

**A TREATISE ON PRAYER:  
DESIGNED TO ASSIST IN  
THE DEVOUT DISCHARGE  
OF THAT DUTY**

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A Treatise on Prayer: Designed to Assist in the Devout Discharge of That Duty by Edward Bickersteth

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# TREATISE ON PRAYER;

DESIGNED TO ASSIST IN THE

DEVOUT DISCHARGE OF THAT DUTY.

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BY THE

REV. EDWARD BICKERSTETH,

ASSISTANT MINISTER OF WHEELER CHAPEL.

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*Thy prayers and thine alms have come up for a memorial before God.*  
Acts x. 4

PHILADELPHIA:  
HOOKER & AGNEW,  
N. W. CORNER OF CHESTNUT AND FIFTH STREETS.  
1841.

## PREFACE.

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THE acceptance which it has pleased God to give to the "*Scripture Help*," and the testimonies which the writer has received of benefit derived from that work, have induced him to endeavor to call the attention of Christians, and particularly the young, (for whom he wishes to be considered as especially writing) to another most important means of grace.

It seemed also peculiarly needful to press the duty of prayer now; for it appears to the writer to be one of the dangers of the present reviving state of the Church, that men gain knowledge without corresponding feelings; they are tempted to make a profession of religion, and talk about it, while, it is to be feared, the more retired and all-important duties of devout prayer, meditation, self-examination, and reading the Scriptures, are neglected.

He has felt a personal advantage in his former Treatise, from its imposing on him an additional obligation to the study of the Word of God. He hopes for a similar benefit in the present publication.

His various public engagements have indeed left him little leisure for a work of such importance; but it appeared to him better to do good, even though it be done in an imperfect manner, than not to do it at all.

In a treatise on that which has so often engaged the attention of Christian writers, new sentiments can neither be desired nor expected. The direction—"ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and you shall find rest for your souls," is well applicable here. The writer willingly availed himself of the ideas suggested by any former author.

He would, however, observe, that it is not the knowledge of the duty, but the grace of prayer which is the great thing that we should desire to attain. He has often had

occasion, in the course of his writing this book, to feel that it is much easier to know how to pray, than really to pray. The grace of prayer is a divine gift of far more importance than the mere knowledge of all parts of this duty, or the ability to perform it before man.

If some are disposed to think, that he has in any instance set the standard of devotion too high, he would say, that he has endeavored to follow the Scriptures; and though he feels that this necessarily often condemns both himself and Christians in general, it appeared his duty not to lower the standard on that account, but rather to explain it, and press it the more, that the perfection of the rule might lead himself and his readers more simply to the Savior for pardon, peace, and strength. Some may, indeed, on the other hand, think, that by not setting the standard high enough, he has often proved his own want of devotional feeling. He is ready here to submit to those of more experience in the Christian life.

It would have been easy to have enlarged many parts; but the object was to bring forward only the most obvious and useful observations that occurred.

Though prayer is that duty which especially declares the guilt and weakness of man, and the grace and power of God; yet there is danger in pressing any positive duty, and particularly that of prayer, lest we should in any measure foster and encourage that self-righteousness which is so natural to the human mind. The writer has endeavored to guard against this evil. Without prayer, indeed, no man possesses spiritual life; yet we are not saved by our prayers; the ability to pray is rather a part of that salvation which Jesus Christ has obtained for us.

It may be thought by some, that parts of this work are little more than a collection or bringing together of texts of Scripture. This will not, it is presumed, be an objection to the majority of his readers; and it may be said, if it need an excuse, that the author felt, that when he could quote

a passage of Scripture in support of any sentiment, he then knew that he was on secure ground. The Scriptures are also very full on this subject; so that an arrangement of those passages which relate only to prayer, would form no inconsiderable volume.

The congregation attending in the afternoon at Wheler Chapel, Spital Fields, will remember the leading outline of a considerable part of the following Treatise, as coming in the course of sermons which the author preached to them on the subject of prayer. He now affectionately submits to their attention, in a more enlarged state from the press, those motives and directions for this duty which he delivered to them from the pulpit.

The author ventures to suggest to heads of families, that parts of this work might furnish suitable reading for family instruction on Sundays.

If the reader should obtain any benefit from this work, and be excited to pray more constantly and devoutly, the writer would earnestly ask an interest in those prayers, that he himself may live in the practice of that duty which, he has been endeavoring to teach others. May every reader also join him in entreating the Author and Giver of every good gift, to grant his blessing to this attempt to induce others to pray more continually and more fervently; to aim at living in abiding communion with the Father of Spirits.

*Salisbury Square, Nov. 18th, 1819.*

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ADVERTISEMENT TO THE TENTH EDITION.

In preparing this Edition for the press, the Author has endeavored to avail himself of some valuable hints given in a recent review of this work, and has introduced some additions there suggested.

*Islington, Oct. 7, 1825.*





## CONTENTS.

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CHAP.		
1.	The Nature and Duty of Prayer.....	9
2.	The Privilege of Prayer.....	16
3.	The Assistance of the Holy Spirit.....	29
4.	The Intercession of Jesus Christ.....	39
5.	Private Prayer.....	46
6.	Public Worship.....	98
7.	Family Worship.....	117
8.	Social Prayer.....	132
9.	The General Habit of Prayer.....	136
10.	The Spirit of Prayer for the Enlargement of the Kingdom of Christ.....	142
11.	Distractions in Prayer.....	149
12.	On Devotional Feelings merely.....	156
13.	Directions to assist in attaining the Spirit of Prayer..	159
14.	An Exhortation to constant Prayer.....	183
15.	Forms of Prayer.....	193
	A Prayer for the Gift and Grace of Prayer....	ib.
	Private Morning Prayer.....	195
	Another Private Morning Prayer.....	197
	Private Prayer at Noon.....	199
	Intercessory Prayer at Noon.....	200
	Private Evening Prayer.....	202
	Another Private Evening Prayer.....	204
	Prayer before the Lord's Supper.....	206
	Prayer after the Lord's Supper.....	208
	Morning Family Prayer.....	209
	Another Morning Family Prayer.....	212
	Evening Family Prayer.....	214
	Another Evening Family Prayer.....	216
	Sunday Morning Family Prayer.....	218
	Sunday Evening Family Prayer.....	220
	Prayer for a Sunday School.....	221
	Prayer for a Benevolent Society.....	222
	A Social Prayer.....	223
	Prayer for the Enlargement of the Kingdom of Christ.....	225
	Another on the same subject.....	228
	Ejaculatory Prayers from the Scriptures.....	231

