinct, to ensure their safety or their progress towards their chief end. But should their instinct fail them, and they not know what they should seek for as they ought, how quickly must they perish! Man is a spiritual being. With all that is animal and earthly in his present constitution, he is still in his essence a spirit. He lives in the spiritual sphere, and is formed and required to receive all his supplies, for body and soul, through living intercourse with his Maker, and with the spiritual world. His intercourse with earthly things, even as means of bodily support and comfort, is to be considered by him as intercourse with God. It is to be entirely conducted with a devout recognition of the divine presence. It must be mixed with faith and prayer. The changes which he produces in earthly things, he must ascribe to God in him and in them. His obedience to the laws of nature in the world, he must reckon as obedience to God. He is taught by special revelation to recognise the invisible spirits of heaven as agents to minister to his security and happiness, and invisible wicked spirits as dangerous to his life and peace. All his earthly life has this heavenly connection, is to be promoted in all its interests by spiritual means, and directed to spiritual ends. He thus lives as to body and soul in the spiritual sphere. He is not to commit himself for guidance to the animal instinct alone, like the brute, but also to the rational and moral instinct of his spiritual nature. Had man followed the rational and moral guide within him, in his primitive state, he would have obeyed the true law of his life, and gained its chief ends, the glory and the blessedness of God. We can imagine, by the help of analogy, somewhat of

the manner of his life in such a course of perfect obedience. His living functions would all have proceeded in the spontaneous way, without resistance from any tendencies introduced by sin. He would have needed neither impulse nor guidance from without. His action would have been prompted and directed by the law of his inward life, under the regular and regulating course of divine providence. The law would have been written in his heart. He would have been a law unto himself. His natural desires would have uniformly agreed with the will of God, as given in the course of providence; and those desires would have been his continual asking for things agreeable to that will; and his unvarying coöperation with God in thought, in feeling, and action, in procuring the gratification of his desires, would have been the form of his prayer. It might take place without any other knowledge except that acquired by experience of the ways of God. He might be unerringly directed by his natural instinct as a spiritual being, in all matters pertaining as well to his spiritual sphere, as to the earthly department of his existence. His mode of life in his sphere would thus be analogous to that of other creatures in theirs. He would no more desire what would not promote his highest good, than the ox would hunger for the poisonous herb. His appetite for his appointed spiritual nourishment, and for the wholesome and nutritious food and drink provided for the use of his body, would be as healthful and as trustworthy as the instincts of the lower orders of life in their spheres amidst the objects of sense. That would have been his perfect life. In receiving from the fulness in store for him in God, how freely and with what discerning instinct would his pure and healthful desires have taken precisely what had been designated, by the eternal purpose, for their satisfaction! How perfectly would they have seemed to know what they should seek for as they ought!

But how mournful does the sin of man appear, when we consider how it has quenched the inward light which would have revealed to him the will of God in every particular respecting himself, and enabled him, at every point, to see the way to his highest good. This was a great defection, perhaps the chief one, in the apostacy of man. He lost communion with God. The light of his soul went out in darkness. This beaming

feature of the divine image in him was utterly effaced. He could no more be a law unto himself. He could no longer be trusted to guide his own way through life, amidst the order which God had established in the world. His very heart is deceived and deceitful in seeking his welfare; and in his blind endeavour to find the way of life, he must ask and receive not, because he asks amiss. The mass of Christian people, even of the better standing, may not be accustomed to dwell in humiliating reflection on this general infirmity, as they do on hatred, envy, covetousness, and similar evils of the grosser kind. But viewed thus as a fatal loss of standing in communion with God, as a state of utter blindness and helplessness in choosing for ourselves among things supposed to be possible in the course of providence with us, this failing must be regarded as our chief infirmity, if not the sum and substance of all our sin. What could be worse for the brute than a vitiated instinct, with which he could not distinguish his proper food from poison? One thing only could be worse; and that would be the *perverted* instinct which rejects the wholesome food and chooses the poison. And this is the failing of fallen man. He chooses evil rather than good.

When the Spirit of grace takes possession of this fallen creature, the infirmity we speak of has begun to be supplied. The intercession of the Spirit is then begun. But the Christian himself, even as a Christian, with all the enlightening and sanctifying influence which constitutes him a child of God, has not the infirmity removed. He still knows not what he should pray for as he ought. He is so ignorant of his own spiritual state, and knows so little of the legitimate effects of providential events upon his experience and character, that the more minutely he should attempt to specify the things he would ask for himself, the more would he fail to ask for things agreeable to the will of God. He knows so little of the real condition of his fellow-men around him, and so much less of all others in the world whom he must pray for, that his particular petitions for all men must be extremely random and inappropriate. Scarcely can such prayer fall short of presumption. It must be in some sense, and according to its persistency, a grief and a resistance to the Spirit. It is not, therefore, to the natural

man alone that this infirmity in prayer belongs; but the spiritual man, in his earthly condition, must carry it with him to the end of his earthly life. So the apostle's words imply. He speaks of it not as belonging to any one stage of our earthly course, but as a characteristic of all Christians in this world. "We know not what we should pray for as we ought," and the Spirit helpeth our infirmities. It is very important to our understanding of the apostle's view of this whole subject, that we clearly conceive this infirmity as not merely a defect of our carnal nature, but as belonging to the earthly childhood of our spiritual man. It is also one which our growth in grace does not overcome; and which, like the mortality of the regenerate body, will be removed only by the sudden and perfect development of our last change.

We should add, that it justly appears to the Christian as partaking of the nature of sin. It belongs to that state of our moral being from which we hope to be delivered. The spiritual mind feels it as a blemish, acknowledges it as such, and endures it not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. The child of God would consider it a great evil to have such an infirmity for ever, and never to know what is for his true health and happiness. He is taught by the Holy Ghost, as by a spiritual instinct, to hope for that higher kind of communion in heaven, in which his resources in God will be sought and applied with a perfect and delightful intelligence, and with the happiest results to his eternal well-being.

In the second place, we notice the office of the Spirit as a help to this infirmity. While the apostle recognises the universal and grievous infirmity of the people of God, he also assumes, with equal decision, that there must be an inward and strict conformity of the new creature to the whole redeeming operation of God—a conformity that is manifest to God, and accepted as prayer for things agreeable to his will. The infirmity must be provided for. The deficiency must be supplied. The creature cannot adapt his own prayer to the divine scheme. Yet there must be adapted prayer. The Spirit, therefore, must produce it. He is not to give the man the knowledge of the things, for that would be virtually the gift of prophecy. In thus speaking of prayer as produced in the

spiritual mind without knowledge of the thing prayed for, the apostle uses the words prayer and intercession in a very broad sense, to denote the whole mental posture of expectation and desire,—the whole presentiment of the new creature, conscious and unconscious, in agreement with the work of God in the world. This presentiment in reference to particular facts of the future, is what the creature cannot originate in himself; and if he could, and thus have conscious knowledge of coming events, he would obtain what the Father hath chosen to keep in his own power. But the prayer must exist; and the Spirit, who does the things, and who has them eternally in his mind, with a knowledge perfectly vivid and accurate, takes, in the new creature, that previsive and expectant posture which the apostle describes by his terms “maketh intercession.” This constitutes the mysterious and effectual substitute for our knowing what we should pray for.

There are two Greek words in the New Testament which are translated by the word *help*. One has the leading sense of coöperation, the other that of doing for another a deed in which he can bear no part, particularly in relieving distress. The distinction may not hold, in full, in every case, but is still very clearly noticeable in the current use of the words. Thus, for instance, (Luke x. 40,) Martha uses the former, in her request to the Saviour, “Bid my sister that she help me;” and (Phil. iv. 3,) where Paul entreats a friend to “help those women who laboured with him;” while, (Matt. xv. 25,) the woman of Canaan, worshipping him, and saying, “Lord, help me,” uses the latter. The former word is the one by which the apostle signifies the help of the Spirit in prayer. It is here, and in the passage in Luke, compounded with two prepositions; elsewhere with one. It expresses coöperation; and suggests that those only have this help in prayer, who are praying themselves. This is a practical consideration of the utmost importance, to prevent the apostle’s idea of the Spirit’s intercession from being taken as occasion for neglecting the formal exercise of prayer. It is, then, to be noted as one part of the intercessory office of the Holy Spirit, that he is a helper. He prays “together with” the saints. It is not a separate exercise that he performs within them, disconnected

from any exercise or corresponding endeavour of their own. But first moving them to call on the Lord, and thus placing their own powers in suitable coincidence with his work, he takes *their* petitions as *his* occasions ; and, though his own personal state of holy aim and tendency in them must be conceived as perpetual and always the same, agreeably with his divine nature, yet his occasions for available activity in their behalf, are their own devotional frames. He is thus our helper in prayer, by blending his petitions with ours. This is not the place to explain in full the relation of his prayer to our own. But it belongs here to state, that the office of the Spirit, as signified by the apostle's word, is that of a true and proper fellow-helper; taking hold with us upon the throne of grace, and giving to the breathings of our pious and earnest, but blind desire, the efficacious quality of his intelligent and pure intercession.

Another aspect of the office in which the Spirit helpeth our infirmity in prayer, appears in his being our spirit of prayer. It is one of the common petitions of Christians that the Lord would give the spirit of prayer. They mostly mean by this the disposition to pray, and the fervent mind in prayer. But the Scripture doctrine concerning prayer would teach them to add this idea of the apostle, which would soon become the chief one in their thoughts; namely, that the Spirit in the saints prays for them in his own way; and that for us to have the spirit of prayer, in Paul's sense, is to have our minds so controlled by the Holy Spirit, and their motions so swallowed up in his, that we shall pray only in his thoughts and words, and with his pure affection. But this cannot be done by voluntary effort in that direction. It must come by growth in grace. And to do this perfectly is what no Christian attains in this life. Such a complete absorption by the Holy Spirit is reserved for the heavenly state. But here it is permitted and required in the earthly measure. We are exhorted to pray *in* the Spirit. Pray in the Holy Ghost. This office of the Holy Ghost, as the spirit of prayer in the church, is always to be recognised, when we pray. His function as the spirit of prayer is not all fulfilled by giving us a devotional frame, and awaking the fervent desire; nor by teaching us to pray, and giving specific direction to our

petitions. The most availing, may we not say the *only* avail-
ing part of his help for us, is his own prayer, which, of course,
is the only part of the complex exercise that is perfectly ac-
cording to the will of God.

The office of the Spirit in helping the prayers of the saints, is that of an intercessor. He maketh intercession for them. The scriptural idea of an intercessor, in its most general import, is that of an advocate; one who appears for others to plead their cause, or render them encouragement and aid by using his influence in their favour. There are two Greek words used in the New Testament, in speaking of the Saviour's manner of using his influence in the invisible world for his people yet on earth. Both these words have the sense of advocacy; and both are applied to the work of the Holy Ghost in that sense. Thus one is used of Christ, Heb. vii. 25, and is translated, "to make intercession." The idea is explained, Heb. ix. 24, by the words, "to appear in the presence of God for us." This is the word applied, in the passage before us, to the Holy Ghost, who is spoken of as helping the prayers of the saints. The other word is used in 1 John ii. 1, where we are said to have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous. The same apostle in his gospel, (John xiv. 16,) reports Christ as applying the term to the Holy Spirit, calling him the Comforter (or Advocate) whom the Father would send to the disciples after their Lord's departure. The personal office of the Holy Spirit as an intercessor, however distinguished from that of Christ, is plainly denoted in Scripture by the same terms, and must be regarded as one and the same efficient operation. We have here, therefore, one of the many cases in which the same things done by one of the three persons of the Godhead are ascribed to another. The helping of the prayers of the saints is indeed an inward work, done in the soul; and the Holy Ghost is the divine person most commonly thought and spoken of as dwelling in us for the purpose of applying the redemption purchased by Christ. But the three persons are inseparable, and alike omnipresent; and according to Christ's own declaration, all dwell personally in the saints. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of the Father; and both work through him. The Holy Spirit is the efficient per-

son of the Godhead. Christ is the medium or mediator. The invisible and original source or ground of both, is the Father, whom no man hath seen nor can see. All are everywhere present together; each existing and acting according to his own personal distinctions and prerogatives. Thus, in the intercession for the saints, the Father determines and directs, the Son mediates, the Spirit performs. This glorious and merciful work of intercession is effected by the Holy Spirit, through the mediation of Christ; and both execute their office in obedience to the will of the Father. The church, therefore, sees the help of God for her infirmities in prayer, to be the intercession of the Spirit, because the Spirit effects it; the intercession of Christ, because Christ mediates and conveys the Spirit for that purpose; and she may view it as the intercession of the Father himself, in this sense, that the Father determines and directs it. This explains the idea of the Holy Spirit as an intercessor. The view does not confound the office and work of the Spirit with those of Christ. It preserves the mysterious distinction of the personal offices after the scriptural manner, and brings out to view the valuable instruction which the apostle would convey. The intercession of the Spirit is Christ's intercession, as the Spirit himself is Christ's Spirit. In whatever other ways Christ may be conceived as interceding for his people, besides thus helping their prayers, in those ways also the Holy Spirit must be conceived as performing his efficient part.

The office of advocate, held by the Holy Ghost and by Christ himself, may be considered as concentrating several of its various functions in this intercession for the saints. The two words distinguished above, have some senses in common; one being more comprehensive than the other. The general office of advocate is not confined to the one operation of helping our infirmities in prayer. The Saviour represented himself as an advocate in behalf of his disciples, when he spoke to them of *another* advocate, [comforter,] whom the Father would send them after his departure. Yet Christ fulfilled his office for them, not alone by supplementing their knowledge in prayer, but in their defence before rulers, and indeed in all their Christian exercises and labours. So the Holy Spirit, whose

greatly enlivened operation in their hearts would be their inward evidence of Christ's own continued presence with them, would be his efficient power in them, according to their need in all respects. He would take of all that was Christ's and show it unto them. But all the Christian endowments contribute to the propriety and efficacy of prayer, and it was natural to take this comprehensive exercise of the direct communion of the soul with God, as an instance of the Spirit's advocacy, in which all the departments of the important office were concentrated.

In the third place, we consider the manner in which this divine office is fulfilled. The apostle designates our matters for this head, by his three phrases, *καθὼ δεῖ*, *κατὰ Θεὸν*, and *στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλύτοις*. The first two are nearly related, but are sufficiently distinct to be separately considered.

The infirmity that calls for the help of the Spirit is, that we know not what we should pray for *καθὼ δεῖ*, *as we ought*; according to what is fit and proper in relation to the course of providence, or the divine plan and order of operation. Our firmest belief in the efficacy of prayer, must not involve the presumption that our prayers interrupt the established course of providence, or change the divine, eternal plan of operation. We should learn to bear this always in mind, whenever we think of the nature and office of prayer in the kingdom of God. Here is a reason why the substance of all prayer to God should contain the sentiment, Thy will be done. We believe all events to be predetermined. We therefore owe it to our doctrinal consistency, and our comfort in prayer, that we should endeavour, when we pray, to obtain the clearest possible view of our position in prayer in relation to the known fact of a divine, eternal purpose, and fore-ordination of every event. We must pray for things which it is agreeable to the will of God to bestow. These things are all predetermined and anticipated in the established order of the world. That we may have the benefit of coöperating with God by prayer for the accomplishment of his will, the prayer must embrace the thing which God has appointed. But these we cannot know without the gift of prophecy. Either, then, the prayer must be ineffectual, or contain some virtue of knowledge which we ourselves are not conscious of. This virtue of knowledge is

actually present; so that the requisite conformity to the decree of God is effected. And this is one part of the manner in which the Spirit intercedes. He gives to the prayer the virtue of an intelligent accordance with what is fit, and agreeable to the course of the divine operation. His intercession is also in such a manner as befits ourselves. It helps us at a weak point. How utterly profitless must be our prayer without this precious accession. The help of the Spirit is the only property of the believer's prayers which makes them available; the only part that is acceptable to God. So prominent is this plea of the Spirit, that the Father testifies his respect for it, in passing by the spoken petitions, all the requests which we think, and feel, and utter, to those deeper yearnings of the Spirit, which are not uttered so much as into conscious thought and affection; yearnings which the Father sees as the searcher of hearts, and as knowing what is the mind of the Spirit. These deep and silent groanings, or yearnings of the Spirit, are exactly suitable to our infirmities and our wants. They are perfectly pure, free from all worldly taint, and even from the imperfection of our carnal nature, which begins to corrupt all the workings of the Spirit, the instant they come into vital and active combination with our conscious motions of thought and affection. How suitable to our all-pervading sinfulness, which belongs to every thing merely natural in us, that the Spirit should *so* apply his help for our infirmities, as to leave it distinguishable, by the eye of God, from our own infirm and worthless petitions; that it may still be known and unre-servedly honoured as the mind of the Spirit, entitled to prevail for its own intrinsic worthiness; that, when our random requests, born so often and so largely as they are of carnal blood, have been all put out of the account, and set aside as they deserve, there may be enough left in us to form abundant ground of acceptance with God;—nay, that the whole ground is left, on which we ever prevail with God in prayer. As the righteousness of Christ in general so comes into the view of God, that it alone is taken into account, and yet so keeps itself pure from the taint of our sins, that it appears to the eye of God in its original, unblemished glory;—so this particular part of that righteousness which comes in the place of our infirmities in

prayer, exactly answers to those infirmities; supplying precisely what we ourselves should have, if we knew what we should pray for “*as we ought.*” It is just the help meet for us in the case. And further, the working of the Spirit befits us as engaged in the exercise of prayer. The advocate here becomes properly intercessor. When we ask, he also appears and asks for us. How becoming the title, The Spirit of Prayer. The Holy Ghost in us, teaches, reprobates, comforts, strengthens, sanctifies; but he also prays. He does not merely work in us responsively, in some sort, to our supplications, by imparting the general benefits of redemption, but he conforms his working to the posture of supplication itself. And this is an admonition to us, that as we value the Spirit’s intercession for ourselves, our friends, and a dying world, we shall be much in prayer ourselves, as our true way of employing the prevailing intercession of the Spirit in behalf of those great interests. In all these particulars, and many more which might be mentioned, the help of the Spirit may be seen to be *xaθò ðεī.*

It is also *xatà θeòv*; expressed in our version by “according to the will of God.” The meaning of this phrase, by any possible interpretation, must indeed *include* the sense given in our version. And from the point of view from which the translators probably contemplated this intercession of the Spirit, that sense would naturally appear the leading and even the only one. But the view taken by most commentators of the secret and unexpressed intercession of the Spirit, seems to allow the presumption that, if the apostle intended thus to limit the meaning, he would have used the full phrase, *xatà tò ðéλημα τoῦ θeoῦ* as in Gal. i. 4. And the scriptural use of the similar phrases, *xatà σdρoχa*, *xatà πνεῦμa*, as in Rom viii. 4; *xatà Xpιstòv*, as in Rom xv. 5, and Col. iii. 8; especially *xatà ἀνθρωπoν*, after the manner of man, Rom. iii. 5; and the same phrase *xatà θeòv*, 1 Peter iv. 6, afford ample grammatical authority for giving the words the broader sense, “after the manner of God.” What is thus done after the manner of God, will be, of course, agreeable to his will. The intercession of the Spirit would thus be described as purely a divine operation, not a prayer of our own, corrected by the Spirit. Although taking place in us, it does not partake of any human charac-

teristics, as seen and approved of God. The only righteousness in us which God approves, is the righteousness of Christ. The only prayer in us, which prevails with God, is the intercession of the Spirit of Christ. The intercession of the Spirit must appear to the Father by itself, with only those characteristics of prayer which are truly divine. It would not otherwise fill the place appointed for prayer in the kingdom of God, and answer its ends. So far as it partakes of the attributes of our fallen humanity, it becomes imperfect. And this imperfection we always acknowledge. We recognise it as belonging to every prayer we offer as our own. The confession is true and proper. And we may always justly add, that if the Lord were strict to mark the imperfection of our prayers, he would not regard them. With the view now before us, we may say he *is* thus strict, and does not regard them. For we here see that there is a purely divine intercession in us, which, however closely united with our own motion, is still distinct from it, and is actually distinguished by the Searcher of hearts. It is strictly "the mind of the Spirit." God knows it as such, and considers and estimates it by itself. He approves it. This is even involved in his knowing it. He knoweth the mind of the Spirit, as he knoweth the way of the righteous. And thus we should remember, that the only element in our prayer which he thus approves, and therefore the only efficacious element, is that which is *κατὰ Θεὸν*, and not *κατὰ ἀνθρώπον*. The interceding office of the Spirit in the saints is thus conducted in a manner entirely divine.

The other characteristic given by the apostle to the Spirit's intercession, is designated by the words *στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις*— "with groanings that cannot be uttered." There is strong proof in this whole chapter that the special inspiration of the apostle gave him an insight into the spiritual constitution of the kingdom of God, without moving him to construct a complete philosophical view of that kingdom as a whole. He sees the whole creation pervaded by the omnipresent Spirit, as a living power. His conception is that of an organic whole, with redeemed man for its head, being moved throughout, by that same Spirit which dwells in the saints, with a silent, unconscious, imperceptible, and inexpressible yearning towards

the manifestation of the sons of God, *i. e.*, the resurrection glory of our body, in which our salvation is consummated. The life of the whole system is to have its perfection in the glorified life of the saints. To that it ministers with the harmony and unity of a living system, (ver. 28.) The one Spirit in the whole creation makes it one organism, as the one Spirit in the saints and Christ makes them all one body. Now this Spirit in the saints tends, with longing and hope, towards their complete glorification. It also communicates the same tendency to all parts of the creation, which it fills with its presence and power. But no where else is that tendency joined with such a rational and conscious activity of the creature as in man. Here is to be found the character of the inexpressible groanings in the saints. They are nothing audible; no vehement feeling; not attended by sensible agitation. They are unexpressed, not because too strong for expression, but because they are not brought forth to the conscious exercise of any of the faculties of expression. They are not uttered within, to the conscious knowledge of the suppliant himself. The Holy Spirit breathes them, or cherishes them as his own feeling or aim; a yearning towards the fulfilment of the divine will; and he is so dwelling in the heart of the saint, as to impart the yearning to the spirit of the man, yet without causing it to come up to a verbal expression, or to thought, or definite, conscious desire. The expression is hindered, it may be, by tendencies of the human nature not yet reconciled to the Spirit's motion. The faculties do not yet "move in swift obedience" to the divine impulse in the inner man. The expression might come if the man were thoroughly spiritual in his frames of mind. At least it might be given as object of knowledge and of specific desire. Or, on the other hand, there may be items in the Spirit's views which, from their nature, are incomunicable to the human mind in its earthly state. There are "things of the Spirit of God" which the spirit of man *cannot* know—which cannot be imparted to it by the Divine Spirit as matters of knowledge; and some of these, perhaps all of them, connected as they are with the work of God and the nature and progress of his kingdom, have more or less to do with the efficacy of prayer; while, from their nature,

they cannot be given as matters for the human understanding, and for the specific desires of the heart. Such things must remain unexpressed through the human faculties, for want of the proper adaptation of the faculties to conceive and utter them; and yet these all may have a living connection with the course of the Lord's work, and with the welfare of the individual believer. A part of these inward yearnings are towards things of which there is no personal and conscious discernment or knowledge, and therefore the yearnings may not be themselves revealed in any of the conscious exercises of the soul, but exist only as tendencies, unperceived in themselves, but by no means inoperative in the innermost man, as the groans of the unconscious world, while possessing immense dynamic value, receive no conscious recognition by the "creature."

The groanings are thus not such as can be suitably designated by that term. Yearnings they more properly are; but even these are commonly conceived as states of conscious life. Tendencies have scarcely enough of intense activity for the apostle's idea; and yet there seems to be great felicity in Olshausen's conceiving an analogy between these groanings and the yearning for perfection in a plant; where the impulse towards glorification appears in the motion of the vegetable organs to obtain and appropriate the light on which the blossom and the fruit depend. If they should be called presentiments, joined with desire, the inspired idea would seem to be answered in full. Only we should not by any means conceive them as consciously entertained by the soul in ordinary cases.

These deep yearnings of the inner man, not only unspoken, but unthought and unfelt, are the availing property of the Christian's prayer. It is not necessary for its efficacy that the mind of the Spirit should find its way into the thoughts and the speech of the suppliant; neither, as we have said, is it possible. The acceptable state of the soul in the effectual prayer consists very largely of those profound and silent aspirations which do not open into the field of human observation. They are known only by the Searcher of hearts. They express not so much the intensity as the depth of that spiritual motion which is really at the bottom of all the prayers of the saints. They are the intercession of the Spirit, according to the will of God

performed in obedience to his direction—after a divine, and not a human manner, and for things which God has provided for his people. He helpeth our infirmities.

In the fourth place, it remains to consider how this intercession of the Spirit is connected with the prayers of the saints and with the course of providence in the world.

This can be ascertained from the Scriptures only. The whole subject is a secret of the spiritual world. It cannot be discovered or explained by observation or experience. It is not revealed by any of our conscious exercises. The apostle treats it as a part of the hidden process of that kingdom which cometh not by observation; revealed only by the Spirit of the Lord to the apostles, and to be received by faith. In the heart of the saint it is known only to the Searcher of hearts. It is the mind of the Spirit. That is the mind of God, and God only knows it. Only from the Scriptures do we learn that the Spirit intercedes at all; and from the same source alone do we learn how the Spirit's intercession is connected with the conscious supplications of the believer.

The intercession of the Spirit and the intercession of Christ stand in one and the same connection with the believer's prayers. The two kinds of intercession differ from one another as two parts of one whole. Whatever the Spirit does in the believer, he does as the Spirit of Christ. He is Christ's agent in it all. There is a *mediating* part of the operation which remains peculiar to Christ. Without this mediation the Holy Spirit could do nothing. Without this mediation the Holy Spirit does not proceed from the Father at all. Christ mediates the Spirit's intercession. He is the middle person through whom the Spirit works. The work is therefore as properly the work of each, as of either. It is Christ's work in one respect, and the Spirit's in another. The mediating part of the intercession is Christ's. He is the responsible superintendent through whom it is done. Then there is the *efficient* part of the operation which remains peculiar to the Spirit. Christ is said to intercede at the right hand of God, to show that he stands first as the representative of divine authority and power; that as the power proceeds from the Father to work in men, it passes first to the person of Christ; and then, through him,

into the person of the Holy Spirit, and in him, into efficient operation, in and for the believer. Nothing of all this is to be understood as transacted in space and time. The Son, as Son, proceeds eternally from the Father; the Spirit proceeds eternally from Father and Son. In other words, the whole being of God is an omnipresent Spirit of living power, in which the three persons are eternally to be distinguished; and all the three have their part in every divine work. The intercession of Christ and that of the Spirit are parts of one and the same work, and therefore both are vitally connected with the believer's prayer.

The Spirit's intercession may be viewed as prompting the prayer of the saints. It is a most inspiring and encouraging thought, that the intercessory motions of the Spirit are the source of all our disposition to pray. We know that the Holy Spirit is the author of all desire for spiritual good in men, and therefore of all disposition to ask for it. The intercession of the Spirit may therefore be considered as lying at the bottom of the believer's own prayer, and as being expressed in that prayer, so far as the believer prays "in the Spirit." These motions of the Spirit, if we may call them motions, are the eternal and unchangeable state of the mind of the Spirit with reference to the work of God. The new creature in Christ is formed by this indwelling of the Spirit in the natural man; and of course this indwelling Spirit retains there all this perpetual motion, tendency, or yearning in the direction of the work of God. This we described above as what the apostle signified by "groanings that cannot be uttered." This tendency of the Spirit is always in the believer, and therefore the believer has always in himself a motion prompting him to pray. If he should "pray always and not faint," he would be obeying always the leading of the Spirit. It is possible for us to "pray always in the Spirit," because the Spirit is always praying in us. Even when the infirmity of the flesh, or necessary occupation, or the love of the world, prevents the actual form of prayer, the Spirit still retains his own yearning, and would impart it if not hindered by the insusceptible state of the preoccupied mind. The more the Christian falls in with this constant tendency of the Spirit, the more he adorns the

doctrine of Christ concerning prayer, and the more he walks worthy of his vocation. This motion of the Spirit prompting him always towards prayer, is one of the ways in which the calling of God is expressed to his heart. When the life of the Christian is not duly pervaded by the Spirit of prayer, he is in a state of contention against his inward intercessor. He "restrains prayer" which the Spirit in his heart would move him to offer. Whenever he is moved to pray, the motion of the Spirit is the cause. The prompting may be partly by knowledge of this doctrine of the Spirit of prayer; and hence the utility of knowing this precious truth as we are trying to teach it; but it may also be something like the unconscious presentiment, which a person may express concerning a future event, without knowing what or why he speaks. But the prompting commonly takes place without bringing forth in the suppliant any presentiment of the things agreeable to the will of God; leaving the thought and words of the prayer to the natural idiosyncracy, or to the suggestion of circumstances, for want of a readier coincidence, or a proper reconciliation of the whole man with the work of the Spirit within him. The uttered prayer thus becomes an index, not of the mind of the interceding Spirit, but only of the fact of his prompting to prayer.

We further notice here a fact of great practical importance in relation to the connection of the Spirit's intercession with the prayers of the saints, that the intercession does not avail except when the person prays himself. It is, therefore, in the first place, no encouragement for any to neglect the offering of their own supplications unto God. If any one is not moved enough by the Spirit to address the Lord in prayer in any form, he derives no benefit from any interceding motions of the Spirit within him. The spiritual influence in that case is wholly lost upon him. It is as when a sinner is moved by the Spirit towards any religious duty which he entirely neglects. He receives no saving benefit from the operation of the Spirit upon him. In the second place, the refusing to direct the desires of the heart to God in some devout and reverential way, is a quenching and grieving of the Spirit, and is a great sin, extremely dangerous to the spiritual welfare. This view reflects a heinous aspect on the sinful state of those who live

under the administration of grace, without prayer. It is a state of active contention against God. This shows, moreover, that the connection between the Spirit's intercession takes place in the living principle of both the divine and the human person. It avails for the man only when it blends itself with his own life, and shows itself in his outward acts in some degree. Though that intercession alone is effectual for the saints, yet, if they do not so far accept it as to yield to its influence in prayer for themselves, they receive no good. The Spirit of prayer in the church is a part of the life of Christ which we receive; and unless the individual accepts it, and yields himself in willing obedience to its power, it will not avail for him. Every one who earnestly prays to God, may have the consoling assurance that the Spirit is interceding for him. But one who offers no prayer, can have no such assurance. Even though he has the Spirit in his heart, and striving there to lead him to prayer, as he strives in all under the gospel to lead them to repentance, yet, by his own perverse resistance, the Spirit of prayer is grieved, as the Spirit of repentance is grieved in other cases, and his benefits are forfeited and lost. No one can say that his own prayers are unnecessary, because in themselves ineffectual, or because they can add nothing to the efficacy of the intercession of the Spirit, or for any other reason. The Spirit *helpeth* us in prayer. If we do not pray, he does not help us. We have always cause to repent and condemn ourselves, that our prayers are not more obedient to the silent dictates of the Spirit in the heart. When, however, we so far yield to his influence, as to engage our own faculties in prayer, in good faith and earnest, then we have his effectual help. But if we so utterly repress the heavenly intercessor, that his influence does not reveal itself through the superincumbent weight of worldliness and unbelief, and produces no thought or feeling of devout supplication in us, we have no benefit of his prayer. The prayerless soul under the gospel light is condemned for resisting the Spirit. Its state is worse than that of a heathen, to whom such Christian, new covenant influence is never imparted.

Again, the intercession of the Spirit, while thus vitally connected with our own prayer, though not itself recognised in

the conscious experience, is nevertheless a ground of assurance as to the efficacy of prayer. The fact of the intercession is known only by revelation. Whenever we feel a disposition to pray, we may know that this disposition is from the Holy Spirit. And we are taught by the apostle, that besides giving this disposition, the Spirit "helpeth" by an intercession of his own. And knowing all this, though we know not how far our particular supplications may be indited by the Spirit, we still have a ground of assurance proportionate to the sincerity and submission of our prayer. The special matter of our petitions may be very little affected by the Spirit, though the disposition to pray is wholly from him. Believing the fact, we trust upon it as the real and only evidence of our acceptance with God. What we lack in perfect conformity to the will of God in prayer, we make up by humble and thankful reliance on the Spirit's own prayer for us. So in all other respects; wherever we feel ourselves wanting in what is good, we rely on the righteousness of Christ, applied to our use by his Spirit. Wherever we perceive anything good in ourselves, we ascribe it to Christ. It is the work of his Spirit in us. Though not conscious of *his* prayer, we are conscious of the great imperfection of our own, and may find welcome relief in trusting by faith on his gracious intercession for us, where our own failure is so deeply felt.

From our present point of view, we can observe that the intercession of the Spirit is related to the Christian's own prayers, as the perfect principle of life in general is to the actual, imperfect phenomena. The Spirit of God in the Christian dwells deep in the heart. His control of the Christian's action is effected by working on the innermost principles of his being. His help in prayer, therefore, is not a superficial work. It is not a suggestion of words, or even of thoughts. It is not an awakening of desire. It is a diffusion, through the innermost being of the man, of that pure and perfect power of life whose tendencies or motions perfectly agree with the ideal work of God in his kingdom. From this new life, the life of the Spirit itself, arise the desires, the thoughts, the words of actual prayer. As it dwells in the heart, it is perfect. The apostle signifies this by describing it as according to the will

of God, or after the divine manner. He signifies it even more strongly, by describing its motions as “groanings that cannot be uttered”—too high for the faculties of expression in imperfect men. If, now, as it works outwardly through the human faculties, it met no obstruction or disturbance, it would make the frame and expression of the Christian’s prayer throughout according to the will of God, because conformed entirely to the mind of the Spirit, so far as a finite mind can be. But the mind of the Spirit, in coming forth into the forms of devout thought, and feeling, and expression, meets the various imperfections of our fallen nature, the obliquities of thought, the perversities of feeling, the infirmities of expression, which render only an imperfect report of the divine thought and operation within. We notice here the usual disagreement between the perfect motions of life within and the actual phenomena of the life. We know not how to preserve our life and health as we ought. There is great disagreement between the inward vital motions which proceed immediately from the creating and preserving power, and those voluntary motions of the man, put forth with the conscious desire to preserve and strengthen the living powers, and to accomplish their purposes in the world. Were the delicate springs of any man’s life subject to the immediate impulse of his voluntary action, they would be rudely disturbed, and soon entirely interrupted. But his living motions rise continually from a power within, of which he has no conscious knowledge, and no immediate control. The original vital impulse of our being lies beyond the range of our voluntary agency. And that primitive impulse, as it comes from its divine source, is perfect. But in working outward into the experience and the character of the man, it encounters resistance from imperfect organization and various disturbing forces arising from the circumstances of its operation. While the original living power in the man, considered as the power of the new creation, tends to produce the perfect human formation of mind and body, its actual production falls far short of its true standard, “the glory of God.” In human society also, so little do the members know of the laws of true prosperity, and so liable are they to break the laws they do know, that if their social welfare were wholly subjected to their conscious

and voluntary agency, they would soon bring their system to a stand. But there is a current of life in society, infinitely better than the speculation or the practice of the members. From this arises the conscious desire of improvement in the members, and their aspiring activity. All their progress is but a growing conformity to the primitive impulse of the inward social principle of human life. While they know not how to guide their social course as they ought, and work oftener against their well-being than for it, the inward spirit helpeth their infirmities—maintains the radical vitality of their system, and gives it a primary and incipient impulse, according to the will of God. These, also, are a species of groanings which cannot be uttered; the deep, silent yearnings of the indwelling Spirit in the social heart of man, which the articulating organs of the system have not yet the configuration to express. All earthly life, indeed, is constructed and administered in this way. There is no actual development of plant, tree, animal, or man, according to the idea of the perfect form. The principle of life, as it proceeds from the Creator, is perfect. But its development is so disturbed by adverse forces that, as a general rule, in all the kingdoms of earthly life, certainly in the human in every case, it falls short of perfection.

The intercession of the Spirit may also be considered in its connection with the course of Divine providence. We are not taught that God answers prayer by interrupting or disturbing the established laws of his providence. If prayer interfered with the appointed course of nature, it would destroy its stability altogether. For if, as the Bible teaches us to expect, the acts of God will yet all be done from respect to the prayers of the saints, the order of the world would be entirely subverted. The confidence of men in the laws of providence would be wholly overthrown. We are not to presume that effectual prayer introduces a new condition of things, and changes the divine course. With God, there is nothing new. His plan had, from the beginning, a place for every thing, and every thing in its place.

The intercession of the Spirit takes its place in the system of the world by its connection with infinite intelligence. The virtue of the Spirit's intercession, in the apostle's view, lies in

this, that it is according to the will of God. It is not expected to change or influence that will, in any degree or respect. The will of God is unchangeable; and to be conformed to it, is the whole duty and interest of man. All effectual prayer in the church is that which says or implies, in every word and thought, "Thy will be done." The infinite intelligence of the Spirit is one reason for the accordance of his intercession with the will of God. For the Spirit knoweth infallibly what the will of God is. This knowledge, of course, includes all things embraced in the eternal plan of God for the creation and administration of the world. The Spirit's intercession must, therefore, be comprehensive. That infinite intelligence embraces all that God has appointed to come to pass; and has its eye not only on that particular which may immediately concern the Christian's interest for the time, but what may concern him for all time, and what may concern all men for time and eternity. This is altogether beyond our view. It is more than we are able to ask or think.

Besides the intelligent discernment of the will of God, the Spirit has an efficient agency in fulfilling that will; and this increases the virtue of his intercession. His connection with the course of providence is vital. His own living, personal efficiency is the actual, operative principle of the providential scheme. "The Spirit is life." In him the will of God, and the eternal Word which expresses it, become actual existence and work. The Spirit is to the will of God as actual life and force are to their originating purpose. His intercession is, therefore, the efficient form of the petition, "Thy will be done." That is to say, it is not the speaking of that word, but the doing of it. The speaking of the word belongs to the Son; the doing of it belongs to the Spirit.

When the Spirit says within us, "Thy will be done," his speech is action. His utterance is the personal exertion of that power which is the essential foundation of the active forces of the world. It is his motion towards the irresistible fulfilment of the eternal decree. His infallible discernment of the fore-ordained particulars of the scheme is an important part of his help to our infirmity. It is in intelligent conformity to the course of divine operation. That operation is personally his

own; and he knows what he himself is doing. It furnishes a rational ground for our confidence that the prayer we offer, though not with his infinite knowledge, yet by his prompting, belongs in the appointed order of the world. As the personal efficiency of the Holy Spirit is the acting power of providence, his intercession is a part of his effectual working. It is his working among the intermediate agencies by which the particular things contemplated are to be brought to pass. An important part of these agencies is that of the people of God themselves. Their prayer is ineffectual unless joined with action. The diligent use of means for obtaining the good we pray for, is an indispensable condition of the answer to prayer. It is thus that the Spirit himself proceeds. His effectual intercession is not without effectual working. The two offices, that of helper in prayer, and that of helper in the work of God, cannot be separated. They cannot be in all respects distinguished. With him, prayer is work. The "groanings that cannot be uttered" are his silent energizing towards the fulfilment of the work of Christ in the hearts of his people. So in relation to the whole course of providence in the world. The Holy Spirit pursues his efficacious agency, through all the course determined by the will of the Father, and committed to the mediation of Christ; working in the saints to will and to do according to his good pleasure; and his working in them to will, can be very easily identified with prompting them to pray.

Effectual prayer, then, does not interfere with the established order of the world. It is included in that order. The decree which ordains the end, ordains the means. It is the Unchangeable One who hears prayer. The Maker of the world is Christ; who also prepared it to become the temporal dwelling-place of his church, and appointed its laws for the discipline of his people. His redeeming power works in agreement with the laws of the natural world. The work of the Spirit in renewing the people of God and building them up in holiness through faith unto salvation, is a supernatural work; but it harmonizes with the established series of cause and effect in the natural world; allows its own spiritual causes to be incorporated with those that are natural, and to proceed with them in the same

invariable order. This is a great truth, taught by the Scriptures, and beyond contradiction. It is founded in the nature of God as supreme, almighty, eternal, and unchangeable. It appears in the method of his government in heaven and earth. It is one of the fundamental articles of Christian knowledge. Our faith should receive and rest upon it, as it rests on any other doctrine concerning Christ and his kingdom. Firmly as we believe that God hears prayer, so firmly must we believe that the prayer he hears belongs to the established and unchangeable order of his administration. Clearly as we discern one of these truths, so clearly must we, at the same time, discern the other. Neither of these doctrines is healthful for the human mind, except in living union with the other. The two ideas, of the effectual supplication of the church and the unchangeable divine decree, belong together. They are united in the glorious reality; let them be united always in the thought of the church. The faith which can apprehend them clearly in their proper unity, is a principle of heavenly origin and of great power; worthy of the Spirit of Him, who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but whose coming was at the desire and prayer of his people.

The apostle's doctrine of the intercession of the Spirit, as we have endeavoured to explain it in the foregoing pages, has great practical value.

From the great infirmity of Christians in their communion with God, they have cause to humble themselves deeply before him, and confess the great defects of their prayers. If their acceptance depended on the fitness and propriety of their own petitions, they might well despair. When the Christian considers how little he knows of the will of God, as to particular future events, especially in the spiritual kingdom, he must be convinced of his entire inability to comply, of himself, with the conditions of effectual prayer. And this is one form of the enmity of the carnal mind against God. A Christian mind, with such a view of its infirmity, will not be liable to think more highly of itself than it ought to think. The heart of a true believer is most effectually humbled when brought into most striking contrast with the perfection of God. And here is one of the points of striking contrast; the man, on the one hand,

offering prayer without knowing what he should pray for as he ought, and with scarcely a shadow of intelligent conformity to the will of God, as to the particulars of his prayer; and on the other hand, the Holy Spirit making silent intercession, after the truly divine manner, and in perfect agreement with the will of God, which is about to be done in the case.

The apostle's doctrine of the intercession of the Spirit is a valuable caution against presumption in prayer. Importunity and fervency are virtues, but only when duly subjected to the will of God. The help of the Spirit avails chiefly for us on this account. The pure motions of the Spirit are a still, small voice, and like the higher and more refined principles of the natural mind, are easily lost amidst impassioned mental exercises and persistent habits, and are best heard by the most delicate and cultivated spiritual sense—by those that “have ears to hear.” There are methods of maintaining the communion of the church and of individual believers with God in the ordinance of prayer, which are founded in speculative misapprehension of the nature and efficacy of the ordinance, and consecrated to popular religious feeling by long usage, but which would seem, in the light of the apostle's doctrine, almost of necessity to overbear the still, small voice of the Spirit, and encourage, under the specious guise of fervency and importunity, a presumptuous thoughtlessness of the will of God.

This doctrine of the Spirit's intercession offers fruitful hints on the nature of our living intercourse and communion with God. That intercession is, to our own prayer, as we have said, what life in general is to the phenomena of life. The Spirit prompts prayer as the living principle puts forth thought and affection. Prayer thus becomes a part of the process of life. It is hardly using a figure to call it the breath of the spiritual man. It is the action of the life, and the means of preserving and strengthening it. By our prayers, the Spirit's living intercession comes forth into our personal activities, and is appropriated as a part of our personal life. And this, as to our own benefit, is a large part of the answer of prayer. This is the principal, normal form of our communion with God. It is making the life of the Spirit in us, common to him and ourselves. Our communion with Christ in general, is after this

manner. Being ingrafted into Christ, we become more and more partakers of his living powers, by the exercise of the life he gives. "As I live, ye shall live also."

A legitimate effect of the apostle's prominent and absorbing view of this help of the Spirit, is a high estimate of prayer as a means of spiritual discipline for the people of God. When once the Christian has formed the habit of daily prayer, with a watchful and submissive looking for the mind of the Spirit as to the particular things to be prayed for, in what other exercise could he find so powerful aid in "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ"?

That God has provided this intercession of his Spirit as a help to his people in prayer, is the argument of all arguments for believers to pray without ceasing. What assurance does it give that every sincere prayer of the follower of Christ receives the gracious regard of the Father in heaven. Those who pray in the Spirit, have the privilege and honour of coöperating with God in a special sense. Every praying soul is joined with the Spirit in the work of God. Every praying family labours together with God. Every community of believers, united to maintain prayer by the help of the Spirit, is a partner with God in his work, and in the glory that shall follow.

ART. II.—*Religious Instruction in the Army.*

AN army may be contemplated in varied points of view, according to the thought habitually uppermost in the mind of the observer. To our amiable and patriotic President, his war Secretary, and General-in-Chief, no doubt it appears as a mighty engine of vast destructive capacity, to be employed in crushing the power of an audacious rebellion, and reëstablishing the authority of the government over the whole territory of the nation. To the Commissary Department, it must appear as a huge monster, of insatiate appetite, requiring all the energies of a most productive climate and soil to be strained, that suitable and sufficient food may be provided for it. The