



SUBCONSCIOUS RELIGION

RUSSELL H. CONWELL

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**BY
RUSSELL H. CONWELL**

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CHAPTER 1. DOES GOD ANSWER CHRISTIANS ONLY?

WHAT might be the consensus of opinion found in a digest of all the testimonies of mankind cannot be surmised, but it did not appear that God was "a respecter of persons" through those years of prayer at the Baptist Temple. The prevailing belief, however, was that God was more willing to answer the sincere disciple than he was to heed the requests of a great sinner. But the fact was also evident that God does answer the just and the unjust. The assertion of the blind man before the Pharisees that "God heareth not sinners" was evidently a quotation from the Pharisees' creed and not a gospel precept. As all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, no one would be heard if God would not hear sinners. Jesus was more inclined to heed the requests of John and Peter than he was to listen to the requests of the sacrilegious Sadducee. But a repentant Sadducee would not be neglected, and the fact is apparent that there is a clear distinction between the influence with God of a righteous man and the influence of a wicked or a frightened sinner.

Here are a few of the testimonies which have a bearing on this important subject. One hardened sinner was so convicted of his completely lost condition that he spent the night in agony, calling on God for forgiveness. He was determined to fight the battle alone, but his strength failed and he was certain that he was condemned irrevocably to eternal punishment. His prayer availed him nothing. When, at last, he opened his heart to a faithful Christian friend, that friend's prayer was heard instantaneously, and the seeker knew by an instinct axiomatic that he was received by the Lord.

There is a general belief that God does hear the pure Christian more readily than he does the vile reprobate. That belief is founded in the moral laws universally recognized in human relations. There may also be a semiscientific reason. The soul which is in tune with the Infinite can more effectively detect and understand the "sound waves" from the spirit world than the soul which is out of tune with God. In the mass of the correspondence about which this book is written there are strong

testimonies to the necessity and attainableness of a practical harmony with the Spirit of God. One man who has been long a teacher of psychology wrote that he had made a deliberate test of the matter, and a condensed report of his experience is here given. He sought "to place his soul in communion with God." He desired that state of spiritual harmony with the divine character which would make him sensitive to every spiritually divine impression. Hence, he prepared himself in this way: he locked himself in his room and gave himself up to the serious business of getting into communication with God. He began to count his sins of commission and earnestly asking forgiveness; he promised the Lord that he would guard himself against them evermore. He then tried to comprehend the awful list of sins of omission which for a while made him hopeless of God's favor. But in deep and prayerful meditation, thinking long on the great mercy of God and of the propitiation Christ had given, he felt his soul slowly emerge from the slough of despond. Suddenly a strange confidence took possession of his soul and a feeling of glad triumph overcame all doubt of his forgiveness. The assurance that he was getting into harmony with the Spirit of God became complete. He threw himself across his bed and "let go of himself," making an absolute surrender to the spiritual impressions.

Into such a state the apostles and prophets must have entered to feel the spiritual impulses and see the visions which they recorded. It is an exaltation of the whole being—a temporarily superhuman experience which may be the state of the soul when released from the body. The joy of that hour of oneness with God cannot be described to one who has not known it. It is higher, purer, more real than other feelings. It is so unlike any other experience on earth. "The soul is lost in God." The worshiper is outside and above himself. Life gleams as a cloud glows in some heavenly morning. Disease, pain, human limitations, care, or anxiety is nonexistent. A pure peace which passeth all understanding permeates the whole being. Underneath are the everlasting arms; over him is the spirit face of Christ. But why should he try to convey an idea of that growing answer to his prayer? He knows he is with his Lord. But the less he tries to tell his experience the more confidence his unbelieving friends will have in his sanity. That such harmony with the divine is subject to certain laws is seen in the fact that such elevation of soul is gained only by a full compliance with certain conditions. Some of these conditions

are found by experience to be those which are laid down in the Scriptures. The seeker must force out of his heart all malice, jealousy, hate, selfishness, covetousness, unbelief, and give himself up to the opposite feelings. We must go over wholly to pure intentions, holy aspirations, truth-living, kindness, forgiveness, love for all, inflexible adherence to the right, and all in all harmonizing with the divine disposition. Pure holiness must be sought, without which no man can please God. All those who give themselves over to such a state of surrender to God have the full assurance of faith which is promised to those who love God with all their hearts and with all their minds.

Such servants of God can offer prayer which avail much more than the frightened call of the worldly minded, egotistic, and selfish enemy of good people and good principles. God loves all men with an everlasting affection. But the kind of intensity of his affection for the saint and the transgressor is quite different. Christ loved the priest and the Levite in a true sense, but he loved the Good Samaritan more. He can love and care for his own without encouraging evil. He could not be just and show no partiality for those who obey him fully. He never fails to hear the cry of any contrite heart, but even among the disciples John was especially beloved.

CHAPTER 2. CONFLICTING PRAYERS

THIS chapter leads into the wilderness. Just beyond it is the insane asylum. The most bewildering, confusing, and dangerous region is the morass of conflicting prayers. No human theory concerning them is even helpful. The labyrinth is absolutely trackless to the human mind when once the worshiper becomes entangled therein. So we will not attempt to explain any of the even unthinkable intricacies of its strange region. Nowhere in the Bible does the Lord answer the questions which millions have asked about it. Two persons, equally sincere, pray for success in a matter where the victory of one must be the defeat of the other. Nations at war pray hard and long for victory, and not even God can answer both. Something must be taken from one to give to another, while the one in possession is praying that he may keep it. One's loss is another's gain. The employer prays for a profit on his business, and the laborer prays for higher wages. The white man and the colored man prays for his own tribe. The Samaritan and Jew, worshiping the same God and having the same family inheritance, believe it is a duty to hate each other, and each calls for God's curses on the other. Many an honest investigator has entered this region of doubt and mystery and managed to back out while still in his right mind. But he has returned the worse for the experience. All sorts of foolish speculations have been given creedal expression until men have declared, with strange assurance, that man cannot trust his reason or his conscience in any matter. They have tried to prove that the laws of nature are inflexible and that prayer cannot have any influence whatever in current events. Gifted men and women of culture and high purpose have convinced themselves that there is no evil, that men never sin, that the Bible theories concerning prayer are fanciful and too miraculous to be possible. "Too much study hath made thee mad," said the practical Roman to the Apostle Paul. The old Roman had probably seen so many religions that he had no faith in any. The religious maniacs are those men who have broken down their brains by laborious study over these insoluble problems. Therefore, while no one should discourage reasonable research anywhere, and while it is not sacrilegious or foolish to think on these things, it does seem best to admit that to the most faithful Christian there are unsearchable things of God which he

cannot sanely hope to understand in this life. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts higher than your thoughts." We cannot expect to achieve a knowledge as great and extensive as that of the Creator, and must be content with our reasonable limitations. "What I do ye know not now, but ye shall know hereafter." Satisfied, then, with the promise of that future full revelation we should study all that Providence places before us for investigation and never let go of what we are sure we do know. We will distinguish, as clearly as possible, between our imagination and our knowledge, and with a level head and our feet on solid ground we will live by a faith that is reasonable and never become blindly reckless.

The lightning struck a tree near a neighbor's residence last week. He knows that to be a hard fact. He does not know much about the electric currents in the atmosphere, neither does the most experienced scientist; but the neighbor knows that the lightning did splinter that tree. From that fact he entertains a faith in a possible return of that event and by faith he puts up a lightning rod on his barn.

The observer notices that sin brings its own punishment in many cases, and he has faith that such will be the universal experience of the future. So he keeps his soul insured by safe and sane investment in righteousness. Every sane man knows that we must at all times walk largely by faith. Faith is a constituent part of the natural human constitution. The degree of faith determines the character of the individual. Faith, like water, seeks its level. But the greater its safe elevation, the greater its power. Faith must grow reasonably, like a grain of mustard seed. It also develops mysteriously by natural increase until the fowls of the air nest in its branches and its growing root will cleave off the side of the mountain. The patriot, earnestly seeking victory, lets no possible agency pass unused to overcome the enemy. When he has prepared fully and laboriously for the battle he will then pray for the help which God may give him. Even should he strongly doubt that the Great Power moving on events beyond his knowledge can or will hear him, yet he will not fail to pray. Any man who calls on the Christian's God will not ask him to aid an unholy cause. A murderer seeking an opportunity to kill will not call on God for aid. The thief ever fears some providential

interference with his plans. The Christian ever hopes for God's aid, and asks for it because his aim is a godly one.

Herein is found the safe position for the believer to take. We can pray for the heathen, although they do pray against their own good. We can pray for victory in some holy war, because the enemy are praying really against their own good. Because their cause is unrighteous, their victory would be a great loss to them. Hence, even the great prayers which sublimely petition for the nations, and which include the whole world in their range of vision, are consistent only when man realizes his weakness and his ignorance, and adds to every prayer the reservation, "nevertheless, not my will but thine be done."

He is the wisest servant of God who can pray from the camp that he may conquer if his cause be really just. The preacher who enters his pulpit with an almost agonizing prayer that God would aid him in his presentation of the Christ to men must ever ask that God will turn aside any arrow which would do harm to the cause. In his ignorance or weakness he may mistake the Gospel message, or may not present the whole truth, and he must ever ask that, whether he gain or lose in the esteem of his congregation, the truth shall always prevail. Christian nations are often wrong in their diplomacy or in their wars, as they discover after a while. The Lord, therefore, gave them that for which they would have asked had their hearts been right with God and their intentions been Christlike toward men.

Sometime we shall understand. But now the seeming inconsistency of asking the Lord to aid his own cause, or praying that Christ may soon come into his own kingdom, is ever a stumbling block to the doubtful ones. If the Lord has all power and has a sincere desire to make the world good, why does he not do it by one sweep of his hand or by one magic word? What is the reason for his commandment to pray to him and to ask him to do that which he wishes to do and can do himself? All these questions lead into the wilderness. We do not know. We cannot suggest any hypothesis which would make the sovereignty of God and the free will of man reconcilable. Man's mind is so constructed that it is impossible to believe that the Creator controls all things and arranges the details of even our thoughts and yet leaves man free to choose to defeat the Lord by his own thoughts and actions. It is impossible fully to

believe that man can voluntarily do evil without in some way interfering with the designs and power of God. If God undertakes to save the world, and "would not that any should perish," but that all should come unto him and live, and yet sinful man can defeat or hinder the accomplishment of his purpose, then the thinker must conclude that God is not supreme. Yet when we keep our minds within their reasonable limits and fall back on our common sense we must believe that God is all-powerful and also that man is free to be sinful. The facts are actual facts, although we cannot reconcile them. There is but little we frail mortals can understand about such matters. Let us, therefore, carefully hold to the facts which we can comprehend, and never assume that things which are, surely are not, or that things which are not, most surely are. There was a boulder in the highway yesterday. We don't know how it came to be there. We know it should not be there. But there it is, and he would be idiotic who tried to go on as if the stone were not there. Behold! there is set before every man good and evil. "Choose good that thou and thy seed may live." We know that in a thousand matters we can choose the good or choose the evil. We see also that liberty is limited by great laws and there are a myriad of things a man cannot possibly do and about which he has no choice. When a man reaches those limitations his responsibility for choosing ceases.

With these simple facts the teaching of the Bible is fully in accord. The necessity for sustenance and protection beyond our ability to supply is ever a great apparent fact. The recognition of that fact leads the thoughtful man to prayer. Let us, therefore, have a care not to venture too far into the wilderness of the seeming theological inconsistencies. That God does answer men and women, thousands can testify. They have tried it fully. They cannot explain why God thus works out his complicated schemes, but they know that he does work in that way. It is established fact. The Great Teacher and Saviour also prayed. That is enough.

CHAPTER 3. SUBCONSCIOUS RELIGION

IN Leipzig, Germany, in 1866 there stood an old three-story mansion, used as a manufactory of mechanical toys. An American student attending the university was invited to visit the showrooms in the upper story and became intently interested in the surprising exhibition of inventive genius. As the visitor descended to the second and first floors he visited the rooms where machinery of many kinds was turning out various parts of the toys. But when he ventured to descend to the cellar to look at the power plant he found "No admission" on every door. But he was more disappointed when he was told that the "designing room," where the toys were invented and the drawings made, was in the subcellar. In order to preserve their patents and their secret processes, even the workmen on the upper floors were forbidden ever to look into the subcellar.

That illustrative fact came forcibly to mind when meditating long over a letter written by a praying student and author who said that he felt sure that the only direct passage between the human soul and the world spirits is through the subconscious mind. From that subcellar of the soul come ideas, impulses, and suggestions which most largely influence our actions. But we are forbidden to enter that department to examine the plans or listen to the wireless dispatches from the spirit world so continuously received there. "No admission" is posted on every door to the subcellar designing room of the human soul. We get the blue prints of new plans, or read suggestions for new or improved work sent up to our brains. But who makes them we do not know. In the impenetrable regions of our mental and spiritual nature are formulated many ideas and moral laws which we must blindly obey. A man is what he thinks, and the larger portion of his thinking is originated or molded in his subconscious self. That is evidently the meaning of the reference by Peter to the "hidden man of the heart." It is amazing to the careful student of our mental constitution to find out how meager is the part of our thinking which originates in the suggestions of our five senses.

From the Grecian and German philosophers some psychologists derived the hypothesis that the subconscious self is only the aggregation of all

the faint or half-formed ideas which are not strong enough to force themselves up into full recognition by the brain. Consciousness includes only those thoughts which the brain accepts and uses in positive action. That theory seems to be in a measure, true. There are faint suggestions and half-formed motives of which we catch glimpses and which never seem to be fully developed. Also the natural instincts of our animal nature still continue and persist in our higher station in the creative order. It can be noted by anyone that perhaps not one in a thousand of our muscular contractions or of our decided actions is consciously dictated by our will. The human race is seemingly, in a large measure, a collection of automatons. We are generally moved about by powers and mechanisms beyond our comprehension and are unconsciously working out designs in the making of which we have no consciously important part.

It is difficult to write clearly on such a subtle theme or explain what is known concerning autosuggestion or explain the laws which, in a measure, control the unconscious part of human life without using technical terms or scientific formulas beyond the understanding of the everyday reader. But, plainly stated, a human being uses but a small inclosure in which he can move on his own conscious volition. We are fearfully and wonderfully made. "What I would not that I do and what I would that I do not" was not the exclusive experience of the Apostle Paul. But it is the common experience of all mankind. A man's thoughts, happiness, and usefulness are the products of his moral character. His "subconscious self" is his real character. What one does consciously may not represent his real character, but that which he does without meditation or conscious limitation represents the true disposition or tendency of his real nature. Inasmuch as ye are disposed by nature or by second nature to be a good Samaritan or to aid "the least of these," ye have lived a continual good deed for the Master. The redeemed soul is one whose permanent disposition, called his "subconscious" or "subliminal self," is controlled by the magnetic influence of the spirit of truth and goodness. The few matters on which the brain acts directly are the deeds of the conscious mind. They are controlled by the will and reasoning powers of the independent portion of man's being. They may or may not accord with the heart's general impulses or they may be the direct product of the heart's purposes. The will and the subconscious

self interact, each influencing the other. This thought presents "a logical contradiction" which has puzzled many great minds.

But our appeal here is to the everyday experience of sincere, truthful Christians concerning their communication with God through the subconscious mind. One writer states that she has often received trustworthy messages from the spirit world in dreams and in unusual impressions during waking hours. This statement often arouses the general prejudice which some of the extreme spiritualists or deceivers have brought upon the theory of mental communication with the departed; but it should be examined on its own merits without bias. The testimony of the millions who believe or hope that they have had messages from their beloved who have gone on before counts for much and is not a testimony confined to professional mediums. The rejection of the theory that it is possible for angel beings to communicate with mortals, and that they are sent of God to do so, involves the rejection of the whole Bible as a divinely truthful Book. If there is no open path through the subconscious self to the spirit world, then the recorded visits of the Holy Spirit to the hearts of men are only idle tales. The disbelief in the soul's ability to hear heavenly voices or receive spiritual suggestions from other spirits would destroy all trust in supernatural religions. God does speak to man in the events and laws of the material life, and he also speaks to us in the "quiet, small voice" as he did to Elijah at Sinai. There appears to be no alternative but to believe in that declaration, for to reject it is to reject the whole body of Christian teaching. We will not entertain such a suicidal proposition. The indestructible spirit body is the same being and possesses the same characteristics in the material body that it possesses when separated from this limiting framework of the earthly body. It is indestructible, but it can be modified in disposition while in this body. That statement, for the sake of brevity, is mentioned dogmatically, but it will be illustrated by the following testimonials.

One writer who evidently has been reared to believe sincerely in "emotional religion," who shouts and groans and wrings his hands at any devotional meeting, but whose probity and strong good sense are the admiration of his friends, states that he knows "that his Redeemer liveth, by the direct assurance of the Spirit." He claims that when a man tells him a lie he feels the presence of evil. He testifies that in his most exalted

moments following a season of fervent prayer he knows what it is to realize the fact that he lives and moves and has his being in God.

There are thousands of men and women whose wild behavior in religious meetings is only the natural evidence of a disordered mind. The negro camp meeting and the whirling of the Egyptian dervishes seem to be much alike in their manner of working up a religious excitement. The unbalanced mental condition of some truly honest worshipers causes distrust of others whose good sense in other matters is never questioned.

Other writers tell of their experience of some overpowering emotion which came so logically in answer to their prayer that they cannot doubt that such was truly the fact. A man prayed that he might be protected through the night. He awakened from sleep, moved by an "inward impulse" irresistible, and went to the barn to find, as he opened the stable door, a little blaze creeping toward the haymow. It was easily extinguished then, but ten minutes later would have been entirely beyond control. The fire was caused by a lighted cigar dropped carelessly on the stable floor near the horses. Another writes that he is naturally emotional and dares not trust himself on any pinnacle, as he always feels when on any high place a strange desire to leap off in suicide. He states that the sensitiveness of his emotional nature becomes most acute in religious gatherings, and that he has never found himself mistaken when he has followed the leadings of that spirit. His wife writes that he had, for years, planted the crops which he "felt like planting" after attending a religious meeting. She adds that while, at first, she had regarded his "moods" as accidental emotions, she had learned that his crops planted in those moods were always profitable investments. Another who had been trained in the Friends' meeting to wait for the Spirit to move him went so far as to wait for the same impulse in all his undertakings. He tried to lay his business ventures before the Lord in silent prayer and then go in the direction the Spirit indicated. He related how, when once he was lost in a thick forest on a cloudy day, he prayed until his "sense of direction" became so clear that he started with closed eyes to take the direction toward which his inward impression impelled him.

Another acted always on the impulse of the moment in speaking to a friend or to a stranger upon religious matters. Another wrote that she had observed for many years that the praying housekeepers were guided

in their work by the most trustworthy intuitions. Few is the number of women who guide their domestic affairs by the rules of cold science, and the larger part of a mother's movements in the care of her children are the unconscious results of special intuition. She claims that in the intuitional nature of the human soul there is such nearness to the divine nature that the especially sensitive soul "feels impulses from across the border."

Here, again, after a day's study of the many accounts concerning the impulses awakened by prayer, we lay down the correspondence with a sigh of regret that nothing absolutely conclusive for or against prayer is to be found. We must still believe or disbelieve according to the measure of faith. In the courts of law attorneys often establish their cases by the use of what is termed "cumulative evidence," where they secure the testimony of many witnesses to the same fact. If that custom be applied to the establishment of the fact that emotions and impulses are sent in answer to prayer the number in its favor would be overwhelming. Down in the subcellar of the mind there may be a tunnel leading through to the palace of God. Millions believe that is a fact. No one can prove it is not so. Therefore, with the reasonable student, the testimony of the many will still be considered trustworthy. The soul of God speaketh often to the soul of man. A great writer on secular subjects confirmed the general impression when he forcibly wrote, "You can get almost anything you want, if you only want it hard enough, and long enough, and with faith enough."

CHAPTER 4. PRAYING FOR VISIONS OF HEAVEN

A STURDY young farmer's boy who had inherited a strong body, a clear mind, and a good family name sat under a maple tree in the hayfield at the hot noontide. He was eating a cold lunch and at the same time reading an article in the weekly paper. The editor had written an editorial on the romantic history of the poor country boys who had risen to world-wide fame and to enormous riches. When he had reread the article he tossed the paper aside, lay back on the odorous new-mown grass, looked up at the deep-blue sky, and watched the passing of a pure-white cloud. A vision of what the world might be to him came in a dreamy way. Other boys as poor as he had graduated from college, had made great scientific discoveries, had married rich and beautiful women, had traveled in far countries, had feasted with kings, had held high office, and had written great books. Why could not he follow their example? It seemed impossible, and with a deep sigh he arose and seized his scythe.

But the vision could not be obscured. As his strong muscles drove the sharp blade through the thick grass he kept muttering to himself, debating pro and con the possibility of an ignorant farmer, living far away from city civilization, and too far from a railroad to hear the whistle, to become powerful in national affairs. How did they start? What did they do first? When his return swath brought him again near the shade of the tree where he had eaten his lunch he caught up the weekly paper and read again the editorial. Then he left his scythe in the grass and went into the shade, leaned against the gnarled trunk of the old tree, and, wholly engrossed in earnest thought, forgot his work. He reviewed his own simple life and examined his own plans and ambitions. He had expected to marry some one of the strong, sensible, country girls and bring her home to live with the old folks, as his father had done. He had a dim idea that he would inherit the old, stony farm some day. He had a latent ambition to raise more corn than his father had raised and to clear a large piece of woodland which for centuries had hidden the mountain side. He would build an addition to the stable and put in a new pair of bars near the brook where the cattle went to drink in winter. He

had also a half-formed purpose to join the local church, and perhaps some day he would be an elder.

At last he aroused himself and, with a half-angry impulse, he began to strike the grass with his scythe as if the grass were some sneaking enemy. He could not arouse again the sweet content of the forenoon. He had caught a glimpse of that far-away land, and while he did not hope ever to enter it, yet the thought disturbed him.

The next Sunday the echo of the old church bell, along the narrow, but beautiful, Berkshire valleys, called him to church. The cows were milked and fed, the old horse curried, and the chores hastily finished when he ran down the road to overtake the old folks. But the grand forest, the sheening, cascading brook, and the brown fields were not the same to him that they were the day before. The cows and horses in the pastures near the road had lost their fascination and value. The hills seemed lower and the grain fields more narrow, the cottages seemed shrunken, and the old church was but an awkwardly built bungalow. All had changed. His clothing was coarser woven and the most attractive girls in their Sunday attire were rude specimens of country verdancy.

As if by a preconceived purpose to accelerate his sweeping mental changes the preacher that morning took his text from the Proverbs of Solomon, wherein he stated that wisdom is more valuable than gold or rubies. The speaker illustrated his sermon by showing the value of an education. He mentioned the happiness of the men and women who knew the structure of vegetation, of animals, and the laws which control their life. He mentioned cases of self-made men who had read good books and whose minds could walk with God through his wonderful natural creations. He spoke of the uselessness or curse of possessions which the owner cannot enjoy for lack of knowledge. He said that the discipline of obtaining wisdom was in itself of great value and that God promised riches, and honor to the man who would earn them. He also said that the Lord started many of us into life with nothing for the loving purpose of developing our capacity and inclination to know and enjoy more. The happiest boy is the one who makes his own toys. The application of the sermon brought forth the exhortation to read instructive books, to examine more closely the works of nature and the laws which control our being. "Learn something every day," said the

preacher, and he closed with the quotation from Luther, "Not a day without learning another verse" ("*Nulla dies sine versu*").

The young farmer was an only son. But his parents had wisely kept him from selfishness and egotism. He had been taught to work and to be grateful for the necessities of life. He had a loyal disposition and loved his parents with a half-worshipful devotion. He had been contented, industrious, careful, and honest. His only pride seemed to be in the distance he could see and in the large burden he could shoulder or carry. He had left school because his father needed him on the farm and he had abandoned the expectation of further education. But on that Sunday he held a long conference with his mother and father concerning his ambition to be something more than a country farmer. He read to them the editorial which had so moved him, and tearfully said: "I want to be great like them! I must improve my mind. I must increase my skill. I must have more influence and do more good. I must get more wisdom and more understanding. This farm is too small a place for me. I will stay at home if I can, or as long as I can, but I must begin to study to-morrow, and never thereafter lose a day. God helping me, I will be something worth while." His parents, with sad hearts, saw the reasonableness of his ambition and gave their consent to his proposed education. He began to read selected books at home, but he soon saw the great advantage of academic instruction in some well-equipped institution. He attended a high school in a near-by village and an academy in another part of the country. He was the leader of his classes and a close student of languages and natural science. He had obtained a glimpse of the world of knowledge and was fascinated with the idea of a university education. Beyond the university, he occasionally saw himself a multimillionaire with a palace and a brilliant retinue of servants. He had chosen for his life mate a brilliant young woman who was a teacher in a kindergarten school connected with the academy. They were to be married when he should graduate from the university. All seemed hopeful and promised a most noble and notable career.

But while he was spending his vacation at the old home in the Hampshire Highlands of the Berkshire Hills, helping his old father in gathering the usual crops, he received an invitation from a rich uncle living near San Francisco, inviting him to visit his estate. The uncle had not often corresponded with the young man's parents and they had taken

no interest in his history. They had heard that he was a wealthy manufacturer and a railroad director. So the brother, and the sister who was the student's mother, had lost all acquaintance with each other in the fifty years of their separation. The young man gladly accepted his uncle's invitation to visit him, and the uncle sent on a railroad pass to bring him to California and return.

The estate of the uncle was on the shore of the Pacific, occupying a gentle slope with wide lawns, evergreen trees fancifully trimmed, and gushing fountains. Hedges of lilies, acres of poppies, roses of every perennial variety, and shade trees in long rows, decorated the great plateau. Orchards of luscious and rare fruits stretched away in great lanes from the back gardens. The house was a mansion built for show, with a front largely Grecian in design, and a rear porch and veranda of the Old Colony style. Carpets, paintings, mirrors, and a hundred curious and costly decorations made an exhibition of lavish wealth. Fine horses and extravagantly furnished carriages in great variety filled the stables. Servants' quarters were really fine cottages and the gatekeeper's lodge cost an extravagant sum. To this New England nephew who had spent his youth in the simplicity and poverty of a back-country farm, all this display of wealth was bewildering. The great library of costly volumes, few of which had ever been opened, seemed to him a great opportunity for his uncle to learn almost everything. The food was so various and so delicious. The wines which he had never tasted were sweetly stimulating and had been made on the estate. His uncle entertained him royally and introduced him to a number of handsome young ladies of fascinating manners, who volunteered to teach him to dance. Every kind of musical invention seemed to be stored in the mansion, and quartets from the university near by came in often to entertain and to be entertained at the uncle's evening socials. The uncle was a widower and childless, and seemed to be most pathetically lonely. He was pleased with his nephew and was proud of his apparently sterling character and manly appearance.

The evening before the nephew's departure on his return journey his uncle talked with him until late in the night and told him frankly that he was going to make the young man his sole heir. But he made his nephew promise repeatedly not to tell any person, not even his parents, what the uncle had decided to do.

The return of that young man, when viewed in the light of subsequent events, must have been a startling experience to his dear, patient, plodding old parents. His manners, his thoughts, his estimation of values had undergone a violent change. The old farmhouse seemed to him to be smaller than ever, the furniture was rude and cheap, the food was coarse and unpalatable, the horse was shamefully old, his father's overalls were disgracefully stained, and his mother's old apron was fit only for rags! The home was lonesome and uncomfortable. He sat by the fire on the cool evenings, silently picturing in his wild imagination what he would do with his millions, and sometimes he admitted, for an instant, the hope that his uncle would die very soon. He abandoned the idea of going on with his college education. He reasoned that money can buy anything and assured himself that he could hire men to think for him if he should need them. Letters from his fiancée became a bore. She was too plain and too unsophisticated to adorn his future mansion. He could not think of marrying a woman of whom he would be ashamed in that fashionable group to which he would be attached. He finally broke the engagement, telling her that he had discovered that he did not love her enough sincerely to marry her. The lady became ill and was suddenly killed in an accident in the sanitarium. The young man would not work. He refused to help his father on the old place and bluntly refused to help his mother when she was about her household tasks alone. All was changed. He was no longer their son. The father felt the impression of mystery about the son's strange behavior and suggested to his wife that the boy showed symptoms of insanity. Not many months passed before the son left his home to take an easy position as a clerk in Boston. But he soon left that and went to sea in a steamer, where he acted as assistant to the steward. At Bordeaux, France, he made the acquaintance of two American young men whose wealthy parents supplied them with funds to travel, but evidently did so to keep the rascals away from home. Then his downward course became a reckless race.

A few years later the uncle heard or read that his nephew was sentenced to three months in the workhouse for drunkenness, and he changed his will, leaving all his estate to benevolent institutions. From that time the unrepentant prodigal disappeared from the knowledge or care of his old neighbors. Both his parents went down to the grave in bitter sorrow

before his reform. The death of the mother was only a few weeks later than the death of the father.

God pity them both, God pity us all
 Who vainly the dreams of youth
 recall. Of all sad words of tongue or pen
 The saddest are these, "It might
 have been." Ah, well for us all
 some sweet hope lies Deeply hidden from
 human eyes, And in the hereafter
 the angels may Roll the stone from the
 grave away.

The friend who reads this account of that young man's broken life may ask what this biographical sketch has to do with the subject of "unanswered prayer." It has much to do with it. Such experiences, which must have been seen in millions of cases, show a reasonable explanation why so many prayers for a view of heaven are denied. At almost every funeral the loved ones ask if the departed is still living and why God does not permit them to come back and tell us about their spirit life. "What are they doing in heaven?" is a question on the lips of millions.

But in the letters herein mentioned the records of unanswered prayers included many who prayed for visions of heaven or who wished to see the angels or the face of the Saviour. One brother prayed continually, "Oh, for one view of the holy city!" and another seemed never to leave out of his daily prayer, "Lord, open my eyes to see the faces of the dear ones hovering about me!" But our eyes are still holden. Our pleading hearts are unsatisfied. We are not permitted to see our future home nor catch more than a glimpse of the angels' wings. When, however, we seek an explanation of this divine arrangement, this separation of this life from the other, the faithful believer in God's wisdom and love can easily set up a reasonable theory concerning it. He will see that God has placed us on this earth to grow in knowledge, to get necessary spiritual discipline for his heavenly service. To obtain that training we must keep our attention on the duties of our daily tasks and do them well. We cannot reap rye with heaven in actual view. It is not consistent to think after the Apostle John saw the holy city at Patmos he could devote himself as readily to catching fish. When that California uncle showed his nephew all that luxury, beauty, and wealth, and told him that he would some day own it all, it was a foolish act—almost criminal. The young man's mental and moral development was stopped then and there. The young man lost far more than the estate could be worth.

Suddenly acquired riches are ever harmful. Dissatisfaction with this life is a fatal sin. God commands us to be content and toil. He, therefore, does not himself do so destructive and discouraging an act as to show us heaven's glories and fill us with a suicidal anxiety to get out of this world at once and speedily to enter the other where there is no more pain or sorrow or dying. A prayer for a view of heaven seems, therefore, to be an unreasonable request. This conclusion satisfies many who have been denied communication with the departed dear ones, and they take up their toil, content to labor and to wait. God does not interfere with the healthful exercise of our free will by holding bribes before our eyes or by forcing our discipline by awful fears.

CHAPTER 5. GREAT PRAYERS

MEN talk and write of "great prayers" as though such petitions could be weighed or measured. They appear to think that sacred feelings can find a standard of comparison. But even the rightfully esteemed Lord's Prayer presents no universal standard by which to measure our varying appeals. One old saint writes that he often gets out of patience when the Lord's Prayer is intoned or recited, as none of its paragraphs fitly or adequately expresses his "soul's sincere desire."

Prayer is necessarily as varying in its moods and objects as a kaleidoscope. Jesus said, "after this manner pray ye." And we must pray "after this manner." But person, time, place, hearers, sharers, emotions, ideas, desires, and needs all enter into the conditions of earnest prayer. To call on God in your own way, with your own motives and your own emotions and your own language, or without words, will be a clear fulfillment of the command to pray. The Lord understands every language and knows all that the heart would express if it could find an adequate form of speech.

The books, except the Bible, most frequently quoted in these letters include volumes by St. Augustine, Luther, Wesley, Whitfield, Spurgeon, Moody, Fosdick, Nicoll, Campbell, Whittle, and Finney. In the quotations the idea is ever present that there are *great* prayers. That place is given most frequently to the printed petitions of Spurgeon. But it is misleading to attempt to place a valuation on any of them. The most effective prayer recorded was the appeal of the Publican as he smote his breast; and Christ's long prayer at the Last Supper was the most comprehensive. But in the following circumstances, having trustworthy witnesses, no two of the marvelously effective petitions were alike—*viz.*, the English boy's prayer for his blind sister's restoration to sight; Muller's prayer for a food supply for his orphanage; Doctor Cullis's appeal to God for his Consumptive Home; Doctor Kincaid's petition for protection for the converts of Ava; the Brooklyn child's prayer for her shipwrecked father; the groans of John Hall's praying, but starving, mother; the prayer of President Garfield's mother at the washtub when her boy was lost in the forest; the silent wish of Carey, the pioneer

missionary; John Daniel Loest's prayer for money to pay his mortgage the next day; Spurgeon's prayer for his pastors' college in dire need; Moody's prayer for the establishment of a Bible school in Northfield; Luther's prayer for Melancthon; Halderman's prayer, in the Fulton Street daily prayer meeting, for the lost ship *Leviathan*; the petition of the mother of Doctor Talmage, asking that her son be made to decide at that moment to come home; Miss Lyon's prayer in the field for a seminary for women; and the prayer of the Dock child of Stockton who claimed that God had told him "in his heart" that his sister would immediately recover. To these may be added an almost innumerable number of cases where the prayers brought direct results, although there was no attempt to use any special form of words.

This principle or truth is probably accepted by all thinking worshipers, including most extreme ritualists. As, however, true prayer requires a devotional state of mind there can be no denial of the statement that the forms, ceremonials, scenic effects, and processions of the different creeds and races have a most potent effect on the devotional natures of their supporters. Whatever awakens a spirit of devotion is more or less useful; but when a strong desire for communion with God has been aroused by music, exhortation, processions, or scenery the most effective method appears to be to then leave each soul alone with God in silent prayer. "Resting in Christ" has a meaning to the devout which no other can understand. Love only can understand love. To be "alone with the loved one" is ever a holy and soul-brightening experience. But to be "alone with God" is, by far, the most holy of all emotions. The testimony of nearly all those at the Baptist Temple who report an answer to prayer, mention the fact that their prayers seemed to be the most productive of results when offered in the silent moments at the close of some inspiring service.

It is clearly impossible for one finite mind to shape a petition which will include and express all the desires of the multitude. Neither can an uninspired writer in one age fully appreciate and comprehend the conditions and needs of another age. Hence, while the petitions of friends, priests, or pastors have a strong influence with the Creator, the one vital necessity in making acceptable appeals to God is that each petitioner should ask for himself. No character can be changed from the outside. No wicked heart can be made pure without its own consent, and

the Lord seems to have limited himself so that he never crosses the threshold of the soul unless he is sincerely invited by that individual householder. God does not convert any soul by force. Therefore, all who would be blessed by him must voluntarily and individually go to him. There can be no substitute in that case. Even Christ, a mediator, may take on himself our punishment, but he cannot do our praying for us. He makes intercession for us, but that is of no use without our co-operation.

CHAPTER 6. USE OF THE BIBLE IN PRAYER

IT will be useful to any seeker after God to examine the agencies which have helped those whose prayers have been conspicuously answered. Among the many helps which, seemingly, have had especial potency in developing or awakening a devout spirit there is none so general in use as the Bible. The petitions which have been preserved from the ancient Fathers often quote the Scriptures; and when they do not quote directly, the language used shows a close familiarity with the Sacred Word. The Gospel truth is wonderfully condensed in this prayer of Thomas à Kempis:

O, Most merciful Lord, grant me thy grace, that it may be with me, and labor within me, and persevere with me, even to the end. Grant that I may always desire and will that which is to thee most acceptable, and most dear. Let thy will be mine, and my will ever follow thine and agree perfectly with it. Grant to me, above all things that can be desired, to rest in thee, and in thee to have my heart at peace. Thou art the true peace of the heart, thou its only rest; out of thee all things are hard and restless. In this very peace, that is, in thee the one Chiefest Eternal Good, I will sleep and rest.

Amen.

The following prayer by St. Augustine is a good example of the influence of the Bible on the trend of his thought:

O, thou full of compassion, I commit and commend myself unto thee, in whom I am, and live, and know. Be thou the goal of my pilgrimage, and my rest by the way. Let my soul take refuge from the crowding turmoil of worldly thoughts beneath the shadow of thy wings; let my heart, this sea of restless waves, find peace in thee, O God. Thou bounteous giver of all good gifts, give to him who is weary refreshing food; gather our distracted thoughts and powers into harmony again; and set the prisoner free. See, he stands at thy door and knocks; be it opened to him, that he may enter with a free step, and be quickened by thee. For thou art the wellspring of life, the light of eternal brightness, wherein the just live who love thee. Be it unto me according to thy word. Amen.

When looking outside of the local list of petitioners to which this volume is so closely confined it can be seen clearly that those whose petitions were the most surely answered were familiar with the Bible. It is also interesting to notice the quotations which were used as mottoes or the favorite extracts from the Bible by the most saintly of the heroes, martyrs, and victors in the Christian Church. Out of many hundreds of Scripture quotations the following are selected with the hope that some one of them may be of especial helpfulness to some one who desires to pray successfully:

Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness; thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer (Psalm iv:1).

My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up (Psalm v:3).

The Lord hath heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer (Psalm vi:9).

Give ear to my prayer, O God; and hide not thyself from my supplication (Psalm lv:1).

Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice (Psalm cxli:2).

I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men (Tim. ii:1).

For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil (I Peter iii:12).

And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli marked her mouth (I Sam. i:12).

Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer, which thy servant prayeth before thee to-day (I Kings viii:28).

And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord

my God for the holy mountain of my God; Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation (Dan. ix:20-21).

And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any; that your Father, also which is in heaven, may forgive you your trespasses (Mark xi:25).

And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense (Luke i:10).

Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven opened (Luke iii:21).

And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him (Luke ix:18).

I was in a city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, a certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me (Acts xii:5).

I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also; I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also (I Cor. xiv:15).

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication (Eph. vi:18).

Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith (I Thes. iii:10).

And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place: and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place: and when thou hearest, forgive (I Kings viii:30).

Nevertheless, we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them (Neh. iv:9).

Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows (Job xxii:27).

He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer (Psalm cii:17).

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is his delight (Prov. xv:8).

And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes.... (Dan. ix:3).

... and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting (Matt. xvii:21).

But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word (Acts vi:4).

And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither (Acts xvi:13).

Be anxious for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phil. iv:6-7).

And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him (James v:15).

Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much (James v:16).

... be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer (I Peter iv:7).

Then what prayer or what supplication soever shall be made of any man, or of all thy people Israel, when every one shall know his own sore and his own grief, and shall spread forth his hands in this house;

Then hear thou from heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and render unto every man according unto all his ways, whose heart thou knowest (for thou only knowest the hearts of the children of men....) (II Chron. vi:29-30).

And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God; and the prisoners heard them (Acts xvi:25).

And when he had sent the multitude away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray (Matt. xiv:23).

Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder (Matt. xxvi:36).

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak (Matt. xxvi:41).

Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels (Matt. xxvi:53).

Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them (Mark xi:24).

And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint (Luke xviii:1).

I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.... (St. John xvii:9, 15, 20).

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; 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 (Rom. viii:26).

Pray without ceasing (I Thess. v:17).

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (Thess. v:23).

Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power (II Thess. i:11).

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height.... (Eph. iii:17-18).

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight (I John iii:22).

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us;

And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him (II John v:14-15).

But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee (St. John xi:22).

And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son (St. John xiv:13).

If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it (St. John xiv:14).

If ye love me, keep my commandments (St. John xiv:15).

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering (James i:5-6).

Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss.... (James iv:3).

There hath no temptation taken you but such is common to man: but God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it (I Cor. x:13).

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy (Jude i:24).

But when ye pray, use not vain repetition, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Be not ye therefore like unto them; for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen (Matt. vi:7-13).

Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed (Psalm xxxvii:3).

Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass (Psalm xxxvii:5).

Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.... (Psalm xxxvii:7).

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want (Psalm xxiii:1).

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 (Psalm xxiii:4).

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSIONS

AS one lays aside the last letter of this collection and leans back in his chair for meditation on all these heart revelations he asks, most anxiously, What is the conclusion of the whole matter?

Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory, our faith remains unmoved. A general view of the field of prayer shows that the great fundamental facts remain undisturbed. God is. God answers prayer. The Bible is the inspired work of the Spirit of God. Jesus is the Son of God. The Christ is the Saviour of a sinful world. "I know that my Redeemer liveth!" Entering upon this investigation with a firm determination to hold an unbiased mind and trying to examine the evidence as an impartial judge there were moments of doubt as to the wisdom of setting one's mind so free. It seemed sometimes as if it was wrong, even for a day, to stand outside of the circle of earnest believers and be a neutral critic of sacred things. But the risk was taken. A tremor came with the suggestion that the lovely structure of our lifelong faith might be shattered, and only dust be left of the religious building which we had so fondly believed was a building that had indestructible foundations, "Eternal in the heavens."

But not one pillar has moved, not a rent or seam in any of the old walls has appeared. The fear that faith might be lost has increased our estimate of its everlasting value. The faith of our fathers stands secure. The testimony of unbalanced minds to the Sonship of Christ did not defeat the Saviour in his day, and they cannot do so now. The mistakes, errors, and superstitions of the extremists and deceivers have not made more than a ripple in the current of Christian faith. The tide comes back. The love for the Holy Bible revives. The prodigal will come to himself and come back. The spirit of the Christian religion is a necessity to human progress and human happiness. The world needs it. It may come slowly, but, nevertheless, it will come surely. The spirit will awaken. The winter cannot last forever. Prayer is as necessary to the spirit of man as breath is to his body. The soul's sincere desire will ever seek expression. The seeker after God will surely find him when he shall truly seek him with all his heart. Hundreds testified to the facts that their prayers were

answered where only a score or less asserted that they did not know whether their requests were heard or not. The millions who never tried to pray cannot be accepted as witnesses on either side. But the great majority of those who have tried the matter testify to its effectiveness.

The doubters, who quibble and stumble over the parables and miracles, find that whether the believer accepted them as literal history or as spiritual illustrations, they all teach the truth; and to believe in them can do no harm. The consensus of religious opinion among the common people is decidedly in favor of trusting more and, consequently, doubting less. "We will be no more children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the slight of men and cunning craftiness." We have put away childish things and here we stand, men and women, saved by grace, and "Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or peril, or sword? I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, not things to come, not height, not depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Right is Right, since God is God, And right the day will win; To doubt would be disloyalty, To falter would be sin.

Ye saints, with your faith of steel, pray on. Ye faltering sinners, smite your breast and pray on. Ye doubtful critics, pray on. Ye sorrow-stricken ones, pray on. In due time every petitioner shall reap if he or she faints not.

Oh, the rest, the peace, the joy of this settled conviction, that the faith in the Messiahship of Jesus Christ need be no more disturbed! "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen."

THE END
