

of the older intellectualism or rationalism. While it has of necessity an intellectual aspect, it is something far richer and more human than that term suggests. This new movement has the fervor and piety of evangelical orthodoxy, but it is a social and not merely an individualistic enthusiasm. It is as serious as Puritanism but it is more artistic and cultivates a nobler ritual and liturgy. It has missionary zeal and courage, but it is not merely blind and ruthless toward other faiths, nor does it restrict itself to evangelism alone. It cultivates educational missions and medical missions and industrial missions, and seeks to transmit to the less fortunate of the earth the full cubic contents of our Christian civilization.

This form of Christianity, which promises to identify itself with the twentieth century, is already revitalizing the churches, enlisting devout laymen and eager college youth. It proclaims its message in the language of the time and it meets a response from the soul of the people, which proves that men are beginning to rejoice again in religion as a natural possession and a transforming power.

## PRAYER.

BY JOHN DENMARK.

I PRAY every Sunday with my people. As we pray together for fellowship, peace, and faith, there comes upon me the joy of yearning with them for something beyond the pain of to-day. I feel that their hearts respond with mine in a great longing. When I have in my prayer much of tenderness and sympathy, I know that they are better satisfied with the morning's worship. But as I pray for ideals, I know that they are often begging for to-morrow's selfish victory. They believe that God will change the course of the universe to satisfy their wants. Because of my prayer they are failing to look reality in the face. I am a beggar leading beggars.

So I have stopped praying except when I must. I sit in my chair sometimes and try to think to God but I no longer try to find Him upon my knees. I seem to find more of God in the world when I am standing erect.

There is a tender mood that comes upon men when they think of the passing of their lives like a shadow. We have learned to call the mood reverence, and prayer has become its accepted form among nearly all races. It is the formal tribute of man to the Great Unknown that grips the destiny of us all. It is our common way

of expressing the wonder of the Psalmist: "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?"

Even the most cynical of men cannot stifle the wonder that comes into his being when he considers the vastness and intricacy of life. We would be more than human if we did not partake of that wonder. And most of all when the great gift of life itself is about to be taken away and we come for the first time to see the value of our treasure, how our souls are prostrated in an agony of fearful hope! Gethsemane was not and is not a delusion.

But how much of prayer is a delusion and a useless superstition.

An old lady came to my house the other day and, patting me on the shoulder, told me how much she hoped I would succeed in my new church. She promised to pray very earnestly that God would make the work fruitful. I thanked her in an embarrassed way and said good-bye. When she had gone I fell to thinking of the millions of useless prayers which have been offered up by lazy zealots as an excuse for real labor. I thought of the many times when prayer has been used by the chaplains of the rich to stifle the rebellion of the poor.

The case against prayer has been stated again and again by the men who have ceased to pray and by the men who have never prayed. I want to record here the sentiment of a man who still prays—with half a heart.

There are two attitudes which the average preacher may take toward prayer. He may believe that prayer actually changes the course of the universe, or he may believe that prayer is simply a "good spiritual tonic" for a congregation which needs moral exercise.

When a man starts to examine the reality of prayer as a means of changing the course of external life he encounters the most painful chapter in the story of the intellectual degradation of the clergy. In an age of miracles and wonders when every real phenomenon was an inexplicable fact and no such thing as scientific analysis was known, prayer was recognized as the personal request of a favored subject to his Great Warrior or Pet Chieftain. When the scientific awakening of the last century came, the natural conclusion of an intelligent preacher was that prayer had never proved its results and that as an institution of the Church it should be examined with real scrutiny. But the attacks of scholarship were centered upon the Bible and outworn theology, so the preacher was permitted to do as he pleased with prayer. Since the foundations

of Christianity were already trembling from the assaults of higher criticism, he let prayer alone. The result is that men who do not dare to believe in the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch still gather in great conventions and pray for the physical health of a missionary in China.

Now the proposition that the appendix of a certain missionary in China will become less inflamed if five thousand people in an American city ask God for his relief is one which is open to scientific analysis. If the parties in the case would submit to experiments the facts might be readily discovered. The doctors in China might arrange a clinic to take place simultaneously with the prayer-meetings in America and observe the effect of prayer-waves upon the afflicted missionary.

But, so far as I know, the members of a certain convention which met several years ago in a Western city and offered up prayers with me for the health of a missionary in China never inquired whether their prayers accomplished any physical result. They knew that their assumption of power to change physical facts was a lie.

They knew that the old promise, "Ask and it shall be given to you," as applied to most of the worth while things of life is a *lie*.

They would be unwilling to pay a postage stamp for a patent medicine which has failed to accomplish its promised results in as large a proportion of cases as prayer has, but they continue to class their credulity in the physical efficacy of prayer as "faith." They put this faith on a higher level than the gullibility of those rural audiences who spend hard-earned savings for tapeworm medicine sold by Demosthenic grafters. But I do not appreciate their distinction.

If prayer is to have recognition in the physical world, it must submit to physical tests. Three-cent gasoline, it was said, was recently invented by a Boston lawyer, but the automobile investors of the city did not pay any attention to the claim until it was scientifically experimented with. Then it was proved to be a failure.

Is the reconstruction of the universe by personal petition so unimportant an undertaking that no one need investigate it? Can the gigantic swindle of purgatorial and sick-get-better prayers which command so large a proportion of the money and loyalty of American Catholics and Protestants be passed over by the clergyman with a few words about "faith in the Unseen"?

The claim made by defenders of prayer as a physical transformer is that prayer is on a "spiritual level" distinct from three-

cent gasoline. Some prayer is. But the level of prayer is no higher than its aim, and when men spend time in interceding before God in the attempt to accomplish the results of medicine and muscle without resort to anything else, they must submit to comparison.

And comparisons are odious. They show that prayer as a physical transformer and restorer is more truly based upon superstition than any patent medicine on the market. Where prayer heals one, patent medicines heal five. The results must speak for themselves. Ten million prayers a day arise unanswered to God. During the war there were prayers for the soldiers of Europe by sympathetic Americans; there were prayers for the eternal conquest of the German arms by a million German mothers; there were prayers for the conquest of Russian, French, American, English, and Turkish murdering machines; there are prayers for a passing mark in examinations by schoolchildren; there are prayers for success in gambling on the stock-market; there are endless prayers for rain, for dry weather, and for salvation from the lightning. . . .

Why should we attempt to classify these prayers into "superstitious" and "intelligent"? In not a single case can it be proved that intercession before God affected His direction of the forces of war, lightning, or plague. The dilemma of the old reasoners is unanswerable: if God is an omnipotent and wise Father, then he does not need our personal pleadings to make Him realize the needs of mankind; if He is not such a Father, then the prayer is directed to an imaginary mind. If the universe is built upon the plan of conventional Christian theology, why pray at all?

The *failure* of prayer is a subject which is taboo among the clergy. We have learned to evade the real issue of the worthwhileness of a prayer for so long that we take ourselves seriously when we tell some afflicted sister who is about to lose her only son with tuberculosis: "If it is God's will, your prayers will be answered; never cease to pray." That is an evasive half lie. What we mean in our hearts is that the prayer will comfort the mother and do no harm to the son. The son will die if the physical laws of life make it inevitable.

I am saying these things at the risk of repeating very stale truths because I am repeatedly astonished by the number of people who still take intercessory prayer seriously. I meet sane, clear-headed business men, hard-working and cynical laboring men, who have failed to look the facts about prayer as a physical transformer squarely in the face. They would not allow a book agent to take up ten minutes of their time with a theory that has so little real

evidence in its support as the theory of personal intercessory prayer. But they allow velvet-voiced preachers to prey upon their superstitions without a murmur.

The story of these velvet-voiced ones is uniform. We have not had our prayers answered because we have not known *how* to pray. (As if the Lord God our Father were not Himself responsible for the lisping intellect of His creatures.) We should learn to pray simply and trustfully. Men have always prayed to God our Father; therefore we should pray to Him as our Father. He may not always answer us according to our wishes, but out of the abundance of His wisdom He will do what is best for us. It may not seem best to us at the time, but if we will trust in Him, our way will be made clear. So we have in the prayer-meeting that optimism born of selfish desire which deliberately creates a universe contrary to all the facts of life because men are more interested in happiness than they are in truth. Men do not always want to *know*. They want something to believe. They have but a short time to live and a very small portion of that time to devote to the things of religion and ultimate destiny. The easy faith of the fathers with its magic priestcraft is offered to them. Faith, the preacher tells them, is beyond reason anyway. Why listen to the skeptic? Simple trust brings that peace of intellectual death which fills the collection box and enables men to go on with the more important tasks of earning a living.

But in spite of the faith of the prayer-meeting in the power of changing the universe by personal prayer, the great masses of men are no longer able to believe in that kind of prayer. They compromise by believing in prayer as a means of making men more holy and Christian. Prayer, they are willing to believe, is a great spiritual tonic. Through prayer, we come into communion with God, even if He does not change the universe to suit our desires.

Whether we can accept this belief depends upon our hard-headedness. People might be divided roughly into the hard-headed, the mystical, and the soft-headed. I am among the hard-headed. Not that I do not enjoy poetry, a symphony orchestra, or a spring landscape. My critical reason is predominant over my imagination and emotion to a somewhat larger degree than among other men. I have been converted twice in revival meetings and have found profound emotional experience in prayer, but the effectiveness of those emotional crises was destroyed when I calmly considered their meaning and value. Never in my whole life have I been certain that I have communed with anything higher than my

own emotional aspirations. When God has met me on Sinai, He had always hidden his face.

Now the soft-headed man labels his great emotional moments "communion with God" because the world tells him to. He has never made any honest attempt to analyze his own reactions and discover whether the assumption of anything supernatural in his religious experience is true. His mother has taught him at her knee to call the self-revelation of childhood prayer, communion with God. Under the influence of that tradition and the hypnotic power of a great revivalist he hears the "call of God." It is a very real call from the highest moral traditions and ideals of his experience. He puts that experience into the storehouse of his memory and perhaps gives definite shape to it by adding the description of some great religious leader. Now he has a God to pray to. He believes in communion through prayer.

The hard-headed man looks on at this religious experience of the soft-headed man with lack of sympathy and sometimes contempt. He does not understand it very well. But the mystic does. The mystic is a man of imagination and insight who reaches the conclusion that "the mystery of things" is *personal* and that man can reach that Person through direct communion. The mystic is not an intellectual infant, although he often associates with such. Now I am a hard-headed man, so I cannot discuss the mystic with any fair appreciation, for I have striven hard after the mystic's experience and have never been able to find anything personal in religious experience outside of the yearnings of my own soul and the traditions of experience.

The painful truth about the position of the mystic within the Church is that his belief is taken up by all sorts of undiscerning people and applied to every imaginable superstition. I do not believe that one man in ten is able to comprehend the mystical point of view, but the preacher soon finds that it is a great advantage to define his own religious experience in these mystical terms. It sets him apart as a spiritual leader. So we often see the strange phenomenon of a congregation of hard-headed and anxiously selfish seekers after salvation creating their religious experience in the reflected light of their preacher's experience: and when the truth is known, the preacher is not a mystic but an imaginative descriptive artist, who has learned to paint his religious experience in colors which his congregation can admire.

The responsibility for sham religious experience and false evaluation of prayer falls upon the clergy. They have thought

loosely and spoken recklessly. They have defined the aspirations of their hearts with a definiteness which the facts do not support. When they quietly analyze their experience in prayer, they are willing to admit that the voice of God which they heard in prayer may have been the voice of conscience and nothing else. For those few men who, when they have carefully and critically analyzed their own minds, feel the presence of God coming to them in prayer, I have nothing but envy. I would like to be one of them—but God has never blessed me with the sign.

What, then, is left of the reality of prayer?

Prayer to me is nothing but a simple expression of human desire. There are times in our lives when we need to forget the small troubles and quarrels of the scramble we call life. Then it clears our vision for some one to express with us the higher hopes of universal service and brotherhood. That is why I still pray with my congregation for higher motives and ideals. I want to teach them through prayer something of higher aspiration.

And does not prayer have a real function as an expression of noble desire? Out of the darkness we have come and into it we will go. Everywhere is Death. The Mystery gives back no answer when we cry. The brave man looks into the darkness unafraid: he is terrified by no threat of the future but he would claim the Unknown for himself. He stretches out his hands to gain greater fullness of life. Priests and fear-mongers bring answers to his prayers. He scorns them for he is not asking for their answer. He is yearning for Life: he is on the great search which has no goal.

## THE ETHICS OF PROHIBITION.

BY A. V. C. P. HUIZINGA.

### I.

IT is a curious coincidence that just at the time that the slogan of "self-determination" is adopted as a panacea for the nations, even to straighten out their tangled international relations, the prohibition movement engulfs with its amendment to the Constitution of the United States the hundred million inhabitants of "the land of the free and the home of the brave." Legal restraint is thus deemed necessary for the free and the brave in this great republic to the extent of employing the very Constitution, designed as a