The Valley of Vision

A Collection of Puritan Prayers
and Devotions

Edited by
Arthur Bennett

The burden of the valley of vision
Isaiah 22:1

THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST
To my colleagues and students at All Nations Christian College, Ware, for ten years’ fellowship in Christ.
Preface

The prayers in this book are drawn from the largely forgotten deposit of Puritan spiritual exercises, meditations and aspirations. They testify to the richness and colour of evangelical thought and language that animated vital piety in an important stream of English religious life. It is hoped that their publication will help to redress the neglect of this vast ocean of Puritan spirituality.

The Puritan Movement was a religious phenomenon of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, yet its influence continued at least to the time of Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–92) who may be regarded as the last of the great Puritans. Although the political storm ended in 1660, its theological ground-swell carried forward distinct forms of practical religion for many decades, particularly family worship and private devotion. In these spheres, and in that of the authority of Scripture over the whole of life, New England Presbyterians and Congregationalists were at one with English Dissenters and Anglican evangelicals in a close-knit union that transcended differences of worship, discipline and polity. They spoke the same spiritual language, shared the same code of values, adopted the same attitude towards the Christian religion, and breathed out the same God-centred aspirations in a manner that makes it impossible to distinguish the voice of conformist from that of non-conformist. Thus, this book of Puritan prayers has a unity not often found in similar works. The strength of Puritan character and life lay in the practice of prayer and meditation. Many of those who held the doctrines of grace wrote down a record of God’s intimate dealings with their souls, not with an eye to publication, but, as in David Brainerd’s case, to test their spiritual growth, and to encourage themselves by their re-perusal in times of low spiritual fervour. Others, like William Jay and Henry Law, turned their personal devotions into corporate forms for family worship, and published them to the church at large. Yet others, such as Philip Doddridge and William Romaine, wrote prayers into their literary works in order to evoke the reader’s spiritual response. Many ministers went further and advised their congregations to put their private prayer thoughts on paper and vocalize them. There thus emerged an important corpus of inspiring Puritan prayers that are still largely unused.
THE VALLEY OF VISION

In extracting this selection from Puritan literature it has been necessary to change some prayers from the plural and the third person into the singular and the first person in order that the book might be used chiefly in private devotion. But, by a change of pronoun, most of them can be employed in corporate worship. A final section has been added for occasions of corporate worship. Old idiom has been retained, but it has been necessary to reframe some phrases in order to accommodate archaic thought to modern understanding. A number of prayers were originally spiritual experiences, as in the case of Thomas Shepard, and some others are conflations from different sources to bind together a given theme.

A poetic form has been adopted throughout as an aid to easier comprehension and utterance. Each prayer consists of a number of main clauses with subsidiary clauses that illuminate and enlarge the subject. In this way an opportunity is provided for pauses and reflections. The editor is thus responsible for the structure of the prayers as here printed. The book is not intended to be read as a prayer manual. The soul learns to pray by praying; for prayer is communion with a transcendent and immanent God who on the ground of his nature and attributes calls forth all the powers of the redeemed soul in acts of total adoration and dedication. The prayers should therefore be used as aspiration units, the several parts of which could become springboards for the individual’s own prayer subjects. These and their divisions can also serve homiletic purposes.

The prayers are taken from the works of Thomas Shepard, Thomas Watson, Richard Baxter, John Bunyan, Isaac Watts, William Williams, Philip Doddridge, William Romaine, David Brainerd, Augustus Toplady, Christmas Evans, William Jay, Henry Law and Charles Haddon Spurgeon. They are sent out with the prayer of Philip Doddridge, that, ‘However weak and contemptible this work may seem in the eyes of the children of this world, and however imperfect it really be, it may nevertheless live before thee, and through a divine power be mighty to produce the rise and progress of religion.’

I desire to thank the Rev. Iain H. Murray of the Banner of Truth Trust for his encouragement to produce this work, Mr S. M. Houghton, many of whose kindly criticisms have been accepted, and the Rev. R. E. Davies, who helped to resolve theological points. I am grateful to the Trustees of the British Museum, Dr Williams’ Library, and the Evangelical Library for access to out-of-print books.

Arthur Bennett
Contents

Preface vii

Introductory: The Valley of Vision xv

1: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

The Trinity 3  Christ is All 18
God the All 4  Fullness in Christ 19
God the Source of All Good 5  Union with Christ 20
The Great God 6  The Name of Jesus 21
The All-Good 7  Christ Alone 22
The Mover 8  Jesus my Glory 23
The Divine Will 9  The Love of Jesus 24
Divine Mercies 10  Love to Jesus 25
God Enjoyed 11  The Second Coming 26
A Present Salvation 12  Spiritus Sanctus 27
Man’s Great End 13  God the Spirit 28
God Honoured 14  The Spirit of Jesus 29
Praise and Thanksgiving 15  The Spirit’s Work 30
The Gift of Gifts 16  The Spirit as Teacher 32
Christ the Word 17

2: Redemption and Reconciliation

The Gospel Way 35  The Precious Blood 41
The Awakened Sinner 36  Love Lustres at Calvary 42
The Convicting Spirit 37  The Saviour 44
The Cry of a Convicted Sinner 38  Reconciliation 45
God and Myself 39  Deliverance 46
The Mediator 40  Regeneration 47
## THE VALLEY OF VISION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resurrection</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Calling</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Convert’s First Prayer</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Life Look</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victory</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging to Jesus</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Penitence and Deprecation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Knowledge</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yet I Sin</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dark Guest</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paradoxes</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart Corruptions</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Deprecation</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Deeps</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continual Repentance</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confession and Petition</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrition</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humiliation</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortification</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purification</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reproofs</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Needs and Devotions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need of Grace</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peril</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need of Jesus</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaknesses</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Infinite and the Finite</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Page x]
Contents

Year's End 111  Morning 117
New Year 112  Morning Needs 118
The Family 113  Morning Dedication 119
Caring Love 114  Evening Prayer 120
Divine Support 115  Evening Praise 121
Grace Active 116  Evening Renewal 122

5: Holy Aspirations
Longings after God 125  Openness 133
Consecration and Worship 126  Christlikeness 134
Resting on God 127  Christian Love 135
Devotion 128  Love Shed Abroad 136
The Personal Touch 129  To be Fit for God 137
Divine Promises 130  Confidence 138
Spiritual Helps 131  Covenant 139
Refuge 132

6: Approach to God
Act of Approach 143  The Throne 148
In Prayer 144  Requests 149
Living by Prayer 145  After Prayer 150
Meeting God 146  A Colloquy on Rejoicing 151
The Prayer of Love 147

7: Gifts of Grace
God All-Sufficient 155  Comforts 164
Privileges 156  Fullness 165
Blessings 157  Happiness 166
Faith 158  Vocation 167
Love 159  Truth in Jesus 168
Joy 160  Grace in Trials 169
Contentment 161  The Grace of the Cross 170
Repose 162  Calvary's Anthem 171
Sleep 163  Sincerity 172
THE VALLEY OF VISION

8: SERVICE AND MINISTRY

God’s Cause 175  A Minister’s Praises 187
Service and Equipment 176  A Minister’s Bible 188
Things Needful 177  A Minister’s Preaching 189
Humility in Service 178  Scriptural Convictions 190
The Servant in Battle 179  Lord’s Day Eve 191
Vain Service 180  The Lord’s Day 192
Love Rest in God 181  Lord’s Day Morning 193
A Disciple’s Renewal 182  Worship 194
A Minister’s Evils 183  The Lord’s Supper 195
A Minister’s Prayer 184  The Minister before Sacrament 196
A Minister’s Confession 185  Lord’s Day Evening 197
A Minister’s Strength 186  The Minister’s Covenant 198

9: VALEDICTION

Earth and Heaven 201  Retrospect and Prospect 203
Heaven Desired 202

10: A WEEK’S SHARED PRAYERS

First Day Morning—Worship 207  Fourth Day Evening—God All-Sufficient 214
First Day Evening—The Teacher 208  Fifth Day Morning—The Giver 215
Second Day Morning—God Over All 209  Fifth Day Evening—Protection 216
Second Day Evening—Bounty 210  Sixth Day Morning—The Gospel 217
Third Day Morning—God Creator and Controller 211  Sixth Day Evening—The Mediator 218
Third Day Evening—Before Sleep 212  Seventh Day Morning—God’s Good Pleasure 219
Fourth Day Morning—True Christianity 213  Seventh Day Evening—Future Blessings 220

Bibliography 221

[xii]
Introductory

The Valley of Vision
The Valley of Vision

THE VALLEY OF VISION

LORD, HIGH AND HOLY, MEEK AND LOWLY,
Thou hast brought me to the valley of vision,
where I live in the depths but see thee in the heights;
hemmed in by mountains of sin I behold thy glory.

Let me learn by paradox
that the way down is the way up,
that to be low is to be high,
that the broken heart is the healed heart,
that the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit,
that the repenting soul is the victorious soul,
that to have nothing is to possess all,
that to bear the cross is to wear the crown,
that to give is to receive,
that the valley is the place of vision.

Lord, in the daytime stars can be seen from deepest wells,
and the deeper the wells the brighter thy stars shine;
Let me find thy light in my darkness,
thy life in my death,
thy joy in my sorrow,
thy grace in my sin,
thy riches in my poverty
thy glory in my valley.
I

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
THE TRINITY

THREE IN ONE, ONE IN THREE, GOD OF MY SALVATION,
Heavenly Father, blessed Son, eternal Spirit,
   I adore thee as one Being, one Essence,
   one God in three distinct Persons,
   for bringing sinners to thy knowledge and to thy kingdom.
O Father, thou hast loved me and sent Jesus to redeem me;
O Jesus, thou hast loved me and assumed my nature,
   shed thine own blood to wash away my sins,
   wrought righteousness to cover my unworthiness;
O Holy Spirit, thou hast loved me and entered my heart,
   implanted there eternal life,
   revealed to me the glories of Jesus.
Three Persons and one God, I bless and praise thee,
   for love so unmerited, so unspeakable, so wondrous,
   so mighty to save the lost and raise them to glory.
O Father, I thank thee that in fullness of grace
   thou hast given me to Jesus,
   to be his sheep, jewel, portion;
O Jesus, I thank thee that in fullness of grace
   thou hast accepted, espoused, bound me;
O Holy Spirit, I thank thee that in fullness of grace
   thou hast exhibited Jesus as my salvation,
   implanted faith within me,
   subdued my stubborn heart,
   made me one with him for ever.
O Father, thou art enthroned to hear my prayers,
O Jesus, thy hand is outstretched to take my petitions,
O Holy Spirit, thou art willing to help my infirmities,
   to show me my need, to supply words, to pray within me,
   to strengthen me that I faint not in supplication.
O Triune God, who commandeth the universe,
   thou hast commanded me to ask for those things
   that concern thy kingdom and my soul.
Let me live and pray as one baptized into the threefold Name.
O GOD WHOSE WILL CONQUERS ALL,
There is no comfort in anything
    apart from enjoying thee
    and being engaged in thy service;
Thou art All in all, and all enjoyments are what to me
    thou makest them, and no more.
I am well pleased with thy will, whatever it is,
    or should be in all respects,
And if thou bidst me decide for myself in any affair,
    I would choose to refer all to thee,
    for thou art infinitely wise and cannot do amiss
    as I am in danger of doing.
I rejoice to think that all things are at thy disposal,
    and it delights me to leave them there.
Then prayer turns wholly into praise,
    and all I can do is to adore and bless thee.
What shall I give thee for all thy benefits?
I am in a strait betwixt two, knowing not what to do;
I long to make some return, but have nothing to offer,
    and can only rejoice that thou doest all,
    that none in heaven or on earth shares thy honour;
I can of myself do nothing to glorify thy blessed name,
    but I can through grace cheerfully surrender soul and body to thee,
I know that thou art the author and finisher of faith,
    that the whole work of redemption is thine alone,
    that every good work or thought found in me
        is the effect of thy power and grace,
    that thy sole motive in working in me to will and to do
        is for thy good pleasure.
O God, it is amazing that men can talk so much
    about man's creaturely power and goodness,
    when, if thou didst not hold us back every moment,
    we should be devils incarnate.
This, by bitter experience, thou hast taught me concerning myself.
I find The Valley of Vision to be a great aid for devotions.” —R.C. Sproul. This book “Valley of Vision” expresses in words everything my heart wants to say. I am really enjoying it, and I have given copies of it away to others. Blessed to be a blessing. Janice Blum. The Lord has blessed me with His strengthening, encouraging, and disciplining presence as I read these prayers and devotions in worship and when weak, disheartened or repentant. I always find His comfort in the pages of this book as it testifies to the truths of His Word. I have given this little book away to discouraged and hurting people several times only to discover that it has truly blessed The Vision of the Valley of Dry Bones (or The Valley of Dry Bones or The Vision of Dry Bones) is a prophecy in chapter 37 of the Book of Ezekiel. The chapter details a vision revealed to the prophet Ezekiel, conveying a dream-like realistic-naturalistic depiction. In his vision the prophet sees himself standing in the valley full of dry human bones. He is commanded to carry a prophecy. Before him the bones connect into human figures, then the bones become covered with tendon tissues, flesh and skin.