

THE WAY OF PRAYER

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The Way of Prayer by John Edgar McFadyen

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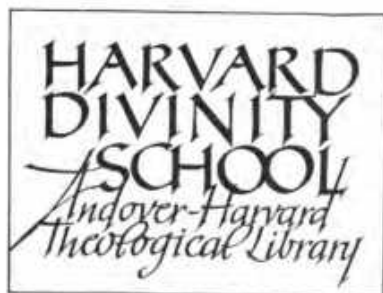
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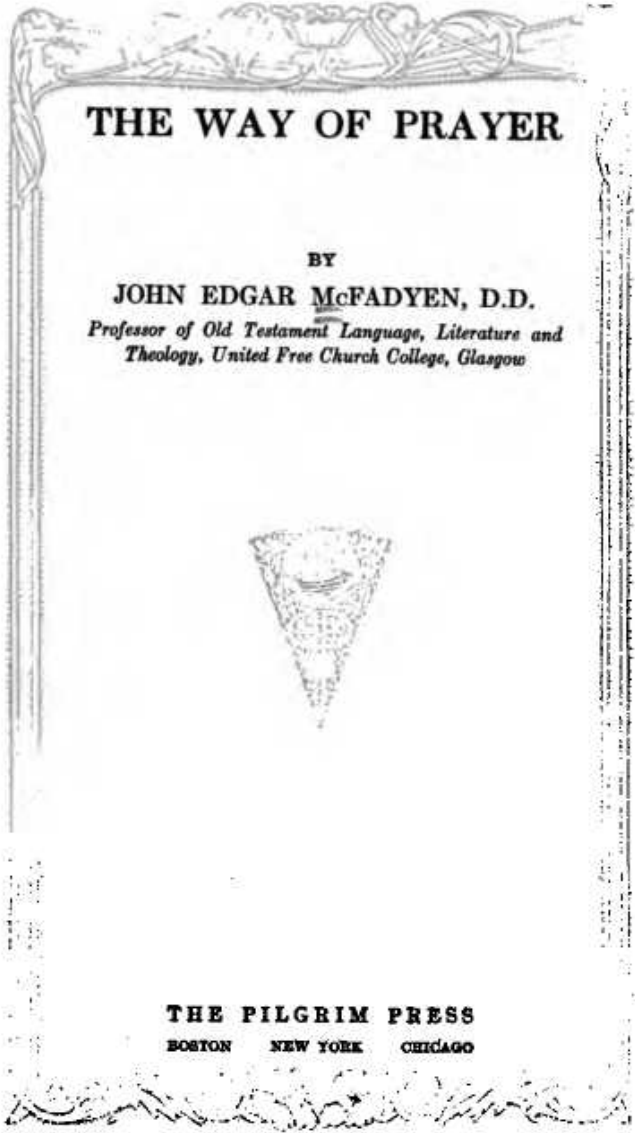
**THE WAY
OF PRAYER**

IF WE ASK HIM TO GO WITH
US INTO OUR BATTLE, WE
CANNOT FAIL TO BE
VICTORIOUS



IN THE SHADOW THEY WERE
COMFORTED TO KNOW
THAT THE GREAT FRIEND
HAD THEM BY THE HAND





THE WAY OF PRAYER

BY

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IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

THE great fact of the Old Testament is the fact of God. Amid all life's uncertainties He was to the devout Hebrew the supreme certainty, the great Person with whom one had always to reckon. His presence might be radiantly manifested in the material blessings of this life—in the grain, the wine, and the oil, in peace and prosperity, and other such things dear to the ancient Hebrew heart; or He might seem to stand afar off and hide His face. But always He was felt to be somewhere; happiness lay in being near Him, and His friendship was the most precious thing in the world.

Thus nothing could be more natural to the Hebrew than prayer. God was the great Friend, and men spoke to Him as readily and as naturally as they spoke to their earthly friends. He could listen like an earthly friend; He could answer, too, and help, as no human friend could do, just because He was God and not man. There is something very beautiful and touching about the speech of men to God in the Old Testament. In the later books

it tends to become more set and solemn, as did the religion generally; but more or less, from the beginning to the end, there is about it a quaint and charming simplicity, which is only possible to men who have the heart and the faith of a little child. What could be more attractive, for example, than the prayer of Abraham's servant, when he has at last reached the far country, where he hopes to find a wife for his master's son? "Behold, I am standing by the fountain of water: and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, 'Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink'; and she shall say, 'Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also,' let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast showed kindness unto my master" (Gen. xxiv. 13, 14). This naïve fixing of the sign by which the maiden is to be recognized was no doubt more possible to an ancient man, with his simpler view of the world, than it would be to us; but through it gleams a fine faith in the Providence that governs human life. When, in the sequel, Rebekah appears on the scene, and does all that the servant had prayed that the maid of destiny should

do, he "looked stedfastly on her"—what a world of significance is concentrated in that look!—"holding his peace, to know whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not." And now that he has the indubitable assurance that his journey has been indeed divinely led, he does not forget to thank the great Lord and Guide of human life. "The man bowed his head and worshipped the Lord, and said: 'Blessed be the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who hath not forsaken his lovingkindness and his truth toward my master. As for me, the Lord hath led me in the way to the house of my master's brethren.'"

That is an early story; but the same simple faith is illustrated, centuries after, by a prayer of Ezra, offered when he and his company were on the point of starting for Palestine. He informs us that he had already told the Persian king that the God of the Hebrews protected those who trusted Him; and so, he tells us, he "was ashamed to ask of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way." It is surely a very practical faith which refuses a military escort over a long and dangerous road. In simple faith the little company therefore committed themselves to God "to seek of him a straight way for us, and for our

