The Place of Prayer in the Christian Life.

BY THE REV. JOHN R. LEGGE, M.A., CHESTERFIELD.

1. THE place of prayer in the Christian life is the same as the place of prayer in human nature. And if the Bible be taken as recording a revelation of man as well as of God, the reading of the pages of the book in which all our members are written will end with a very sure and certain conviction of what the place of prayer is in human nature.

In that recorded revelation of human nature the first man who prayed was Enosh. Not Adam, the first man; nor Enoch, who walked with God; but Enosh. He is the first man to introduce us to the world of prayer. He was the first inhabitant of this planet who was also at home in the inner world of prayer. He was 'the first who ever burst into that silent sea,' where 'the upward glancing of an eye when none but God is near,' is prayer. It was in the days of Enosh, says the revealed version of human nature, that 'men began to call upon the name of the Lord.' He was 'the first man, God-conquered, with his face to heaven upturned.' Enosh means 'man in his frailty and weakness.' 'The radiant morn' of humanity had 'passed away.' The ideally happy family that the story of the Garden of Eden stands for had suffered an eclipse of its splendours. About Enosh is no romance nor halo. He is frail, weak man. But he is the praying man. He is the origin of a new species of man—the praying man. He is a missing—almost lost—link in the ascent of man. He is a type of man pioneering in the spiritual world, setting out upon unpathed territory, blazing, amid the sun-smitten shadows of the forest primeval, a new and living way of access by prayer into the presence of the All-Father. Enosh launched out on to the deep with a personality which he felt to be 'a ship of the soul.' Others pushed out their little skiffs: soon they felt 'an ampler ether, a diviner air.' Their souls had sight of 'that immortal sea which brought us hither.' They 'heard the mighty waters rolling ever more.' 'Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord.' The place of prayer in human nature assigned by the Scriptural revelation of human nature, is central and fundamental and pregnant. Man is God-conscious from his birth; but it is when he awakes to the consciousness of himself

as frailty and weakness, that prayer rises like a fountain. None can fix the date of the opening of this fountain. But they have eyes that see not, and ears that hear not, and mouths that speak not, and other senses that are sealed up, who are not aware that in the Biblical revelation of human nature there flows a stream of prayer, that deepens as it flows—water: to swim in, a river that could not be passed through—life-giving whithersoever it runs. The place of prayer in the Christian life must be identical with its place in human nature.

2. The place of prayer in the Christian life is the same as the place of prayer in the life of Christ. This would appear to be obvious. Our Saviour was a man of prayer. We owe to Luke, the beloved physician, our main and clear knowledge of the praying Jesus. His Gospel is the camera that focuses this view of our Saviour. The earliest occasion when Luke lifts the curtain upon the inner life of the Saviour, is at His baptism. We read: 'Now, when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also having been baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened.' This is an interpreting touch of the physician's own. When the waters of baptism had been over Him, He went up out of them *praying*. What follows is God's answer to the Saviour's prayer. He who in after days taught, 'Ask, seek, knock, and ye shall have,' taught them with authority. He had a positive gospel of prayer—the ripe fruit of His own experience.

The next time on the pages of Luke that we see Jesus praying is after the cleansing of a leper. After that mighty work what does Jesus do? He withdrew into the wilderness and prayed. Why? Jesus was a spent man after that mighty deed. Miracles are exhausting operations. Going about doing good takes it out of Him. Away then to solitude, to nature, and to God, for refreshment, for additional equipment, for refilling of the cell-batteries of the soul. 'This teaches much which it is easy and fatal to miss.' We have felt drained and spent, weary in well-doing. Have we been like the Master who recruited Himself for new service by 'continuing in prayer' to God? After

'out-go' of power, Jesus found 'in-come' of it by prayer.

The pages of Luke also show that Jesus was steadfast in prayer when on the eve of great experiments and deep experiences. The appointment of Apostles was a great experiment in aggressive Christianity. The eve of that day in the Calendar of the Church was spent in prayer. All night He prayed; and when it was day, He chose the twelve Apostles. All of us can see how critical the moment was: how far-reaching the consequences of that choice.

As to His great experiences. We have seen the connexion of His baptism with prayer. Luke points out that for the day on which Jesus told His disciples that He was to die, He similarly prepared Himself by prayer. He did not find it easy to let them know. Prayer enabled Him to break the news. The last day which He spent as a free man left, as its closing experience, Jesus agonizing in prayer in Gethsemane. He withdrew a stone's cast, and prayed. He went away a second time and prayed. He went away a third time and prayed, saying again the same words—'Not my will, O Father, but thine be done.'

There awaited Jesus the insult of the mob who broke in upon His loneliness, the betrayal of Judas, the midnight trial, and all the scorn and contumely that accompanied it. But He bore Himself so loyally that the governor exclaimed, 'Behold your King.' Prayer did it. He had fortified the soul in that fashion. Gethsemane was the key and citadel of Golgotha. Such was the place of prayer in the life of Christ.

It must be the same in our life in Christ. Who of us would not be wiser, better, happier, more useful, were we to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest what is told us of Jesus praying in full prospect of great enterprises and experiences?

3. The place of prayer in the Christian life is the same as it has had in the lives of all great Christians. Luther said that the busier he was the more he needed to pray; and did it. Luther had vast enterprises and great experiences to send him into the school of Christ in prayer.

Principal Whyte calls William Law a discoverer in experimental religion; and claims that it was his practice of prayer—especially intercessory prayer—that made him so; and proclaims that for a man so immersed in controversy as was the

author of the *Serious Call*, only prayer could have enabled him to achieve the victory that he won over the sin that doth so easily beset a controversialist.

But the description 'great Christians' has been used above because the phrase was used by the late Marquess of Salisbury in his parliamentary tribute to his great contemporary, Mr. Gladstone, who was described as 'a great Christian.' What was the place of prayer in the life of the man so described? We know now better than ever. Morley's 'Life' of Gladstone illustrates this weighty sentence from the pen of the late Dean Church. 'The stronghold of a true man's life is not near the frontier but somewhere far away, remote and lofty, and lonely.' A reviewer of the 'Life' says: 'Perhaps there rarely has been a man who has had such a great Inner Kingdom of his own into which he constantly retired and in which, amid all this tumult and tempest of outer activity, he usually dwelt—a great Inner Kingdom of isolation and prayer.'

How will the seasons and occasions of prayer in this life of a great Christian stand the test of the place of prayer in the life of Christ, which must be the standard of judgment? He entered into the great enterprise of political life with prayer. He met the great emergencies of that life with prayer. At its most critical moment he was overheard praying, 'O turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me. Give thy strength to thy servant, and keep the son of thine hand-maid.' The great temptations and the bitter disappointments of the parliamentary life were overcome by the place that prayer had in the life of this great Christian. The place of prayer in the Christian life must be the same as that which it has had in the lives of all great Christians—'the saints who are the excellent of the earth.'

4. What, then, is the place of prayer in the Christian life? It is the place of power. It is the place of power for witness to God, and of power with God. It also has manward power. That the place of prayer in the Christian life is the place of power is the position arrived at from consideration of its place in human nature (according to the records of revelation); its place in the life of Him who bore a perfect human nature; and also its place in the lives of all great Christians. It is the place where the strength in our weakness is dis-

played. It was in the uncalendared days of his history, when man knew himself to be frail and weak, that 'men began to call upon the name of the Lord,' and grew to be sure that there was the voice of One who regarded and answered.

When the race was in its childhood, it was like a brood of nestlings in the nest. The nestlings know that they are fed from above. And so they look up and are fed. Man was born with instincts that compelled the upward glancing—and from above the hunger of his soul was met. Surely it is impossible to be mistaken here. It is true that silence falls upon this world of prayer at times: that generations are born, and marry, and beget sons and daughters, and die. But when the days of man's history can be calendared, chronicled, and compared, what we see is not only a national conviction of the power of prayer, but also a succession of men,—not only contemplative men, but men of action like Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah, Isaiah, and Nehemiah,—who were all of them men of prayer—persistent, pleading prayer. Were these men fools? Were they duped when they believed that there was an answering Voice and a regarding Person? Was that an hallucination? We have had our own men of action who were also men of prayer—Alfred, Knox, Cromwell, Wesley, Gordon, and Gladstone. Were these the dupes of a Divinity that never was? It is impossible to believe it. And so the place

of prayer in the Christian life is the place of power that witnesses for God Himself. It is an argument that 'he is, and is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.'

But prayer is also manward power. Principal Forsyth calls prayer 'the forge of personality,' and teaches that it is for religion what research is for science. By it we get into contact with realities. The soul is thereby brought into contact with its own nature; *i.e.* God. And on that account Dr. Forsyth enjoins men to use the Bible greatly in prayer. For it is the most original work on prayer; not prescribing but inspiring it; and so is corrective of the spirit of criticism which so easily besets and assaults men in these days.

The forge of personality! The metaphor is strange. But is not the experience that of wrestling Jacob? 'In his manhood he had power with God; yea, he had power over the angel and prevailed.' Who is willing to go into God's forge, and be beaten on God's anvil in order to have the iron enter into the soul; in order to obtain those qualities of endurance, resistance, toughness, and purity, which mean the redemption of our personality?

He takes my softened heart and beats it;
The sparks fly off at every blow.
He turns it o'er and o'er and heats it;
And lets it cool, and makes it glow:
And yet I whisper, 'As God will,'
And in His mighty hand hold still.

Recent Biblical Archaeology.

BY THE REV. A. H. SAYCE, D.D., LL.D., D.LITT., PROFESSOR OF ASSYRIOLOGY
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

What we now know about the Hittites, and its bearing on the Hittites of Genesis.

IN a *Miscellany* which has just been presented to Dr. Mackay of Liverpool, Professor Garstang has given a short, but very comprehensive, *résumé* of the present position of 'Hittite Studies.' No one was so well qualified to write it as the excavator of Sakje-gözü and the author of the standard work on *The Land of the Hittites*, a second edition of

which is likely soon to appear. In my recent review of Professor Eduard Meyer's book (*Reich und Kultur der Chetiter*) I stated that my decipherment of the Hittite hieroglyphic inscriptions had forced me to the unexpected conclusion that they all—or nearly all—belonged, not to the earlier Hittite empire of Boghaz-Keui, but to a second Hittite empire established by the Moschians about B.C. 1200, of which Tyana was the capital. It is still a question what relation the Moschian language of the inscriptions bears to the language of the cuneiform texts of Boghaz-Keui and