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"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Poetry.

What is a year?

What is a year? 'Tis but a wave
On life's dark rolling stream,
Which is so quickly gone that we
Account it but a dream.

'Tis but a single earnest throb
Of Time's old iron heart,
Which tireless is, and strong as when
It first with life did start.

What is a year? 'Tis but a turn
Of Time's old brazen wheel,
Or but a page upon the book
Which death must shortly seal.

'Tis but a step upon the road
Which we must travel o'er;
A few more steps and we shall walk
Life's weary rounds no more.

Religions.

Who may pray?

BY REV. JOHN GRAY.

Let the teacher sent from God reply. He says *Men*. Yea, nor does he say men may, but "men *ought* to pray—*ought always* to pray—to pray, and *never faint*." Luke xviii. 1.

Stand up, my soul! Arise and speak his praise! *Those*, all unworthy, hell-deserving as thou art, art not excluded, not denied the privilege, for it is *MEN* on whom it is conferred, and not on one, but *all*—men of every clime and nation, of every character and condition, who *ought* to pray, *always* to pray, to pray and *never faint*."

O mercy, thy extent how great! O grace divine, thy riches! Pray on, my soul, pray on, and never faint, till thou in heaven be, where prayer is all unknown, uncalled for as a duty, unnecessary as a privilege, where all is song. As in heaven, prayer had never been known on earth, but for the entrance of evil, involving us in sin, guilt, and misery. Nor even then had prayer been resorted to by guilty man, had not God revealed himself as the God of grace and mercy. See Adam, not praying, but hiding away from God. Nor, as sinners, had prayer afforded us a single ray of hope, but for the interposition of Christ, who, as Mediator, stood up in the breach, "and gave himself up unto the cross," and was "wounded for our transgressions," and "died the just for us the unjust." He is our "way to God"—our "mercy seat"—his blood brings us nigh." "No man cometh unto the Father but by him." He is all our plea—the "Lord our righteousness"—our Dayman, our Advocate. Not our prayers, but his, for us, prevail. "Him the Father heareth always."

And the intercession of Christ does not render our praying unnecessary, for himself says—"Men *ought always* to pray, and *never faint*." It is made necessary by our sinfulness, our need, and our misery. Even the heathen feel the need of prayer. It is a cardinal point, lies at the foundation, and is the corner-stone of all human systems of worship, whether Jewish, Mohammedan, pagan, Christian; all feel and acknowledge the necessity of prayer.

What part, then, does prayer hold in our personal and individual religion? Is it its cardinal point, its alpha and omega? And in the churches of Christ what part is it acting?

Prayer, never forget it, is the balance of God's sanctuary, in which our religion is weighed. No man has experienced religion till it can be said of him, as of Saul, "Behold, he prayeth;" and no individual, nor church, has any greater measure of piety than he or it has of the spirit of prayer. Prayer is the pulse, that indicates an individual's or church's spiritual health.

"Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air."

But why "ought men always to pray?" Because on them only has God bestowed the high honor and privilege of exercising it. Angels are not allowed it—devils may not—man only may—man "ought." This exalts man, placing him next to Jesus the Mediator. True, angels can do much by serving; but

man can do far more by praying. Angels are but "ministering servants," men intercessors with God. Men's prayers make work for angels, and send them forth. (See Dan. viii. 15, 26; Dan. ix. 20, 27; Dan. x. 10, 21; Acts x. 30, 32.) Angels, by their services, bless only the individuals to whom they minister; men, by their prayers, the world at large.

The command to us is, "Do good unto all men, as ye have opportunity." What a command! "Do good unto all men!" Who but God can do this? *When, how, or by what* can men "find opportunity" to obey this command? We seek for it in vain but in prayer. By it we can be *universal* benefactors. Through God, by prayer, we can reach all men. Can make ourselves felt by all the world, by moving the HAND that rests on the wheels of providence, and on the wheels of grace. Prayer, to a certain degree, makes us omnipresent and omnipotent, because it prevails with God, who is both. Oh, then, "ought not men always to pray?" Yes indeed, the victories it has won, the blessings it has secured, the evils it has averted, the glory it gives to God, and the honor it confers on man, all unite to show, that "men ought always to pray."

Nor does the Saviour excuse any one from the duty, or exclude any one from the privilege. It is not he, nor she, nor they, but "men ought always to pray."

They *ought*—because all can, because all may, because all are commanded, because all need it, because no other act of worship reflects such glory on God, because it is the easiest way of obtaining good, the only way of obtaining the best and greatest of all good, even eternal life, and which can only be had as a donation in answer to prayer. "Ask, and ye shall receive." "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

And as prayer is the best way of obtaining good for ourselves, so it is one of the best ways of doing good to others. Then, as patriots, philanthropists, and Christians, "men ought always to pray." Our love of country, of the world, and of the church of God, urges us to the performance of the duty, because our country needs our prayers (more, at present, than ever it did), the world needs them, the church needs them, and the family needs them. With calls for prayer like these, "ought not men always to pray?"—to pray in the spirit in the family, in the closet, in the sanctuary, and in social gatherings for prayer?

Without such prayer as this, we can do no real good. Such prayer is as the oil to the lamp, the fire from heaven upon the altar, and as the soul to the body. Without it all is dark, and cold, and powerless, and dead. "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest day nor night." Pray, and you will be blest; pray, and you will be a blessing to others.

Jesus says it—it, therefore, must be true—"Men *ought always* to pray, and *not faint*." This implies that men can be in no circumstances of affliction, distress, or want, beyond the reach of God's power to deliver from and supply. Yea, there is a promise contained in the words "ought" and "not faint." They intimate that we shall not pray in vain—that the eye of God is ever on us, his ear open to hear us, and his hand stretched out still, "mighty to save"—to "save to the uttermost all who call upon him."

When we think of Him we address in prayer—what he has done, what he can do, that his arm is not shortened, that he is the "same to-day as he was yesterday," we "ought to pray, and *not faint*." Not look at the difficulties in our case, but at the power of God, whose name is "the Lord of Hosts," omnipotent to save. Look at the troubled sea, and like Peter, we sink; but look to Christ, and like him we are saved.

We *ought* not to faint—that dishonors God, and delays deliverance.

Our case may be peculiar, the trials many and great, answers delayed, and we may feel all unworthy as did the returning prodigal—but let us pray on, never give up, never faint. He who cannot lie, it is, who says to us—"Men *ought always* to pray, and *not faint*."

"Prayer makes the darkest cloud withdraw,
It climbs the ladder Jacob saw,
Gives exercise to faith and love,
Brings every blessing from above."

The Koran.

The followers of the False Prophet outnumber those of the Pope of Rome, and are nearly twice as numerous as all the sects of Protestant Christians combined. By all these the Koran is revered as a revelation from God, and as the most perfect of all his revelations. This book is but little known among Christians; few have any sufficient motive, and few, probably, would have sufficient patience to read it from beginning to end.

The word *Koran* means a reading, or that which ought to be read. The Hebrew scholar will at once recognize its affinity with the Hebrew word of the same signification. In extent the Koran is a little larger than the New Testament, or about one third as large as the Old. It is divided into 114 chapters, called in the Arabic *Suras*. These are much more unequal than those of Scripture. The first thirty chapters contain from four or five to nearly thirty pages each, of closely printed *duodecimo*, while very few of the last fifty contain as much as one page, and not more than two or three of the last thirty so much as half a page. Many of the closing chapters contain less than ten, and several of them not more than three or four lines. The first twenty chapters contain more than the remaining ninety-four, and the first seven fully one-fourth of the whole. They seem to have been arranged with reference to their length, without regard to the date of their delivery; though this principle is not followed out with minute accuracy. To all except one, (the ninth,) this sentence is prefixed, "In the Name of the Most Merciful God." They all have titles, also, some of which indicate the principal subject of the chapter, and others are derived from some word which is contained in the chapter, but which does not always seem to have any particular importance. The following are some of these titles: The Cow, the Bee, the Ant, the Spider, the Elephant; the Sun, the Moon, the Star; Thunder, the Earthquake; the Night, Daybreak, the Afternoon; Abraham, Joseph, Jonas, Mary. These last consist mainly of recapitulations of Scripture narratives, with additions which are often very puerile. Besides the titles proper, twenty-nine chapters have prefixed to them some letter, or several letters of the alphabet. These letters are said by the Mohammedans to conceal profound mysteries, which have never been revealed to any but the Prophet himself. Each of the chapters is divided into verses. The second chapter, which is the longest of all, contains 286 of these verses; and some of the last chapters contain only from three to five or six. But these subdivisions are not regarded in the English editions, being separated only by a period.

The Koran was revealed to Mohammed, according to the story, in short fragments, beginning from the 40th year of his age, when he left his cave, assumed the title of "the Prophet of God," and began to exert himself to propagate his new religion, and continuing till the time of his death, a period of twenty-three years. The first thirteen years of this time he spent in Mecca, and the last ten in Medina. The angel Gabriel is said to have appeared to him from time to time, and dictated a few verses, directing him in what chapter to record them. It is therefore quite impossible to determine the order of time in which the different parts of the Koran were written. It is agreed, however, that the first five verses of the forty-sixth chapter were the earliest of all these angelic communications. According to the inscriptions, eighty-five of the chapters were revealed at Mecca, seventeen at Medina, and one, (the second,) partly at Mecca and partly at Medina; while one, (the fifty-seventh,) is said to have been revealed at Mecca or Medina, and ten are marked as disputed in this respect. The tradition is, that the whole Koran was sent down from God to the lowest heaven at once, and that the Prophet had the privilege of seeing this entire original once a year, and twice during the last year of his life.

The style of the Koran is reputed among Mohammedans to be superior to that of any other book. It is indeed admitted to be the standard of purity and elegance in the Arabic language; but some learned unbelievers have avowedly attempted to rival its literary ex-

cellence, and in the judgment of Arabic scholars not without success. Mohammed himself often claims to have his divine mission, and the inspiration of the Koran, admitted on this particular ground. Such expressions as this often occur: "I have revealed to thee this Koran in the perspicuous Arabic language;" and in the tenth chapter we read as follows: "This Koran could not have been composed by any except God. * * Will they say, Mohammed hath forged it? Answer, Bring therefore a chapter like unto it; and call whom you may to your assistance, besides God, if ye speak truth." The impression which the translation of Sale makes upon the English reader does not by any means accord with this high claim. It abounds in repetitions, in puerilities, and in expressions and allusions which are, to say the least, on the borders of indecency.—*Examiner*.

Church Thermometer.

A thermometer measures the degree of heat, the temperature of the atmosphere, or of anything else in which it is placed. So there is a moral thermometer, which determines quite accurately the warmth of the church. I do not mean the instrument hung up to show the warmth of the audience-room, important as it may be, but I mean something which shows the temperature of the heart. It is the *prayer-meeting*. When the church is warm it shows it; and when it is cold it just as unmistakably indicates it; and all the way up and down the scale, we may there read its condition. All that it is necessary to do to learn the true state of things in this respect is to consult the thermometer. Reader, how is it with your thermometer? Are you acquainted with the prayer-meeting, so that you can answer this question? Perhaps your thermometer needs a little looking after. See to it.—*Morning Star*.

COMMIT YOURSELVES.—It is not always best to commit yourself on everything. In some things it is policy, nay, duty, to keep your own counsels. It might do more harm than good to disclose them. But it is not so in religion. You should always be ready to commit yourself on the Lord's side—to "give a reason for the hope that is in you." It will strengthen your purpose—your character—and make you a holder, better Christian; and it will be a great means of doing good to others. You should thus hold up the cross of Christ, and throw your influence on the right side.—*Id.*

A BRIEF ESSAY ON MAN AND WOMAN.—Man is strong; woman is beautiful. Man is daring and confident; woman is diffident and unassuming. Man is great in action; woman in suffering. Man shines abroad; woman at home. Man talks to convince; woman to persuade and please. Man has a rugged heart; woman a soft and tender one. Man prevents misery; woman relieves it. Man has science; woman taste. Man has judgment; woman sensibility. Man is a being of justice; woman of mercy. Each possesses peculiar gifts and a wide sphere of usefulness, and, by the wise use of those respective gifts, society is benefited and God is honoured.—*Quiver*.

"WENT ASIDE INTO A DESERT PLACE."—We are told that when the apostles returned from their ministerial work, our Lord "took them and went aside privately into a desert place." We cannot doubt that this was done with a deep meaning. It was meant to teach the great lesson, that those who do public work for the souls of others, must be careful to make time for being alone with God. The lesson is one which many Christians would do well to remember. Occasional retirement, self-inquiry, meditation, and communion with God, are absolutely essential to spiritual health. That man who neglects them is in great danger of a fall. To be always preaching, teaching, speaking, writing, and working public works, is unquestionably a sign of zeal according to knowledge. It often leads to untoward consequences. We must take time occasionally for sitting down and calmly looking within, and examining how matters stand between ourselves and Christ. The omission of the practice is the true account for many a backsliding which shocks the Church, and