

SELECT  
PRACTICAL WRITINGS  
OF  
JOHN KNOX.

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THE  
WRITINGS OF JOHN KNOX

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TREATISE ON PRAYER.

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A DECLARATION WHAT TRUE PRAYER IS, HOW WE SHOULD PRAY,  
AND FOR WHAT WE SHOULD PRAY; SET FORTH BY JOHN KNOX,  
PREACHER OF GOD'S HOLY WORD.

UNTO THE SMALL AND DISPERSED FLOCK OF JESUS CHRIST.

**P**RAYER *springeth out of true faith*, Rom., x.—How necessary is the right invocation of God's name, (otherwise called perfect prayer,) it becometh no Christian to mistake, seeing it is the very branch which springeth forth of true faith; whereof if any man be destitute, notwithstanding he be endowed with whatsoever virtues, yet in the presence of God is he reputed for no Christian at all. Therefore a manifest sign it is, that such as in prayer always are negligent, do understand nothing of perfect faith. For if the fire may be without heat, or the burning lamp without light, then true faith may be without fervent prayer. But because in times past was, (and yet, alas, with no small number is,) that reckoned to be prayer, which in the sight of God was, and is nothing less, I intend shortly to touch the circumstances thereof.

*What prayer is.*—Prayer is an earnest and familiar talking with God, to whom we declare our miseries, whose support and help we implore and desire in our adversities, and whom we laud and praise for our benefits received. So that prayer containeth the exposition of our sorrows, the desire of God's defence, and the praising of his magnificent name, as the Psalms of David clearly do teach.

*What is to be observed in prayer.*—That this be most reverently done, the consideration should provoke us in whose presence we stand, to whom we speak, and what we desire; standing in the presence of the omnipotent Creator of heaven and earth, and of all the contents thereof, to whom assist and serve a thousand thousand of angels, giving obedience to his eternal majesty; (Dan., iii; Job, xvi,) and speaking unto him who knoweth the secrets of our hearts, before whom, dissimulation and lies are always odious and hateful, and asking that thing which may be most to his glory, and to the comfort of our conscience. But diligently should we attend, that such things as may

offend his godly presence, to the uttermost of our power may be removed. And first, that worldly cares and fleshly cogitations, such as draw us from contemplation of our God, be expelled from us, that we may freely without interruption call upon God. But how difficult and hard is this one thing in prayer to perform, none knoweth better, than such as in their prayers are not content to remain within the bands of their own vanity, but as it were, ravished, do intend to a purity allowed of God; asking not such things as the foolish reason of man desireth, but that which may be pleasant and acceptable in God's presence. Our adversary, Satan, at all times compassing us about, (1 Pet., v,) is never more busy than when we address and bend ourselves to prayer. Oh, how secretly and subtly creepeth he into our breasts; and calling us back from God, causeth us to forget what we have to do! So that frequently, when we with all reverence should speak to God, we find our hearts talking with the vanities of the world, or with the foolish imaginations of our own conceit. So that, without the Spirit of God supporting our infirmities, mightily making intercession for us with incessant groans which cannot be expressed with tongue, (Rom., viii,) there is no hope that we can desire any thing according to God's will.

*How the Spirit maketh intercession for us.*—I mean not that the Holy Ghost doth mourn or pray, but that he stirreth up our minds, giving unto us a desire or boldness to pray, and causeth us to mourn, when we are extracted or pulled therefrom: which things to conceive, no strength of man sufficeth, neither is able of itself. But hereof it is plain, that such as understand not what they pray, or expound not, or declare not the desire of their hearts clearly in God's presence; and in time of prayer, to their possibility, do not expel vain cogitations from their minds, profit nothing in prayer.

*Why we should pray, and also understand what we pray.*—But some will object, and say, Albeit we understand not what we pray, yet God understandeth, who knoweth the secrets of our hearts; he knoweth also what we need, although we explain not or declare not our necessities unto him. Such men verily declare themselves never to have understanding what perfect prayer meant, nor to what end Jesus Christ commandeth us to pray; which is, first, that our hearts may be inflamed with continual fear, honour, and love of God, to whom we run for support and help, whensoever danger or necessity requireth; that we so learning to notify our desires in his presence he may teach us what is to be desired, and what not. Secondly, that we knowing our petitions to be granted by God alone, to him only we must render and give laud and praise; and that we ever having his infinite goodness fixed in our minds, may constantly abide to receive that which with fervent prayer we desire. For sometimes God deferreth or prolongeth to grant our petitions, for the exercise and trial of our faith, and not that he sleepeth, or is absent from us at any time; but that with more gladness we might receive

that which with long expectation we have awaited, that thereby we, assured of his eternal providence, so far as the infirmity of our corrupt and most weak nature will permit, may not doubt but his merciful hand shall relieve us in most urgent necessity and extreme tribulation. Therefore, such men as teach us that it is not necessary whether that we understand what we pray, because God knoweth what we need, would also teach us, that neither should we honour God, nor yet refer or give unto him thanks for benefits received. For how shall we honour and praise him whose goodness and liberality we know not? And how shall we know, unless we receive, and sometimes have experience? And how shall we know that we have received, unless we know verily what we have asked?

The second thing to be observed in perfect prayer is, that standing in the presence of God, we be found such as bear reverence to his holy law, earnestly repenting our past iniquity, and intending to lead a new life; for otherwise, in vain are all our prayers, as it is written, “whoso withdraweth his ear, that he may not hear the Law, his prayer shall be abominable.” (Prov., xv.) Likewise Isaiah and Jeremiah say thus: “Ye shall multiply your prayers, and I shall not hear, because your hands are full of blood;” that is, of all cruelty and mischievous works. Also the Spirit of God appeareth by the mouth of the blind whom Jesus Christ did illuminate, by these words, “we know that God heareth not sinners;” (John, ix,) that is, such as glory and do continue in iniquity.

*When sinners are not heard of God.*—So that of necessity true repentance must needs be had and go before perfect prayer, or sincere invocation of God’s name. And unto these two precedents must be annexed the third, which is the direction of ourselves in God’s presence, utterly refusing and casting off our own righteousness with all cogitations and opinion thereof. And let us not think that we shall be heard for any thing proceeding of ourselves. For all such as advance, boast, or depend any thing upon their own righteousness, repel and hold from the presence of His mercy with the high proud Pharisee. And, therefore, the most holy men we find in prayers most dejected and humbled. David saith, “O Lord, our Saviour, help us, be merciful unto our sins for thy own sake. Remember not our old iniquities, but haste thou, O Lord, and let thy mercy prevent us.” (Psalm lxxix.) Jeremiah saith, “If our iniquities bear testimony against us, do thou according to thy own name.” And behold Isaiah, “Thou art angry, O Lord, because we have sinned, and are replenished with all wickedness, and our righteousness is like a defiled cloth. But now, O Lord, thou art our Father: we are clay thou art the workman, and we the workmanship of thy hands. Be not angry, O Lord; remember not our iniquities for ever.” (Isa., lxiv.) And Daniel, greatly commended of God, maketh in his prayer most humble confession, in these words, “We be sinners, and have offended; we have done ungodly, and fall-

en from thy commandment: therefore not in our own righteousness make we our prayer before thee, but thy most rich and great mercy bring we forth for us. O Lord, hear; O Lord, be merciful, and spare us, O Lord; attend, help, and cease not, my God, even for thy own name's sake; do it, for thy city and thy people are called after thy own name." (Dan., ix.) Behold, that in these prayers is no mention of their own righteousness, their own satisfaction, or their own merits; but most humble confession, proceeding from a sorrowful and penitent heart, having nothing whereupon it might depend, but the sure mercy of God alone, who had promised to be their God; that is, their help, comfort, defender, and deliverer (as he hath also done to us by Jesus Christ.) in time of tribulation. And therefore they despaired not; but after the acknowledging of their sins, called for mercy, and obtained the same. Wherefore it is plain, that such men as in their prayers have respect to any virtue proceeding of themselves, thinking thereby their prayers to be accepted, never prayed aright.

*What fasting and alms-deeds are with prayer.*—And, albeit, to fervent prayer be joined fasting, watching, and alms-deeds, yet are none of these the cause that God doth accept our prayers. But they are spurs, which suffer us not to vary; but make us more able to continue in prayer, which the mercy of God doth accept.

But here may it be objected that David prayeth, "Keep my life, O Lord, for I am holy: O Lord, save my soul, for I am innocent; and suffer me not to be confounded." (Ps. xxxviii, lxxxvi.) Also Hezekiah, "Remember, Lord, I beseech thee, that I have walked righteously before thee, and that I have wrought that which is good in thy sight." (2 Kings, xx.) These words are not spoken of men glorious, neither yet trusting in their own works. But herein they testify themselves to be the sons of God by regeneration; to whom he promiseth always to be merciful, and at all times to hear their prayers.

*The cause of their boldness was Jesus Christ.*—And so, their words spring from a wonted, constant, and fervent faith; surely believing, that as God of his infinite mercy had called them to his knowledge, not suffering them to walk after their own natural wickedness, but partly had taught them to conform themselves to his holy law, and that, for the promised Seed's sake, so might he not leave them destitute of comfort, consolation, and defence, in so great and extreme necessity. And so their righteousness allege they not to glory thereof, or to put trust therein, but to strengthen and confirm them in God's promises. And this consolation I would wish to all Christians, in their prayers, a testimony of a good conscience to assure them of God's promises; but to obtain what they ask, must only depend upon him, all opinion and thought of our own righteousness laid aside. And, moreover, David, in the words above, compareth himself with King Saul, and with the rest of his enemies, who wrongfully did persecute him, desiring of God that

they prevail not against him—as he would say, Unjustly do they persecute me, and therefore, according to my innocency, defend me—for otherwise he confesseth himself most grievously to have offended God, as in the preceding places he clearly testifieth.

*Hypocrisy is not allowed with God.*—Thirdly, In prayer is to be observed, that what we ask of God, we must earnestly desire the same, acknowledging ourselves to be indigent and void thereof, and that God alone may grant the petition of our hearts when his good will and pleasure is. For nothing is more odious before God than hypocrisy and dissimulation; that is, when men do ask of God things whereof they have no need, or that they believe to obtain by others than by God alone. As if a man ask of God remission of his sins, thinking, nevertheless, to obtain the same by his own works, or by other men's merits, he doth mock with God and deceive himself. And, in such cases, do a great number offend, principally the mighty and rich of the earth, who, for a common custom, will pray this part of the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread," that is, a moderate and reasonable sustenance; and yet, their own hearts will testify, that they need not so to pray, seeing they abound in all worldly solace and felicity. I mean not, that rich men should not pray this part of prayer: but I would they understood what they ought to pray in it, (whereof I intend after to speak,) and that they ask nothing whereof they felt not themselves marvellously indigent and needful; for unless we call in verity, He will not grant; and except we speak with our whole heart, we shall not find him.

The fourth rule necessary to be followed in prayer is, a sure hope to obtain what we ask: for nothing more offendeth God than when we ask doubting whether he will grant our petitions; for, in so doing, we doubt if God be true, if he be mighty and good. Such, saith James, obtain nothing of God, (James, i); and therefore Jesus Christ commandeth, that we firmly believe to obtain whatsoever we ask, for all things are possible unto him that believeth. And therefore, in our prayers, desperation is always to be expelled. I mean not, that any man in extremity of trouble, can be without a present sorrow, and without a greater fear of trouble to follow. Trouble and fear are the very spurs to prayer: for when man, compassed about with vehement calamities, and vexed with continual solicitude, having, by help of man, no hope of deliverance, with sore oppressed and punished heart, fearing also greater punishment to follow, from the deep pit of tribulation, doth call to God for comfort and support, such prayer ascendeth into God's presence, and returneth not in vain.

As David, in the vehement persecution of Saul, hunted and chased from every hole, fearing that one day or other he should fall into the hands of his persecutors, after that he had complained that no place of rest was left to him, vehemently prayed, saying, "O Lord, who art my God, in whom alone

I trust, save me from them that persecute me, and deliver me from my enemies. Let not this man (meaning Saul) devour my life, as a lion doth his prey, for of none seek I comfort but of thee alone.” (Psalm vii.) In the midst of these anguishes, the goodness of God sustained him, so that the present tribulation was tolerable; and the infallible promises of God so assured him of deliverance, that fear was partly mitigated and gone, as plainly appeareth to such as diligently mark the process of his prayer. For, after long menacing and threatening made to him of his enemy, he concludeth with these words, “The sorrow which he intended to me, shall fall upon his own pate; and the violence wherewith he would have oppressed me, shall cast down his own head: but I will magnify the Lord according to his righteousness, and shall praise the name of the Most High.”

*God delivereth his chosen from their enemies.*—This is not written for David only, but for all such as shall suffer tribulation, to the end of the world. For the writer hereof, (let this be said to the laud and praise of God alone,) in anguish of mind, and vehement tribulation and affliction, called upon the Lord, when not only the ungodly, but even my faithful brethren, yea, and my own self; that is, all natural understanding, judged my case to be irremediable. And yet, in my greatest calamity, and when my pains were most cruel, his eternal wisdom willed that my hands should write,<sup>1</sup> far contrary to the judgment of carnal reason; which his mercy hath proved true, blessed be his holy name. And therefore dare I be bold in the verity of God’s word to promise, that, notwithstanding the vehemency of trouble, the long continuance thereof; the despair of all men, the fearfulness, danger, sorrow, and anguish of our own hearts, yet if we call constantly to God, that, beyond expectation of all men, he shall deliver.

Let no man think himself unworthy to call and pray to God, because he hath grievously offended his majesty in times past; but let him bring to God a sorrowful and repenting heart, saying with David, “Heal my soul, O Lord, for I have offended against thee. Before I was afflicted, I transgressed; but now let me observe thy commandments.” (Ps. vi, cxix.)

To mitigate or ease the sorrows of our wounded conscience, two plaisters hath our most prudent Physician provided, to give us encouragement to pray, notwithstanding the knowledge of offences committed; that is, a Precept and a Promise. The precept or commandment to pray is universal, frequently inculcated and repeated in God’s Scriptures: “Ask, and it shall be given unto you.” (Matt., vii.) “Call upon me in the day of trouble.” (Psal. 1.) “Watch and pray, that ye fall not into temptation.” (Matt., xxvi.) “I command, that ye pray ever, without ceasing.” (1 Tim., ii.) “Make deprecations incessant, and give thanks in all things.” (1 Thess., v.) Which commandments whoso contemneth or despiseth, doth equally sin with him that doth steal. For as this commandment, “Thou shalt not steal,” is a precept

negative, so “Thou shalt pray,” is a commandment affirmative; and God requireth equal obedience of, and to all his commandments. Yet more boldly will I say, he who, when necessity constraineth, desireth not support and help of God, doth provoke his wrath no less than do such as make false gods, or openly deny God.

*He that prayeth not in trouble, denieth God.*—For like as it is to know no physician or medicine, or, in knowing them, refuse to use and receive the same; so, not to call upon God in thy tribulation, is like as if thou didst not know God, or else utterly deny him.

*Not to pray is a sin most odious.*—Oh, why cease we then to call instantly upon his mercy, having his commandment so to do! Above all our iniquities, we work manifest contempt and despising of Him, when by negligence we delay to call for his gracious support. Whoso calleth on God obeyeth his will, and findeth therein no small consolation, knowing nothing is more acceptable to his majesty than humble obedience.

To this commandment he addeth his most undoubted promise in many places: “Ask, and ye shall receive, seek, and ye shall find.” (Matt., vii.) And by the prophet Jeremiah God saith, “Ye shall call upon me, and I shall hear you; ye shall seek, and shall find me.” (Jer., xxix.) And by Isaiah he saith, “May the father forget his natural son, or the mother the child of her womb? And although they do, yet shall I not forget such as call upon me.” And hereto correspond and agree the words of Jesus Christ, saying, “If ye, being wicked, can give good gifts to your children, much more my heavenly Father shall give the Holy Ghost to them that ask him.” (Matt., vii.) And that we should not think God to be absent, or not to hear us, Moses occurreth, saying, “There is no nation that have their gods so adherent or nigh unto them as our God, who is present at all our prayers.” (Deut., iv.) Also the Psalmist, “Near is the Lord to all that call upon him in verity.” And Christ saith, “Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

*Readiness of God to hear sinners.*—That we may not think that God will not hear us, Isaiah saith, “Before ye cry I shall hear, and while they yet speak I shall answer.” And also, “If at even come sorrow or calamity, before the morning spring, I shall restore, and bring gladness.” And these most comfortable words doth the Lord not speak to carnal Israel only, but to all men sore oppressed, abiding God’s deliverance; “For a moment and a little season have I turned my face from thee, but in everlasting mercy shall I comfort thee.”

*The hope to obtain our petitions, should depend upon the promises of God.*—Oh! hard are the hearts which so manifold most sweet and sure promises do not mollify, whereupon should depend the hope to obtain our petitions. The indignity or unworthiness of ourselves is not to be regarded;

for albeit to the chosen who are departed, in holiness and purity of life we be far inferiors, yet in that part we are equal, in that we have the same commandment to pray, and the same promise to be heard. For his gracious majesty esteemeth not the prayer, neither granteth the petition, for any dignity or worthiness of the person that prayeth, but for his promise' sake only. And therefore, saith David, "Thou hast promised unto thy servant, O Lord, that thou wilt build a house for him; wherefore thy servant hath found in his heart to pray in thy sight. Now, even so, O Lord, thou art God, and thy words are true: thou hast spoken these good things unto thy servant. Begin therefore to do according to thy promise: multiply, O Lord, the household of thy servant." Behold, David altogether dependeth upon God's promise; as also did Jacob, who, after he had confessed himself unworthy of all the benefits received, yet durst he ask greater benefits in time to come, and that, because God hath promised. In like manner, let us be encouraged to ask whatsoever the goodness of God hath freely promised. What we should ask principally, we shall hereafter declare.

*Of necessity we must have a mediator.*—The fifth observation which godly prayer requireth is, the perfect knowledge of the advocate, intercessor, and mediator; for, seeing no man is of himself worthy to stand, or appear in God's presence, by reason that in all men continually resteth sin, which, by itself doth offend the majesty of God, raising also debate, strife, hatred, and division betwixt his inviolable justice and us, for the which, unless satisfaction be made by another than by ourselves, so little hope resteth that any thing from him we can attain, that no surety may we have with him at all. To exempt us from this horrible confusion, our most merciful Father, knowing that our frail minds should hereby have been continually dejected, hath given unto us his only beloved Son, to be unto us righteousness, wisdom, sanctification, and holiness. If in him we faithfully believe, we are so clad that we may with boldness stand and appear before the throne of God's mercy, doubting nothing, but that whatsoever we ask through our Mediator, that same we shall obtain most assuredly. Here, is most diligently to be observed, that without our Mediator, fore-speaker, and peace-maker, we enter not into prayer; for the incallings of such as pray without Jesus Christ are not only vain, but also, they are odious and abominable before God. Which thing to us in the Levitical priesthood most evidently was prefigured and declared: for as within the *sanctum sanctorum*, that is, the most holy place, entered no man but the High Priest alone, and as all sacrifices offered by any other than by priests only, provoked the wrath of God upon the sacrifice-maker; so, whoever doth intend to enter into God's presence, or to make prayers without Jesus Christ, shall find nothing but fearful judgment and horrible damnation.

Wherefore it is plain, that Turks and Jews, notwithstanding that they do apparently most fervently pray unto God who created heaven and earth, who guideth and ruleth the same, who defendeth the good and punisheth the evil, yet never are their prayers pleasant unto God; neither honour they his holy majesty in any thing, because they acknowledge not Jesus Christ. For he who honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father. For as the law is a statute that we shall call upon God, and as the promise is made that he shall hear us, so are we commanded only to call through Jesus Christ, by whom alone our petitions we obtain; for in him alone are all the promises of God confirmed and complete. Whereof, without all controversy, it is plain, that such as have called, or call presently unto God by any other mean than by Jesus Christ alone, do nothing regard God's will, but obstinately prevaricate, and do against his commandments; and therefore, obtain they not their petitions, neither yet have entrance to his mercy; "for no man cometh to the Father," saith Jesus Christ, "but by me." He is the right way: who declineth from him erreth, and goeth wrong. He is our leader, whom, unless we follow, we shall walk in darkness; and he alone is our captain, without whom, neither praise nor victory ever shall we obtain.

Against such as depend upon the intercession of saints, no otherwise will I contend, but shortly touch the properties of a perfect mediator. First, the words of Paul are most sure, that a mediator is not the mediator of one; that is, wheresoever is required a mediator, there are also two parties; to wit, one party offending, and the other party which is offended; which parties, by themselves may in no ways be reconciled. Secondly, the mediator who taketh upon him the reconciling of these two parties, must be such a one as having trust and favour of both parties, yet in some things must differ from both; and must be clean and innocent also of the crime committed against the party offended. Let this be more plain by this subsequent declaration:

*Angels may not be mediators.*—The eternal God, standing upon the one part, and all natural men descending of Adam upon the other part; the infinite justice of God is so offended with the transgression of all men, that in no wise can amity be made, except such a one be found, as fully may make satisfaction for man's offences. Among the sons of men none was found able; for they were all found criminal in the fault of one; and God, infinite in justice, must abhor the society and sacrifice of sinners. And as to the angels, what might prevail their substitution for man?<sup>2</sup> who, albeit they would have interposed themselves as mediators, yet they had not the infinite righteousness.

*Jesus Christ, God and man, is Mediator.*—Who, then, shall here be found the peace-maker? Surely the infinite goodness and mercy of God might not suffer the perpetual loss and repudiation of his creatures; and therefore his eternal wisdom provided such a mediator, having wherewith to satisfy the

justice of God—differing also from the Godhead:—his only Son, clad in the nature of manhood, who interposed himself a mediator; not as man only; for the pure humanity of Christ of itself might neither make intercession nor satisfaction for us; but God and man. In that he is God he might complete the will of the Father; and in that he is man, pure and clean, without spot or sin, he might offer sacrifice for the purgation of our sins, and satisfaction of God's justice. For unless saints have these two, Godhead equal with the Father, and humanity without sin, the office of mediators saints may not usurp.

But here will be objected, “who knoweth not Jesus Christ to be the only mediator of our redemption? but that impedeth or hindereth nothing saints and holy men to be mediators and to make intercession for us.” As though that Jesus Christ had been but one hour our mediator, and after, had resigned the office to his servants!

*Who maketh other mediators than Jesus Christ, taketh honour from him.*—Do not such men glibly entreat Jesus Christ, detracting from him such a portion of his honour? Otherwise speak the Scriptures of God, testifying him to have been made man, and to have proved our infirmities; to have suffered death willingly; to have overcome the same; and all to this end, that he might be our perpetual high sovereign Priest, into whose place or dignity none other might enter. (Heb. vi, vii, ix, x.) As John saith, “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ, the righteous.” (1 John, ii. ) Mark well these words. John saith, we have presently a sufficient advocate; whom Paul affirmeth to sit at the right hand of God the Father: (Rom. viii;) and to be the only Mediator between God and man; for he alone, saith Ambrose, is our mouth, by whom we speak to God: he is our eyes, by whom we see God; and also our right hand, by whom we offer any thing unto the Father; who, unless he make intercession, neither we, neither any of the saints, may have any society or fellowship with God. What creature may say to God the Father, “Let mankind be received into thy favour; for the pain of his transgression, that have I sustained in my own body; for his cause was I encompassed with all infirmities, and so became the most contemned and despised of all men, and yet, in my mouth was found no guile nor deceit; but always obedient to thy will, suffering most grievous death for mankind. And therefore, behold not the sinner, but me, who by my infinite righteousness have perfectly satisfied for his offences?”—May any other, Jesus Christ except, in these words make intercession for sinners? If they may not, then are they neither mediators nor yet intercessors. “For albeit,” saith Augustine, “Christians do commend one another unto God in their prayers, yet make they not intercession, neither dare they usurp the office of a mediator: no, not Paul, albeit under the Head he was a principal member, because he commendeth himself to the prayers of faithful men.” But if any do object, such is not the condition of the saints departed, who now have put

off mortality, and bear no longer the fragility of the flesh;—although I grant this to be most true, yet are they all compelled to cast their crowns before Him who sitteth on the throne, acknowledging themselves to have been delivered from great affliction, to have been purged by the blood of the Lamb; and therefore none of them do attempt to be a mediator, seeing they neither have being nor righteousness of themselves. But in so great light of the Gospel which now is beginning, (praise be to the Omnipotent!) it is not necessary upon such matter long to remain.

Some say, we will use but one mediator, Jesus Christ, to God the Father; but we must have saints, and chiefly the Virgin, the mother of Jesus Christ, to pray for us into him.

*Against such as would have mediators to Jesus Christ.*—Alas! whosoever is so minded, showeth himself plainly to know nothing of Jesus Christ rightly. Is He who descended from heaven, and vouchsafed to be conversant with sinners, commanding all sore vexed and sick to come unto him, (Matt., xi,) who, hanging upon the cross, prayed first for his enemies, become now so intractable, that he will not hear us, without a person to be a mean? O Lord, open the eyes of such, that they may clearly perceive thy infinite kindness, gentleness, and love towards mankind.

Above all precedents, is to be observed, that what we ask of God, ought to be profitable to ourselves and to others, and hurtful or dangerous to no man. Secondly, we must consider whether our petitions extend to spiritual or corporal things.

Spiritual things, such as are deliverance from impiety, remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and of life everlasting, we should desire absolutely, without any condition, by Jesus Christ, in whom alone all these are promised. And in asking hereof, we should not pray thus, “O Father, forgive our sins if thou wilt;” for his will He hath expressed, saying, “As I live, I desire not the death of a sinner, but rather that he convert, and live;” which immutable and solemn oath, who calleth in doubt, maketh God a liar, and, as far as in him lieth, would spoil God of his godhead. For he cannot be God except he be eternal and infallible verity. And John saith, “This is the testimony which God hath testified of his Son, that who believeth in the Son, hath eternal life, (1 John, v,) to the verity whereof we should steadfastly cleave, although worldly sorrows apprehend us—as David exiled from his kingdom, and deprived of all his glory, secluded not himself from God, but steadfastly believed reconciliation by the promise made, notwithstanding that all creatures on earth had refused, rejected, and rebelled against him, Happy is the man whom thou shalt inspire, O Lord!

In asking corporal things, first, let us enquire, if we be at peace with God in our consciences, by Jesus Christ, firmly believing our sins to be remitted in his blood. Secondly, let us enquire of our own hearts, if we know tem-

poral riches or substance not to come to man by accident, fortune, or chance, neither yet by the industry and diligence of man's labour; but to be the liberal gift of God only, whereof we ought to laud and praise his goodness, wisdom, and providence alone.

*What should be prayed for.*—And if this we do truly acknowledge and confess, let us boldly ask of Him whatsoever is necessary for us; as sustenance of the body, health thereof, defence from misery, deliverance from trouble, tranquillity and peace to our commonwealth, prosperous success in our vocations, labours, and affairs, whatsoever they be; which God willeth we ask all of Him, to certify us that all things stand in his government and disposal; and also, by asking and receiving these corporal commodities, we may have taste of his sweetness, and be inflamed with his love, that thereby our faith of reconciliation and remission of our sins may be exercised and take increase.

But, in asking such temporal things, we must observe, first, that if God deferreth or prolongeth to grant our petitions, even so long that he doth apparently reject us, yet let us not cease to call, prescribing him neither time, neither manner of deliverance: as it is written, “If he prolong time, abide patiently upon him:” and also, “Let not the faithful be too hasty; for God sometimes deferreth, and will not hastily grant, for the probation of our continuance,” as the words of Jesus Christ testify: and also that we may receive with greater gladness that, which with ardent desire we long have looked for—as Hannah, Sarah, and Elizabeth, after great ignominy of their barrenness and sterility, received fruit of their bosoms with joy.

Secondly, because we know the kirk at all times to be under the cross; in asking temporal commodities, and especially deliverance from trouble, let us offer to God obedience; if it shall please his goodness we be longer exercised, that we may patiently abide it. As David, desirous to be restored to his kingdom, what time he was exiled by his own son, offereth unto God obedience, saying, “If I have found favour in the presence of the Lord, he shall bring me home again. But if He shall say, Thou pleasest me no longer to bear authority, I am obedient; let him do what seemeth good to him.” (2 Sam., xv.) And the three children unto Nebuchadnezzar did say, “We know that our God whom we worship may deliver us; but if it shall not please him so to do, let it be known to thee, O king, that thy gods we will not worship.” (Dan., iii.)

*Better it is to obey God than man.*—Here the [children] gave a true confession of their perfect faith, knowing nothing to be impossible to the omnipotence of God; affirming also themselves to stand in his mercy; for otherwise, the nature of man could not willingly give itself to so horrible a torment. But they offer unto God most humble obedience, to be delivered at his good pleasure and will; as we should do in all afflictions; for we know not

what to ask or desire as we ought, that is, the frail flesh oppressed with fear and pain, desireth deliverance, ever abhorring and drawing back from obedience-giving. (O Christian brother, I write by experience!) But the Spirit of God calleth back the mind to obedience, that albeit it desires and abides for deliverance, yet should it not repine against the good will of God, but incessantly to ask that it may abide with patience. How hard this battle is no man knoweth, but he who in himself hath suffered trial.

*The petition of the spirit.*—It is to be noted, that God sometimes doth grant the petition of the spirit, while he yet deferreth the desire of the flesh. As who doubteth but God did mitigate the heaviness of Joseph, although he sent not hasty deliverance in his long imprisonment; and that, as he gave him favour in the sight of his jailor, so, inwardly also, he gave him consolation in spirit? (Gen., xxxix.) And moreover, God sometimes granteth the petition of the spirit, while he utterly repelleth the desire of the flesh. For the petition of the spirit always is, that we may attain to the true felicity, whereunto we must needs enter by tribulation, and the final death, both of which the nature of man doth ever abhor. And therefore the flesh under the cross, and at the sight of death, calleth and thirsteth for hasty deliverance.

*The flesh striveth against the spirit.*—But God who alone knoweth what is expedient for us, sometimes prolongeth the deliverance of his chosen, and sometimes permitteth them to drink, before the maturity of age, the bitter cup of corporal death, that thereby, they may receive medicine, and cure from all infirmity. For who doubteth, but that John the Baptist desired to have seen more the days of Jesus Christ, and to have been longer with him in conversation? Or that Stephen would not have laboured more days in preaching Christ's gospel, whom nevertheless he suffered hastily to taste of this general sentence? And albeit we see therefore no apparent help to ourselves, nor yet to others afflicted, let us not cease to call, thinking our prayers to be vain; for whatsoever come of our bodies, God shall give unspeakable comfort to the spirit, and turn all to our advantages, beyond our own expectation. The cause I am so long tedious in this matter is, that I know how hard the battle is between the spirit and the flesh, under the heavy cross of affliction where no worldly defence but present death does appear.

*Impediments come of weakness of the flesh.*—I know the grudging and murmuring complaints of the flesh; I know the anger, wrath, and indignation which it conceiveth against God, calling all his promises in doubt, and being ready every hour utterly to fall from God. Against which, remains only faith, provoking us to call earnestly, and pray for assistance of God's Spirit; wherein, if we continue, our most desperate calamities he shall turn to gladness and to a prosperous end.

To thee, O Lord, alone be praise, for with experience I write this and speak.

Where, and for Whom, and at what Time, we ought to pray, is not to be passed over with silence. Private prayer, such as men secretly offer unto God by themselves, requires no special place; although Jesus Christ commandeth, when we pray, to enter into our chamber, and to close the door, and so, to pray secretly unto our Father. (Matt., vi.) Whereby He wills, that we should choose for our prayers such places as might offer least occasion to call us back from prayer, and also, that we should expel forth of our minds in time of our prayer, all vain cogitations; for otherwise, Jesus Christ himself doth observe no special place of prayer; for we find him sometimes praying in Mount Olivet, sometimes in the desert, sometimes in the temple, and in the garden. Peter desireth to pray upon the top of the house. (Acts, x.) Paul prayed in prison, and was heard of God; who also commandeth men to pray in all places, lifting up unto God pure and clean hands; as we find that the prophets and most holy men did, wheresoever danger or necessity required.

*Appointed places to pray in may not be neglected.*—But public and common prayers should be used in the place appointed for the assembly of the congregation, whence whosoever negligently withdraweth himself is in nowise excusable. I mean not that to be absent from that place is sin, because that place is more holy than another; for the whole earth created by God is equally holy. But the promise made, that “wheresoever two or three are gathered together in my name, there shall I be in the midst of them,” condemneth all such as despise the congregation gathered in his name. But mark well this word “gathered.” I mean not to hear piping, singing, or playing; nor to patter upon heads or books whereof they have no understanding; nor to commit idolatry, honouring that for God which indeed is no god; for with such, will I neither join myself in common prayer, nor in receiving external sacraments. For in so doing, I should affirm their superstition and abominable idolatry, which I, by God’s grace, never will do, neither counsel others to do, to the end.

*What it is to be gathered in the name of Christ.*— This congregation which I mean, should be gathered in the name of Jesus Christ; that is, to laud and magnify God the Father, for the infinite benefits they have received by his only Son, our Lord. In this congregation should be distributed the mystical and Last Supper of Jesus Christ, without superstition or any more ceremonies than he himself used, and his apostles after him, in distribution thereof. In this congregation, should inquisition be made of the poor among them, and support provided till the time of their next convention; and it should be distributed amongst them. Also in this congregation should be made common prayers, such as all men hearing might understand, that the hearts of all subscribing to the voice of one, might with unfeigned and fervent mind say, Amen. Whosoever withdraw themselves from such a con-

gregation, (but alas! where shall it be found?) do declare themselves to be no members of Christ's body.

*For whom, and at what time we should pray.*—Now there remaineth for whom, and at what time we shall pray. For all men, and at all times, doth Paul command that we shall pray (1 Tim., ii.) and principally, for such as are of the household of faith as suffer persecution; and for commonwealths tyrannously oppressed, incessantly should we call, that God of his mercy and power will withstand the violence of such tyrants.

*God's sentence may be changed.*—And when we see the plagues of God, as hunger, pestilence, or war coming or appearing to reign, then should we with lamentable voices, and repenting hearts call unto God, that it would please his infinite mercy to withdraw his hand. Which thing, if we do unfeignedly, he will without doubt, revoke his wrath, and, in the midst of his fury, think upon mercy, as we are taught in the Scripture, by his infallible and eternal verity. As in Exodus God saith, "I shall destroy this nation from the face of the earth." And when Moses addresseth himself to pray for them the Lord proceedeth, saying, "Suffer me that I may utterly destroy them." And then Moses falleth down upon his face, and forty days continueth in prayer for the safety of the people, for whom, at the last, he obtained forgiveness. David, in the vehement plague, lamentably called unto God (2 Sam., xxiv); and the king of Nineveh saith, "who can tell? God may turn and repent, and cease from his fierce wrath, that we perish not." (Jonah, iii.) Which examples and scriptures are not written in vain, but to certify us that God of his own native goodness will mitigate his plagues, by our prayers offered by Jesus Christ, although he hath threatened to punish, or is presently punishing: which he testifies by his own words, saying, "I have prophesied against any nation or people, that they shall be destroyed, if they repent of their iniquity, it shall repent me of the evil which I have spoken against them." (Jerem., xviii.) This I write, lamenting the great coldness of men who under such long scourges of God, are nothing kindled to prayer by repentance, but carelessly sleep in a wicked life, even as though their continuing wars, urgent famine, daily plagues of pestilence, and other contagious, insolent, and strange maladies, were not the present signs of God's wrath provoked by our iniquities.

*A plague threatened to England.*—O England, let thy intestine battle and domestic murder provoke thee to purity of life, according to the word which openly hath been proclaimed in thee, otherwise, the cup of the Lord's wrath thou shalt drink. The multitude shall not escape, but shall drink the dregs, and have the cup broken upon their heads; for judgment beginneth in the house of the Lord, and commonly the least offender is first punished, to provoke the more wicked to repentance. But, O Lord, infinite in mercy, if thou shalt punish, make not consummation; but cut away the proud and lux-

uriant branches which bear not fruit, and preserve the commonwealths of such as give succour and harbour to thy contemned messengers, who long have suffered exile in the desert. And let thy kingdom shortly come, that sin may be ended, death devoured, thy enemies confounded; that we thy people, by thy majesty delivered, may obtain everlasting joy and felicity through Jesus Christ our Saviour, to whom be all honour and praise for ever. Amen. Hasten Lord, and tarry not.

JOHN KNOX.

*Here after followeth a Confession by John Knox, Minister of Christ's most sacred Evangel, upon the death of that most virtuous and most famous king, Edward VI, King of England, France, and Ireland; in which confession, the said John doth accuse no less his own offences, than the offences of others, to be the cause of the away-taking of that most godly prince, now reigning with Christ, while we abide plagues for our unthankfulness.*

Omnipotent and everlasting God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who by thy eternal providence disposest kingdoms as seemeth best to thy wisdom: we acknowledge and confess thy judgments to be righteous, in that thou hast taken from us, for our ingratitude, and for abusing of thy most holy word, our native king and earthly comforter. Justly mayest thou pour forth upon us the uttermost of thy plagues, for that we have not known the day and time of our merciful visitation. We have contemned thy word, and despised thy mercies: we have transgressed thy laws, for deceitfully have we wrought every man with our neighbour; oppression and violence we have not abhorred, charity hath not appeared among us, as our profession requireth. We have little regarded the voices of thy prophets; thy threatenings we have esteemed vanity and wind. So that in us, as of ourselves, rests nothing worthy of thy mercies, for all are found fruitless, even the princes with the prophets as withered trees, apt and meet to be burned in the fire of thy eternal displeasure.

But, O Lord, behold thy own mercy and goodness, that thou mayest purge and remove the most filthy burden of our most horrible offences. Let thy love overcome the severity of thy judgments, even as it did in giving to the world thy only Son, Jesus, when all mankind was lost, and no obedience was left in Adam nor in his seed. Regenerate our hearts, O Lord, by the strength of the Holy Ghost: convert thou us, and we shall be converted: work thou in us unfeigned repentance, and move thou our hearts to obey thy holy laws.

Behold our troubles and apparent destruction, and stay the sword of thy vengeance before it devour us. Place above us, O Lord, for thy great mercies' sake, such a head, with such rulers and magistrates, as fear thy name, and will the glory of Christ Jesus to spread. Take not from us the light of thy

Evangel, and suffer no papistry to prevail in this realm. Illuminate the heart of our sovereign lady, Queen Mary, with pregnant gifts of thy Holy Ghost, and inflame the hearts of her council with thy true fear and love. Repress thou the pride of those that would rebel, and remove from all hearts the contempt of thy word. Let not our enemies rejoice at our destruction, but look thou to the honour of thy own name, O Lord, and let thy Gospel be preached with boldness in this realm. If thy justice must punish, then punish our bodies with the rod of thy mercy. But, O Lord, let us never revolt, nor turn back to idolatry again. Mitigate the hearts of those that persecute us, and let us not faint under the cross of our Saviour; but assist us with the Holy Ghost, even to the end.

## FOOTNOTE

1. Knox, during his confinement in the French galleys, wrote a Confession of his Faith, and an account of his public disputation in St. Andrews with the Papists. He also arranged the treatise of Sir Henry Balnaves, his fellow-prisoner, entitled, “The works and conversation of a justified man,” to which he wrote a preface.
2. In the original this sentence reads, “What prevailed the prevarication of man:” Prevarication was probably used in a good sense, instead of a bad.