

PRAYER, ITS NATURE AND SCOPE

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Prayer, Its Nature and Scope by H. Clay Trumbull

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H. CLAY TRUMBULL

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BY

H. CLAY TRUMBULL

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Preface

These thoughts about prayer are not mainly devotional, nor are they designed chiefly for the encouragement of those who already have rest in their enjoyment of prayer. They were written primarily for the meeting of difficulties which trouble many minds with reference to the true basis of prayer, its scope, and its limitations.

They are to point out to doubters the reasons for and the reasonableness of fitting prayer, and to suggest caution and warning as to the mode and matter of prayer, rather than to urge to a continuance of a practice already appreciated by spiritually minded believers. Many of these thoughts have been brought out in hours of earnest discussion with inquiring or anxious minds, at various places and at widely different times.

Preface

Because they were first expressed to those who were in trouble of mind, and proved serviceable in making clear the principles involved, it is hoped that they may be helpful to many others whom the writer has never met.

H. C. T.

PHILADELPHIA,
February 25, 1896.

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I

What is Prayer?

Many who are in the habit of praying have but vague notions of the meaning of the term "prayer;" and many more of those who sneer at or undervalue prayer do not know what it is that they are making light of. Whether prayer be indulged in or ignored, it were well to be able at least to answer the question, What is prayer?

A common thought of prayer connects it with direct petition, with a call for relief or help of some kind. It is used in this sense in legal phrase. A petitioner to a court of justice, to a legislative body, or to a ruler, usually closes his formal request with the words, "And your petitioner as in duty bound will ever pray." The same idea has prominence in the minds of most of those who pray morning and evening to God, as the giver of all good. They