

LIBRARY

OF THE

Theological Seminary,

PRINCETON, N. J.

Case

BV 210 .H3 1875

Shelf

Hartley, Isaac Smithson,
1830-1899.

Book

Prayer, and its relation to
modern thought and



THE VEDDER LECTURES
ON
MODERN INFIDELITY.

1874.

THE VEDDER LECTURES—1874.

P R A Y E R:

AND ITS RELATION TO

MODERN THOUGHT AND CRITICISM.

A COURSE OF LECTURES

DELIVERED BEFORE

The Theological Seminary and Rutgers College,

(NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY),

By ISAAC S. HARTLEY, D. D.,

Pastor of the Reformed Church, Utica, N. Y.

NEW YORK:

BOARD OF PUBLICATION OF THE R. C. A.

1875.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

THE following is a copy of the instrument of gift, executed by Mr. Nicholas F. Vedder, and recorded by order of General Synod :

“ For divers good considerations moving me thereto, and especially that I may in some degree aid in upholding the great and cardinal truths of the Christian Religion in opposition to the popular infidelity of the times, and of ‘ science falsely so called, ’ I, NICHOLAS F. VEDDER, of Utica, in the State of New York, do give, transfer, and set over, to the *General Synod of the Reformed Church in America*, ten bonds of the denomination of \$1,000 each, known as Equipment Bonds of the Toledo and Wabash Railway Company, bearing seven per cent. interest, semi-annually, with coupons attached, and being of the value of Ten Thousand dollars, at par.

“ This gift is for the purpose of founding and sustain-

ing an annual course of Lectures to be delivered before the students of the Theological Seminary of New Brunswick, and also to the students of Rutgers College, New Brunswick, on 'The present aspects of Modern Infidelity, including its cause and cure.'

"And this gift is made to the said General Synod upon the following express trusts, and subject in all respects to the conditions following, that is to say :

"I. That the General Synod shall annually, and every year after this gift takes effect, elect by ballot, at their regular annual session, a Lecturer for the year ensuing said annual session. The Lecturer shall always, at the time of his annual election, be a member of the Reformed Church in America.

"II. That the said Lecturer shall be required to deliver at least five lectures on the general theme or subject hereinbefore prescribed, to the students of the two Seminaries or institutions hereinbefore mentioned, one month or more, as may be found most practicable and expedient, before the graduation of the Senior class in each of said institutions.

"III. That after having completed the delivery of the said Lectures, and within the period of three months thereafter, said Lecturer shall deliver a corrected copy of his Lectures, prepared for the press, to the Presi-

dent of the General Synod for the time being, who shall give a receipt therefor, upon the presentation of which to the custodian of the fund hereby created, the person receiving the same shall be entitled to receive and shall be paid the income of the said fund for the then current year, but in no case shall he be entitled to, or receive more than the annual sum which shall be realized and actually obtained from said fund.

“IV. That the General Synod, after the manuscript of the Lectures is so delivered as aforesaid, shall offer the same to the Board of Publication of the Reformed Church, for the purpose of publication by said Board, and if the Board accept the same, such Lectures shall from time to time be published by said Board, and, if the profits arising therefrom shall be sufficient, copies thereof shall be presented to each student in both institutions who was present at the delivery thereof, and copies shall likewise be placed in the libraries of the Seminary, and of the College, and any surplus of profits shall be paid into the treasury of the Board of Publication. If the Board shall decline the offer to publish the said Lectures, then the President of the General Synod shall offer the same to any publisher who will undertake to publish the same, and furnish the copies hereinbefore provided for.

“The above are fundamental conditions imposed by me and to be strictly fulfilled when the trust hereby created shall take effect. During my life, I desire no publicity to be given to this endowment, but after my death, it is my request that the same be known and designated as the ‘Vedder Lecture on Modern Infidelity.’

“The securities I have above named, I have placed in the hands of Rev. Isaac S. Hartley, of Utica, to be by him retained until the General Synod have by a resolution to be passed and entered on their minutes, accepted the trust hereby created, and agreed to its conditions, and then to be delivered to the said General Synod, or their Treasurer. And I enjoin upon the Synod to hold these bonds until the same shall arrive at maturity, and on their payment, whenever that shall take place, to reinvest the capital in permanent securities to be approved by the Treasurer of the General Synod, and held as a perpetual fund to secure the objects herein provided for.

“In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal, this 13th day of January, 1873.

“N. F. VEDDER.

“In presence of WM. J. BACON.”

THE following extract from the Minutes of the General Synod, June, 1873, contains its action in reference to the gift of the late Mr. Nicholas F. Vedder :

1. *Resolved*, That the gift of \$10,000, by Nicholas F. Vedder, of Utica, to found a Lectureship, be accepted by this Synod, according to the terms thereof, and the same entered upon the Minutes; and that, in memorial of his admirable gift, said Lectureship shall be known as the *Vedder Lecture on Modern Infidelity*.

2. *Resolved*, That in the publication of the Lectures, the President of General Synod shall not be allowed to involve the Synod in any pecuniary responsibility.

3. *Resolved*, That after offering them to such leading and responsible publishers as may be within his reach, if they decline, he shall deposit the Lectures in the library of the Seminary; but in either case, General Synod shall have the copy-right, and the sole right, subject to the conditions prescribed in the gift.

4. *Resolved*, That in the election of a Lecturer, the mode observed shall be that prescribed in the Constitution for the election of a Professor.

5. *Resolved*, That if, after the Synod has fulfilled its own duty in electing a Lecturer, death or any other contingency should cause the course for that year to fail, the income of the Lectureship shall be invested and held subject to the trust, to be used in case of failure of income in any year.

6. *Resolved*, That one of the Professors of the Seminary, alternating in order of seniority, the President of Rutgers College, and the President of the existing Synod, shall be a committee each year to select the theme of the Lectures, after consultation with the Lecturer.

The following was also adopted :

Resolved, That the General Synod shall appoint, upon the Nicholas F. Vedder Lectureship, two Lecturers, the one being designated to lecture at the close of the present ecclesiastical year, and the other to lecture at the close of the next year; and that thereafter each General Synod shall appoint the Lecturer for the ecclesiastical year succeeding its own synodical term, and thus secure to the Lecturers more ample opportunity for the preparation of their Lectures.

Synod proceeded to elect two Lecturers, according to the preceding resolution, and the law governing the election of a Professor. Rev. Isaac S. Hartley was elected for the present year, and Prof. Tayler Lewis, LL.D., for the succeeding year.

CONTENTS.

History LECTURE I.

PRAYER, AND THE METHOD BY WHICH IT IS MADE
AVAILABLE. 17

Definition of Prayer - 50
acceptance in faith - 50

LECTURE II.

PRAYER, AND THE PERSONALITY OF GOD, . . . 59

LECTURE III.

CAN GOD ANSWER PRAYER; OR, PRAYER IN ITS RELATION TO SCIENCE, 97

LECTURE IV.

THE "PRAYER TEST." 147

LECTURE V.

DOES GOD ANSWER PRAYER; OR, PRAYER AND MIRACLE, 197

LECTURE I.

PRAYER, AND THE METHOD BY WHICH IT IS
MADE AVAILABLE.

LECTURE I.

PRAYER AND THE METHOD BY WHICH IT IS MADE AVAILABLE.

THERE is no subject, either in the religious or the physical world, which, in these latter days, has called forth more varied discussion, and in regard to which, among the thoughtful, the intelligent, and the good, there is a greater diversity of sentiment, than that upon which we now propose to enter. Infidelity, baffled in her numerous efforts to find successful weapons wherewith to achieve a long-coveted victory, has again boldly invaded the domain of practical religion; and in one of her holiest realms, that of Prayer, has endeavored to wrest from believers one of their most potent convictions; and while even the unlettered disciple of Jesus, so long as he has the witness within himself of the truthfulness of his faith, need have no fear for any of the arguments of infidelity, still it is proper that, as often as charges are brought against it, so often should they be met, and answered with the same de-

gree of plainness with which it has been attacked.

And in general language, the attitude which infidelity has assumed on the subject now before us is, while admitting prayer to be a power in the world, and beneficial in its subjective influence, it is not, however, that power which the church and others have so long claimed; nor is it so universal either in its application or its conquests; on the other hand, it has the most marked and evident limitations; and beyond these same limitations it no more avails than do the laws of our spiritual being avail in the natural world, or those of our mental organization over the form, nature, and structure of our bodies; its province is strictly defined, and as strictly fixed. Nor, unhappily, has it rested even here. For while there are some who would thus confine this agency to a single realm, others, advancing, have gone so far as to deny that prayer has any efficacy—nay, to question its necessity. Not that they believe there is no God, nor yet that man is not a real existence, or there are no necessary relations existing between them; or that there is not a natural world and a spiritual world; still less that it is impossible for God to establish such communi-

cation as it is claimed this agency reveals; and that there is no such thing as law; but the universe contains no such force, nor is there any such power; rather that which some call prayer is at most a mere myth, a void, a deception, a dream; and while none greater has ever visited the world, so no doctrine has ever been upheld by such flippant argument, or rests upon a more uncertain basis.

What may have been the immediate origin of this particular form of unbelief, and the mode also in which it has been so recently introduced, are questions certainly of much interest; but as more than their mention would lead us far beyond the purposes contemplated in our present investigations, we leave them with similar inquiries to be reviewed by those who some time may follow us; it is enough for us merely to note the fact, that unbelief in the power and need of prayer is abroad in the world, and having noted it, to give it that consideration which its relations to the church and the world so imperatively demand. And since it is as disingenuous as it is unwise to enter upon the discussion of any subject, without a clear understanding of the doctrine involved in it; and as error and falsehood come so much more

frequently from false assumptions than from any process of reasoning, at this early stage in our investigations let us ascertain, as best we can, what Prayer is; or what is the phenomenon which some assert, is not only capable of affecting the established laws of the universe, but which is able also to move Deity himself; and which others, with no less enthusiasm, maintain at most is purely subjective, if not a myth and a fraud.

And whatever may be the definition given to prayer, the following facts in regard to it challenge successful refutation:

1. As to its antiquity, it rivals anything and everything with which we can claim an intelligent acquaintance. Whether it was first heard in this world, when man, conscious of his lofty nature, stood blameless before his Maker, reflecting His image; or when driven from the garden he sought refuge from his guilt and shame, history nowhere, in so many exact words, informs us. This, however, we are told, that as soon as man began to understand the comprehensiveness and sweetness of that significant expression, Jehovah—what it involved, what it asserted, what it assured—“then began men to call upon the name of the Lord.” In other words, its rise was coeval

with the awakening of man to the true relations which Jehovah sustained towards him, and which he sustained towards Jehovah. And if we follow the exposition which some commentators have given to this passage, and say it has primary reference to the invocation of God by His proper name, in audible and social prayer, then prayer must have had its beginning years long anterior, and at a period which can be measured only as we estimate the time required to secure elevated and heavenly aspirations from hearts and minds weakened by sin. Historically, then, whatever it is, we can safely assert that it ranks with the earliest development of the intellect and desires of man to know more of God, of His nature, character, and especially of His forgiving mercy; and that it received an open recognition, in less than two and a-half centuries, from the hour in which God, having reviewed His works, pronounced all things as "very good." Indeed, so far as we know, prayer has always existed; for we have no evidence that it was ever enjoined. And if asking from men what they may be able to give us is a prompting of nature, so soon as it was known that favors were obtainable from God which could not be procured elsewhere, its

existence must have been cotemporaneous with men's idea of God's providence in the world, and His interest in their welfare. Nor should it be forgotten, that in every stage of human cultivation there are evidences of its use in some form—whether it be that which idolatry in its degradation has assumed, or the primeval one of a sacrificial system, or the more refined and etherealized one of mental aspiration. And if we lay aside the Christian revelation, and judge in the light of history and tradition, prayer might reasonably be pronounced the common starting-point from which all religious systems have diverged, and the grand central principle around which religious thought and faith have ever revolved.

2. Whatever may be the definition given to prayer, it is to be remembered, also, that there is nothing which has more thoroughly interwoven itself among the experiences of men of every nationality, and of every era, and which the world has more universally recognized. In this respect, prayer is not as the fruits of the earth, or as the flowers of the field, or even as the stars of the firmament, the product of certain latitudes, or visible only in certain localities; but it has been found to be existent wherever man has been a dweller, whether

in the North, or in the South, in the East or in the West, among the hills, valleys, mountains, plains, or upon the sea; everywhere has it been acknowledged and practiced. It is a part of all religions, written on all mythologies, recognized in all creeds, and appears in every known language, and it has been revealed under all possible circumstances and conditions. Mariners, explorers, adventurers, missionaries, all bear witness to its universality; and while the latter are often called upon to remodel systems of belief, never as yet have they had occasion to teach the meaning of prayer; only the method by which it is made acceptable.

Men differ largely in their tastes and sympathies, in their hopes and aspirations, and in their motives and attainments; here, however, mankind are one—none too humble, none too depraved, none too ignorant, nor any too intellectual and refined, as not to have cultivated it. In fact, prayer is co-extensive with the idea of religion; and wherever the possibility has been entertained, though exceedingly remote, for the creature to commune with the Creator, there has it received distinct expression. And though it were possible to obliterate all reference to its existence in written

religions, creeds, confessions, and systems, its general observance would still be evident to us from the numerous sepulchral shrines, and from the temples and tablets, as well as from the mounds and the relics which to-day dot the globe. [Bishop Wordsworth's remarks in this connection are intensely true: "As for the heathen of old, they began nothing without prayer for Divine aid; journeys were not commenced without supplication, nor voyages without sacrifice; the opening of popular and senatorial assemblies was preceded by religious rites; colonies were not planted without inauguration; the history of some ancient cities is now almost limited to the ruins of their temples. The most sublime poem (the *Iliad*) and the most eloquent oration (the *De Coronâ* of Demosthenes) of pagan antiquity, commence with invocations of Heavenly assistance. When was an ancient general known to set forth on a military campaign without an inquiry whether Heaven was propitious to his enterprise? When were years and months begun without prayer and sacrifice? Nor was this the case only with the beginnings of actions and of times, but of places also. Thresholds of houses, gates of cities, were consecrated to the unseen powers of

heaven. On the coasts and headlands of countries, temples stood visible from afar. The lofty columns on the sea-cliffs of Sunium, of Taenarus, of Carystus, and of Leucas, proclaimed far and wide, that the land on which they stood was consecrated." And what is to be noted: this universal testimony to prayer is not the result of revelation, but rather of many to whom its holy instructions have never been known.

3. And whatever is the definition given to prayer, it should be remembered that thus far in the history of the race no convulsions of empires, no change of dynasties, no councils, no human philosophy, no conceit of man has been able to banish it from the belief of men. From the hour in which God started the world in its orbit, most wondrous changes have been witnessed. Continents have been discovered and peopled; powerful empires have risen suddenly, flourished awhile, and then nearly as suddenly have disappeared. Thrones and governments have been set up, and leagues offensive and defensive made; but to-day they are not only powerless, but the fact of their existence to many has yet to be made known. Cities have been built, and trodden by millions of human feet, whose sites now

form the theme of the warmest dispute ; while contrariwise, where once roamed the beasts of the forest and jungle, there is now to be seen a true and lofty civilization. And councils, local and œcumenical, have been convened, and what they discussed and decreed, others have pronounced unworthy of debate and adoption. And so of many of the schools, systems, and philosophies—all have successively appeared, and for a time exerted a wide influence ; but they are as impotent to-day as the authors which gave them life and being. In short, changes are ever occurring in the state, in the church, in philosophy and science, in theory and in doctrine, in thought and in purpose ; still prayer, whatever it may be, and whatever it may involve, is the same as when it was first exercised ; and if history is to be believed, its devotees are not only yearly increasing, but they are more potent and cultivated than any previous age has ever witnessed. This leads me to observe,—

4. Whatever prayer is, we have no reason to believe that man will ever cease its practice ; and not because he is the victim of superstition, and is easily deceived ; nor yet from any intense illumination which he is yet to experience ; but from the fact that prayer

seems to present itself to the natural reason of man everywhere; to all his possible conditions and relations; and to be the outgrowth of his dependent nature—in a word, because it is a part of his being; nor can he at times any more do without its observance, and be, as he is, rational, confiding, dependent, than he can do without air or food, and continue to live, act, and think. And what is thus inwrought into the very texture of man, it need not be proven, must continually receive expression. Men will pray, though unable to solve one of the objections which reason, science, or experience may allege against it. Men will pray, though daily reprov'd for their weakness, and laugh'd at for their ignorance and credulity. Men will pray, though the language which they may employ be broken and fragmentary, and fail in expressing the intensity of their feeling, or the depth of their need. Men will pray, though they may know and feel that Heaven's ears are closed against their appeals, and for their succor no arm will be outstretched. Men will pray, though they know neither the time nor the mode in which God may answer their supplications. When one is exposed to temptation, or feels the need of another's wisdom to guide him in

his plans—or is in doubt and fear—or is bending under heavy burdens, who can prevent such a one from turning heavenward? Or when the child of the house is stricken with disease, and moans under its sufferings, what is there that is able to restrain the father or the mother of that child from imploring heaven for his recovery, and of pushing their petitions with an earnestness which knows no denial? And finally,—

5. However prayer may be defined, it has been practiced, and adopted, and urged upon others, by those who have constantly sought the highest interests of man, and who are universally acknowledged to be the most unselfish, loving, and excellent of the earth. It is likewise the belief of those whom the world can least spare, and to whom, were it expedient, all men would render the highest honors.

But what is Prayer? What is the phenomenon itself? And in answering this question at this point of our investigation, purely from its human side, and speaking negatively, and beginning with some of the lowest conceptions which have been formed in regard to it, we would say: Prayer is not any chosen attitude of the body, as the bending of the knee, the closing of the eye, or the upraising of

the hand; nor is it any plausible formality, attired in regal pomp and splendor; still less any arrangement of so many mellifluous words, each one of which may be surcharged with love or humility, and harmoniously marshalled as jewels upon a golden string; nor is it an apostrophe to woods and wilds, or waters; or a "voice convulsively sent out into space, whose utterance is a physical relief, like the bitter cry of the hare when the greyhound is upon her"; nor is it the proud ascent of the imagination into some high region of splendors and sublime abstractions; nor is it rapture, or rhapsody, or necessarily any lofty ecstasy of the soul; still less any mere conception of God—His wisdom—His power—His love—or any dramatic wrestling with Him; or a "machine warranted by theologians to make God do what His clients want." Rather is it something far different and deeper, both in nature and character, and immeasurably more holy, reliable, and successful in its results; and a something which is born far away from the cold regions of the intellect, and which has in it nothing either ceremonial, passionate, and perfunctory, or which involves lofty conceptions, mental greatness, or the most chaste and liberal endowments.

When we desire to know what prayer is, as to its essence or nature, we must not look for it either in the lofty realm of the intellect, nor yet in the wondrous arena of the imagination, nor among the high-sounding phrases of men—among words, however beautifully arranged or eloquently expressed; for no mere mental effort can know it; nor bare flight of the imagination reach it; nor any stately marshalling of periods attain it; for language is merely the channel through which it reveals itself, or the casket which may hold the jewel, but not the jewel itself; for as the diamond differs from the setting, so does true prayer differ from much with which it may be and has been associated. When the Bible refers to prayer, it speaks of it as “drawing near to God”; “speaking unto the Lord”; “declaring to Him our ways”; “pouring out our hearts before Him”; “coming to the throne of grace”; and as “the lifting up of the soul and of the heart unto God.” Nor does it rest here, but with the fact that it is “the lifting up of the soul unto God,” it describes it, also, as “wrestling with God”; as “an offering”; a “meditation”; “incense”; and a “declaration of our way to Him.” Such are some of the expressions of the Scriptures,

when it would speak of this holy exercise. And while we need not quote further from its pages, who can fail to discover were the thought which runs through all these and similar expressions to be embodied in one phrase, it would be other than this;—that prayer is the desire of the heart, or the turning of the soul to God, and seeking communion with Him. Certainly this is the germinal truth, which threads all the numerous definitions of this holy and heavenly duty.

Prayer, then, is not, as too many unhappily suppose, a secret imparted only to men of peculiar temperaments; nor is it a gift conferred upon a chosen few; or an art or science which is to be acquired by observing the practices and teachings of others. But as it is a feeling of which all may be conscious, so is it an experience which all may possess; and for whose exercise God has made provision in every heart, encased in whatever form, living in whatever age, and whatever may be its convictions, its purposes, or its destiny. Indeed, prayer, in its last analysis, presupposes no extraordinary endowments, no special gifts, no superior knowledge, no unusual experiences—simply a warm heart, and a consciousness of the relations which exist

between man and his Creator. Its birth and life are found in the affections, and there, as a force, it rules and reigns supremely. Consequently, it is not he who knows the most that prays the most, nor he who thinks the most, or says the most, though he may have assumed the most profound attitude known to devotion, and in the most musical and eloquent words have called upon God to give ear to his appeal. For such a conception of prayer would be converting this sweet privilege, this silent, but none the less effective, agency into words or language, and acknowledging true prayer as born of the intellect, or as the product of mere form; and that, therefore, to be the most successful petition which involves the noblest thought, and which may be appavelled in the richest and most harmonious syllables. In fact, one may repeat a hundred times a day that most beautiful and comprehensive prayer which the Master himself, anticipating for all time the sentiments, the wants, and the longings of the race, has left us, beginning with that endearing expression, "Our Father which art in Heaven;" or with the sweet singer of Israel, he may say, "My soul thirsteth for Thee, O God, my flesh longeth after Thee."

Yea, he may weep himself away as a cloud, and yet no prayer rise, nor a single vow or complaint be lodged where he would have them lodge. But he whose affections have been so touched, and whose heart has become so warmed and lighted, as to experience deep, honest, and holy cravings, and whose soul has been made alive, it matters not how feebly, to its true character and destiny, and to the high-born relations which exist between him and his God; and who, in view of its character and its relations, hungers and thirsts, burns and pants, craves and sighs for certain favors, for greater knowledge of self, and a high, holy, and unbroken communion with heaven; he it is who really prays, and whose desires and petitions ascend like holy incense to the skies.

When one has most profoundly reflected upon his condition, and has a just estimate of the relations which he sustains to his Maker, and feels condemned by the extent and depth of that guilt which his transgressions have brought upon him; or when one, by reason of the light which beams into his bosom, is led to see his helplessness, and literally groans over his weakness and past indifference and ingratitude; or when the heart fairly burns

for forgiveness and reconciliation, and would be willing to part with all, could it be assured of its acceptance with God; and in view of its guilt, unworthiness, and emptiness, it resolves to turn to God, and life is given to those resolves; that soul, that spirit, that heart prays more—those desires or those resolves which then and there are born, that holy emulation which it now seeks, and that love and pardon which it craves—all these newly-born aspirations are prayers deeper and more significant than the grandest mental conceptions, or that which words can possibly express or language frame. For true prayer lies back of bare intellect and of mere syllables. It is not lip labor, nor is it word music. For there may be prayer in a sigh—that deep throbbing of the heart which outwits all language to describe; there may be prayer in a groan—the inner aching of a distracted spirit; there may be prayer in a look; there may be prayer in a smile; there may be prayer in a nod; and there may be prayer in a hope. And when the soul, alive to its salvation or condemnation, evinces by a moistened eye its true condition, the tears which then may be shed are real and living prayers. And that fire which animates every

awakened heart—its flame, its heat ; and those holy motives which stimulate to effort—their life and aim ; those righteous purposes which contribute so largely to the joy and comfort of the soul—their eagerness and yearning—all those inner movements, those internal promptings, the hidden cravings—every holy desire born in the heart—is a prayer, whether expressed in words, or never spoken by the lips. How often it is that the heart, alive to its true condition, is unable to express its condition or its desires in language. There are times, indeed, when the experiences of the soul are too deep for utterance ; and there are affections and emotions which language fairly chills, and which, if ever framed with words, would be robbed of their power ; just as to the convicted there is a silence, the force and nature of which God only fully knows, and which only God can fully interpret. The soul assuredly has its nerves and sinews as well as the body, and the heart its tongue and lip of utterance as well as the understanding, though no word breaks upon the stillness of the air. Mark one whom the Holy Spirit has awakened to a knowledge of his sins ; and who, in the golden light which radiates from His presence, has beheld their

magnitude: that poor, trembling, smitten soul whose conscience has been pricked—Peter standing without the porch; or behold him into whose inner depths truth has thrown its convincing rays, whose heart may have become melted, but who now is invested with a joy unequalled by a possession of the world's greatest treasure—as Paul of old; in the one, that sense of nothingness, that complete emptiness and unworthiness before God—those tears, those telescopic globes through which, when born of penitence, God looks nearer and dearer; and in the other, that holy calmness, that look of joy, acceptance, and forgiveness, as far transcends words or mere expression, as the brilliant light of the meridian outglories the deepest darkness of night. The desire of Peter to be forgiven, or of Paul to be borne home to that kingdom from whence came those sudden flashings, is more eloquent than the most serious lamentations, or words of honeyed sweetness and beauty. Nay, just as in the heart of a great musician there are silent melodies which are never to roll forth from harp or organ, so there are desires which language cannot frame, nor words possibly express.

Do we not see at times some bowed in deep

affliction, and so deep as to be beyond the power of all outward expression or of mere lip utterance—a widow bending over the cold form of her early protector and friend; or a father, white and motionless, gazing for the last time upon the pearly features of his only boy! And will it be said that in those bleeding hearts, in those quivering lips, in those trembling, stricken frames, there are no longings, no aspirations, no desires, no prayer! Are there not periods when the heart cannot speak, when its lips are fairly sealed; times when the inner movements of the soul are too full, large, and grand—far too grand and profound for expression, and when all its appeals are inly breathed; seasons in which the emotions of the heart are altogether too subtle or refined for words? In the soul

“ That mysterious thing,
Which hath no limit from the walls of sense,
No chill from hoary time, with pale decay
No fellowship, but shall stand forth unchanged,
Unscorched amid the resurrection fires,
To bear its boundless lot of good or ill—”

do not fires often burn, though neither the heart and light are discernible by any outward vision? Stand for a few minutes nigh unto Bethany. And in a certain home, death

has done its work, and done it most successfully; and the hearts of many, but of two especially, are smitten, and deeply smitten, because their brother is not. And as the Master draws near the bereaved household, we are told, Martha eagerly runs to meet Him; she would be the first to speak to her own and her brother's Friend, and to breathe into His willing ear, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." "But Mary sat still in the house." But, as she quietly awaits the presence of her loving Friend, in her heart are there no longings, no cravings? Though across the shadowed threshold she does not step, or haste to tell her sorrow to her approaching Friend, are there not within her hungerings and burnings that He would come, and quickly come, and to her own familiar home, that she might acquaint Him with her grief?

Or stand near Olivet's rugged slope, and behold the Saviour, His earthly labors over, about to leave, nay, leaving, His timid disciples to struggle as He struggled with the world, and to bring it back repentant unto God. And as they gaze through the rifted cloud, and look upon His sublime form gradually melting into purer and brighter light; as

they think of His teachings, and of His power, of His promises and prayers, of His origin and destiny ; and recall the trials which, if faithful to Him, they must endure before a like glorious ascension shall be theirs—trials from their own friends, and from their own brethren, from captains, priests, and governors and emperors—among that astonished group, as they follow that majestic form, “steering its flight of gentlest wing to gain its native Heaven,” is there no desire ? Have their steadfast, earnest looks upon the ascending glory no power, no significance ? Among them, then and there, are there no burnings, no aspirations to shake off the chains and all the dust of earth, and enter Heaven with their ascending Lord ? The Saviour, going directly to His Father’s house, to re-occupy His early throne, and within the hearts of His own brethren no breathings for a like immediate journey ? Were we thus to conclude, we would be robbing the golden harp of its finest and most sonorous strings. As we can never print a tone, or a sigh, or a tear, no more can we expect language, at all times, to embody the holy emotions of the heart.

And it is to be remembered, also, there are those whose tongues God, in His inscrutable

wisdom, has been pleased to seal. And I do not now allude to that vast multitude whom death has blasted with his icy breath, and upon whose turf the young flowers to-day bud and bloom; but to those, few though they may be, from whom there has been withheld the power of speech.

“ ’Tis sweet to see the babe kneel by its mother’s side,
And lisp its brief and holy prayer at hush of even-tide;
And sweet to mark the blooming youth, at morning’s purple
ray,

Breathe incense of the heart to Him who ruleth night and
day.

But how the bosom’s secret pulse with strong emotions swell,
And tender, pitying thoughts awake, which language may
not tell.

When yon mute train, who meekly bow beneath affliction’s
rod,

Whose voice, though never heard by man, pour forth the
soul to God!

They have no garment for the thought which springs to meet
its sire,

No tongue to flush the glowing cheek, or fan devotion’s fire;
Yet surely to the Eternal throne the spirit’s sigh may soar,
As free as if the wing of speech its hallowed burden bore.”

Prayer, then, in its last analysis, must be feeling or desire. It is an instinct; and consequently, it is not the product of anything external to us: but it is a part of that nature wherewith man was originally endowed, when God, having formed his physical frame,

breathed into his nostrils, and man became a living soul. And, since it is an instinct, it ranks with those numerous other instincts or intuitive ideas whose existence the thoughtful have always recognized. And yet, when we say Prayer is an instinct, we do not mean that it is such as the animal reveals when it would seek relief, it knows not when or where, or when it would express its wants in its peculiar way; but it is an instinct whose exercise comes from the conviction that the aid sought can be granted. It is an instinct whose action is born of thought; and which, whensoever exercised, feels that its highest cravings can be fully realized. It is an instinct which recognizes the existence of a higher power, and the possibility of that power interposing in its behalf.

But not to anticipate. Advancing, therefore, in our definition of this familiar term, and considering it in the immediate connection in which it presents itself in our present investigations, remembering what man is in his nature, Prayer may be defined as the act of the creature bowing before the Creator; it is the subject doing homage to his Sovereign; it is a child, an erring child, calling upon his Father. Yet more, it is the soul thinking and

feeling; and in its noblest action seeking higher and holier communion with God; it is the God-like in man returning to that of which he is a part, or the human sighing and wrestling for the divine.

And remembering man's need, Prayer is an intelligent expression of that need unto God; it is an instinctive crying unto God, with a deep conviction that He can administer not only the relief sought, but He can meet every want; and it is the soul asking that its numerous necessities may be supplied.

And remembering man's dependence, Prayer is the soul acknowledging its weakness, and its appeal to God in its hour of sore extremity; it is a solicitation from Him of its requirements, with the confidence that whatever may be asked in faith, and in obedience to the Divine will, shall be given; and a feeling, if God does not then interfere, suffering, sorrow, and destitution must follow.

And remembering man's weakness: Prayer is helplessness casting itself upon power; it is ignorance seeking knowledge from wisdom; it is feebleness coveting strength; it is the humiliation of the whole man before God, and an earnest entreaty that his frailty may become might, and vigor, and efficiency.

And remembering man's destiny: Prayer is the soul laboring for God's forgiveness, acceptance, and His enduring friendship; it is the imperishable within him longing for its true and only proper home, and to be made meet for that inheritance which has been promised it, and for which man was originally created.

And remembering man's endowments and present character, that he has mind, and will, and affections, and aspirations; and that he is guilty, sinful, sorrowful, and prone to iniquity: Prayer is mind in its highest action; it is will employed, and busily employed, in its noblest work; it is affection flowing in its holiest channel, and aspiration rising, as upon angels' wings, and coveting full realization in the immediate presence of God. And it is guilt seeking remission; it is sinfulness craving perfect purity; it is sorrow pouring its grief into the ears of mercy; and depravity sighing to be washed in the fountain which has been opened for sin and all uncleanness.

And when it is remembered what God is—that He is the Creator and Preserver, and bountiful Benefactor, the Almighty God, our Father; and it is He whom we have offended; and the relations which man sustains to—

wards Him, ~~*~~Prayer is not only invocation, and adoration, and confession, and thanksgiving, and supplication, but it is praise. ~~/~~ It is the link which unites the personal will of the Father to the personal will of the child; it is religion in the fullness of action; and, therefore, in its widest sense, Prayer is the whole homage which it is possible for man to render to God as the Being who merits his highest and holiest worship. This is Prayer.

Consequently, so far as man is concerned, it involves, first, the self-consciousness of the soul; secondly, the accountability of the soul, and a deep feeling of its dependence and want; thirdly, a desire to have its wants gratified: a condition which embraces the action both of the understanding and of the will; fourthly, the existence of a Being who is able to aid the soul in the attainment of its requirements; fifthly, the possibility of that same Being exercising himself, or being exercised in its behalf; and finally, in view of the infinite distance between the Creator and the creature, or the Giver and receiver, whatever may be the action of this High Personality, a free and willing submission to His decisions. Such are the chief constituents of prayer, and such is the holy exercise.

As there are two practical questions connected with prayer, so far as we have been permitted to consider it, which merit, at least, some mention, and as we purpose in our subsequent remarks to speak of prayer more particularly in its relation to modern thought and criticism, let me conclude this lecture by a brief reference to them. (And one relates to the art of prayer, while the other has reference to the manner in which prayer is made acceptable.)

And, first: how may one learn to pray? How frequently is this inquiry heard; and what lamentable ignorance exists as regards the secret of genuine prayer! For a knowledge of prayer is not acquired, as some suppose, by any laborious study of its form; nor yet by treasuring up in the mind the devout expressions which have fallen from the lips of those advanced in holiness; nor is it attained by memorizing certain portions of the Scriptures, such as the penitential psalms, or those sublime words which the Saviour employed when He engaged in this holy exercise, though all this may quicken thought, and give beauty and fluency of diction; rather is it by a knowledge of one's true condition. As Paley long since has expressed it,

“the foundation of prayer in all cases is a sense of want: no one can pray, and be in earnest for what he does not feel he needs.” Here is its beginning, its alphabet, and whence flow its numerous springs. Just so far as one deeply experiences a sense of want, and of positive want, so far does he acquire the art of true prayer. For this knowledge possessed, as when one suffering physical pain, knows just where that pain is; or if floating in the water, and in danger of drowning, he needs no one to teach him what to say, or how to speak, but knows full well how to call, as Peter of old, for deliverance; so with true prayer: let one be fully acquainted with his necessities, and genuine prayer will flow from him as freely as water from the snows on the mountain peak when melted by the sun. It was not the seeing who stopped the Master as He left Jericho, on His road to Bethany, to have Him touch their eyeballs; nor the hearing who asked Him to put His fingers into their ears; or the strong and healthy that went to the pool of Bethesda; but the blind, and the deaf, and the lame, and the impotent. They were lepers who, as He “entered a certain village, lifted up their voices, and said: ‘Jesus, Master, have

mercy on us!’” Indeed, nothing but a consciousness of need, or of one’s poverty and helplessness, will drive him out of himself, and lead him to seek aid of another. When the heart has been scanned, and its hidden things brought to light, and each of its chambers has been thoroughly examined, and the marks or thoughts which cover its walls have been read, when all its furniture has become fully known, then one can pray, and pray with an eloquence and earnestness before unknown. It is here where we are to get all the food of devout and acceptable supplication; and not in any gilded volume, though traced by a redeemed hand; nor yet in nature, though sublime and masterly as are her teachings; but in the heart, that favored temple where God loves especially to dwell. Good old Richard Hooker never spoke more truthfully than when he remarked: “The heart is the golden censor from which the fumes of sacred incense must arise, if he would pray aright; as we read, ‘My son, give me thy heart.’” Yes, it is in the heart where we become acquainted with our condition as it is, and where also we can see ourselves, in part at least, as God sees us. And for this scrutiny we need no instructor

nor previous training; for looking within is simply nature reading what is natural. And so easily discoverable are all our actual needs, that when known, even one young in years and thought can express them. A child can know its wants; and by word, or look, or nod, reveal them; and so can all, whether physical, mental, or spiritual, if he only feel them. Know, then, your real condition. Look into your soul—your inner soul; ascertain its necessities. Recall your guilt. Feel your spiritual leprosy. Dive deep into that inner mine and quarry its easiest veins, and learn your true character; and then one will not only have nearness to the throne, but he will pray so as to be heard in heaven. Know your heart, and you will be heard morning, noon, and evening, exclaiming with the royal Psalmist of old: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me.” And as we so often see with a little child, when its little prattle has become exhausted, abandoning, it may be, all effort at speech, it resorts to signs, or

looks, or actions, to make known its wants, and the fond father, at once interpreting its symbols, proceeds to satisfy its wishes far beyond the ability of the child to reveal—so with our Heavenly Father. If with a profound consciousness of want, there is an honest longing for His presence, a craving for forgiveness and acceptance—brokenness of heart, hungerings and thirstings—an acknowledgment of emptiness, His hand also will be opened far beyond our fondest anticipations, to comfort and to bless.

But to our second inquiry, and briefly. How is Prayer made available?

And in answering this likewise practical question, I would say:

I. No prayer is acceptable to God unless it is offered with reverence, with humility, in sincerity, with a desire to be holy, and in consonance with His will; all of which is evident, when we remember whose presence we enter when we would pray; the sinfulness and unworthiness of man; that it is the heart upon which God always looks, and His intense hatred of iniquity. So far as the mode of praying and the character of the petition are concerned, all these are essential for acceptable prayer. Nor can these elementary

constituents be set aside. As to the inquiry, Why is this? it need not detain us. It is sufficient, if we recall that prayer has its conditions for success, as have other things, and as no necessary condition, connected with whatever subject, can be disregarded and success attained, no more can the essential conditions of prayer be neglected and success attend its exercise. And that these are the inherent elements of prayer is manifest from the very nature of prayer, and what true prayer also contemplates.

II. Nor is prayer acceptable unless offered in faith. "All things," says the Saviour, "whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." And again, "All things are possible to him that believeth." And again, "Whatsoever things ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." "But without faith," says the Apostle, "it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us." And as St. James writes: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him

ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." Faith then plainly is another vital attribute of acceptable prayer. And it must be noticed that this faith, so far as it is related Godward, is to be centered particularly upon His character, His promises, and His ability; and in its reference to the petitioner, he is to believe that prayer is a means to a certain end; and as results flow from the use of other agencies, so will prayer be productive, if its agencies are employed. Or analyzing these statements: as to God, we are to believe He is what He has revealed Himself to be—a prayer-hearing and a sin-pardoning God; and that He most willingly listens to all who will come to Him in His own appointed way. And as to His promises that have been made to us, He waits to fulfil them as soon as we obey the conditions upon which they were offered. And as to His ability, that He has full power to do all that He has promised; and though we may discover difficulties connected with His answer-

ing our requests, yet if they are in obedience to His will, as all power is His, He can and will answer them. And he who prays is to believe that God has not abandoned the universe to caprice, but governs it through the use of certain agencies, and among them is that of prayer; and now because he has used this agency, or because he has asked, and asked in obedience to God's will, He will give him what may be expedient for him to possess. Yet more, he is to believe; had he not thus have asked, he would not possess much of what he does possess; or, in other language, he is to believe what he receives is in consequence of his having prayed. Indeed, the expectation of receiving is simply a logical inference from the fact that one has asked in faith. If knowledge reveals God as seated upon a throne of grace, faith leads us to His footstool.

III. Prayer is available, also, when it is taught us by God, the Holy Ghost. But as the influence of the Holy Spirit in prayer, as represented in the Scriptures, is more of a revealer and helper and teacher, both of the matter and manner of prayer, than an indispensable agent for its efficacy, as we learn from such passages as these: "The prepara-

tion of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord;" "ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss;" "likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercessions for us with groanings which cannot be uttered"—with the remark that His agency has more to do with the petitioner than with God, or with the heart—its tone, character, and condition—than with Him to whom prayer is addressed, I pass to name as another essential of successful prayer:

IV. That it be made in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ. Here, also, as for all our information in regard to the other essential elements of accepted prayer to which we have just given utterance, Revelation is our only true instructor and guide. Now, whatever may have been the mode in which a suppliant under the early dispensation drew near to God, and poured out his soul to Him, it does not concern us here to discuss; nor yet, whether God hears those prayers, and only those which are presented by Jesus Christ; as of this we have no knowledge. But the Scriptures do most plainly teach, until the advent of the Man of Nazareth, all access to

the throne was difficult; and when it was reached, it was accomplished by an observance of certain prescribed, burdensome rites and ceremonies. But now, He having come, a new and living way has been opened for us; and that way is through Christ's merits and intercessions. As we read, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us through the veil: that is to say, His flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." And again, as we read in the previous chapter of the same epistle, where the apostle, having shown the superiority of the new covenant as mediated by Jesus Christ, over the older one as mediated under the Levitical priesthood, thus speaks: "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." "Wherefore," as he elsewhere observes, "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth

to make intercession for them." Or as the same truth may be more briefly expressed: Jesus Christ, by dying on the cross, became our High Priest, and therefore Prayer to be acceptable must now be presented in His name.

And this is the only method of successful prayer, as it is written: "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." And again, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." In short, the instructions which the Scriptures give us on this most vital point in acceptable prayer, of praying in the name of Christ, are presented in the following familiar quotations: "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." "I have ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, He may give it you." "In that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name. Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. At that

day ye shall ask in my name, and I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God." Passages which certainly teach that to pray in Christ's name, is: first, to have a just conception of His nature and dignity, and the relations likewise which on our behalf He now sustains to the Father; secondly, an abiding confidence in His ability to do, and willingness, what He has promised to do; thirdly, a deep sympathy in His work; and finally, a partaking of His Spirit. Such is it to pray in the name of Jesus Christ. And it is this prayer which is the prayer, according to His will, as we read: "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us; and if we know that He hear us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him."

Such are the leading elements in successful prayer; nor can they be overlooked without defeating the holiest desire, or vitiating the noblest aspirations which may rise from the heart.

LECTURE II.

PRAYER AND THE PERSONALITY OF GOD.

II.

PRAYER AND THE PERSONALITY OF GOD.

BUT is not Prayer more than the desire of the heart? In connection with this inquiry the consideration of God's relations to us is demanded. What, then, are the bearings of prayer as viewed in this relation?

But before we answer this important question, two other inquiries confront us, and as both necessarily enter into a correct reply to the question proposed, after naming them, let us give them that consideration which their relation to our theme so evidently requires. And the first question to which we refer is, the existence of God. Prayer, as we have seen, involves belief in a Higher power or in Deity; and it may be asked, is there such a thing or Being as a Deity? If so, what is this Deity? Is Deity a person, a thing, or a mere force? It is, then, to the demonstration of the existence of God to which we are brought.

Whether the existence of God can be demonstrated or not, the following facts in ref-

erence to this subject, we believe, are incontrovertible:

First. We have no evidence against the existence of God.

Second. There may be such a being as God, though the fact be undemonstrable.

Third. If there be no evidence for or against His existence, it is far safer to believe He exists—that having served Him, we may ultimately be rewarded—than not to believe, and at last discover there is such a Being.

Fourth. The belief in the existence of God is far more congenial to our nature than a disbelief in Him.

Fifth. It is only the wicked who wish there were no God; and such of the intelligent as may have come to this conviction, have arrived at it not so much through any process of reasoning, as from the difficulty of explaining many of the phenomena in the world.

Sixth. Those who do believe in the Divine existence, come to this experience long anterior to their knowledge of any theoretic argument by which it may be established. And finally,—

It is not so much the existence of God which men dispute, as the method by which this fact can be known, or how we are assured of it.

But to the question: Is there a God?

As any elaboration of the numerous arguments, which, from the very earliest days, have been adduced for proving the existence of Deity, and upon which the intellectual and the devout still lean with confidence, would lead us far beyond the purposes contemplated in these discourses, in answering this inquiry, let us content ourselves simply with their statement, leaving their analysis, as well as their explanation and defence, to other hands and occasions. And as is so well known, the forms which the arguments for the Divine existence have assumed are the *a priori* and *a posteriori*; the former the arguments from cause to effect, while the latter are the arguments from effect to cause, or the arguments of experience.

Now, in regard to this first method, the *a priori*, we shall have little to do; and for the reason that, notwithstanding the many forms in which it has been presented, and the numerous additions and improvements which it has received at the hands of such men as Des Cartes, Leibnitz, Wolfe, Dr. Samuel Clarke, Cousin, Baumgarten, and others, as it makes God's existence depend upon an inference; and as it is impossible to reduce metaphysical proof to

what is termed a demonstration, as an argument it is unsatisfactory; and with all this, thus far it has failed to make any practical impression in the interests either of true virtue or of genuine piety. Indeed God, in His essence, is inconceivable to man; and this arises purely from man's weakness. God's nature also differs from our nature. In fact, our being is a communicated being; whereas God's being is of another character. His existence is a self-existence. And since He exists of Himself, He alone knows why He exists, and also the manner of that existence. But though the essence of God is inconceivable, it does not necessarily follow that His existence may not be a necessary inference from undeniable principles; as He has manifested Himself; and it is in His manifestation where He has made himself known to us. We turn then at once to the *a posteriori* arguments for proving the Divine existence.

And in this field the arguments upon which we would rest, and if need be urge, are in the main the following:

1. That God exists is evident from the expressions of boundless intelligence which are discoverable in the world, turn where we may; and as order, and law, and proportion,

and harmony suggest design, so does design argue a designer, as truly as thought argues a thinker; or, as this familiar truth has been expressed: "As the invisible soul creates a visible expression on the countenance of a man, so does nature, which is, as it were, the countenance of God, betray the hidden spirit which dwells within it."

2. That Deity exists is evident also from the undeniable adaptation of the world to its purposes. The world is an organic whole; and this idea of oneness, which threads all its parts, so far as we know, has never been successfully questioned, even by the most determined atheist.

3. God's existence may be deduced from the nature and constitution of man. That matter forms a part of man's nature, and in man there is something entirely distinct and different from matter, are now quite the universal convictions of the race. Nor is it less believed, that mind is sensible, or acts, while matter is insensible, or is acted upon. Man thinks; thought, then, must be the effect of the motion of matter, or it must proceed from motion; but if matter is capable only of being acted upon, since thought can not be its product, it must have another origin, and that origin, we may say, is God. /

4. The Divine existence may be inferred from its being an intuitive conviction of the human mind. It is impossible to free ourselves from the notion of a God, for we find the idea within us; and as thinking of ourselves necessitates our thinking of God, God's existence becomes the dictate of nature, and the instinct of our higher being.

5. The Divine existence has been argued, also, from its being the belief, not simply of the wisest and best men, but it is the universal conviction of the race. No nation, no people has as yet been found to whom the idea of a God was not known. Nor do any records, however ancient, conduct us to a period in the history of any people where this belief did not exist.

Such are some of the arguments which are now advanced and largely dwelt upon, and by men of every shade of religious belief, for establishing God's existence. Whether they prove all that is claimed of them, or whether the demonstration of the existence of a Deity, *a priori*, is an impossibility; and the numerous *a posteriori* arguments involve, as some maintain, a *petitio principii*, we do not wish to discuss; nor would we deny, also, that against both these methods of reasoning there

have been brought objections of no mean significance. But, while all this may be true, this is likewise true—thus far, with a very few exceptions, as arguments, in whatever age they have been employed, they have carried conviction to some of the most thoughtful of men; and an understanding of them has dissipated doubts, not only genuine and deep, but which were cherished for years. While they may not be satisfactory to some minds, that they do not “concur in converging to an inevitable center, each contributing at once confirmatory evidence that God is, and complementary evidence as to what God is, and these concurrently establishing the being of God upon immovable foundations,” and exclude all rational doubt, and approach so near to the character of perfect demonstration, as to leave the mind of an honest and sincere investigator completely satisfied, no one, we think, will question. Indeed, the arguments to which we are being constantly introduced for the existence of God, whether metaphysical or *a posteriori*, to be of force, are not to be received, as some suppose, in their independent capacity, but in their united character. As with the rope of many threads, its strength does not consist so much

in its individual strands as in their union; so with these same arguments; their force is found in their unity. By the *a priori* reasonings, the existence of God is made, so to say, possible; and now the cosmological advancing on this, this possible existence may be proven to be a necessary existence; and, still advancing, the teleological may show this same necessary and eternal Being is intelligent; leaving to the moral the demonstration that this same intelligent Being is not only in possession of moral attributes, but is just what the numerous modes of proving His existence show Him to be. It is in their combination where their strength is to be sought, and not in their isolation.

Believing, then, that God exists--and it has been quite as successfully demonstrated as any grand problem with which we are familiar, or as it is possible for a fact of such a character to be proven--the inquiry which now meets us is, What is God? Is God a mere abstraction, or a force, or a law, or a name for the moral order of the universe, or is God a person? For certain it is, as are our views of this vital question, so must be our conclusions on the subject now under consideration.

We ask, then, is God a person? And we reply, unhesitatingly, God is a Person; a truth deducible, we believe, from the following considerations:

I. In the world design is everywhere apparent; and design argues a designer, or an intelligence; and this same intelligence presupposes thought; and, as we cannot have thought without a thinker, this same thinker must be a person; for the idea and the reality also of personality are involved in thought. This is one of our intuitive convictions; nor can we have any other notion of a thinker than of personality. For, if thought means anything, it means the operation of mind; and, as in our own nature, we are conscious of personality as distinct from what we do, as the soul or mind differs from matter; and since there is a God, and He is intelligent, and is different from what this intelligence may produce, this same intelligence in God must be just as personal and as distinct from what He has wrought and has done, as we know we are persons, and distinct from what our minds may have accomplished. In a word, such is the nature of design, that it, of necessity, implies an agent, and an intelligent agent; nor can intelligence be other than the product of mind.

An impersonal intelligence is a contradiction in terms and in thought, as well as in language.

II. God's personality is demonstrable also from His spirituality. And without multiplying words, the argument, in general outline, may be presented as follows: Man is a spirit; this our consciousness tells us; and as the spirit within us is a real being, so this our real being is capable of thought, volition, and feeling. Now, we cannot be conscious of our specific subsistence without being conscious also of our personality; and we are conscious of our personality. God also is a spirit. And if it be true that, being spiritual, our personality can be proved from consciousness, and we are persons, much more must God, who is likewise a spirit, be a person; unless it be maintained that, both in nature and in character, God is far inferior to or less than man; and this, we apprehend, no one has ever believed.

III. God's personality is derivable also from the nature of man.

I know not how better to begin my observations under this head, than by proposing the anterior inquiry, What is man? for we believe, if it can be shown that man is a person, the personality of God is as inevitable as effect

follows cause, and is its logical consequent. But as a correct answer cannot be given to this latter question until we have a solution to the problems, whether the mind can know itself, and the mode also in which it begins to know, let us turn for a few moments to these inquiries. And in the argument which I propose now to trace, I follow Dr. D. H. Hamilton, whose recent development of it is not only the most natural, but far more perspicuous and clear than the older historical methods; and as far as suits my purpose, I use substantially his terminology. And first;—

How does the mind begin to act? Without entering into any discussion of this perplexing proposition, speaking negatively, it is not in an act of choice by the will: for the act of choice presupposes not only mental action already existing as objects of choice, but also mental actions to be directed by the act of choice. Nor do we find the first spring of the mind's action in the affections: for the affections are susceptibilities, and they act only as they are acted upon, and never until they are acted upon by some object or action without them; and this action or object is always produced directly or indirectly by the will's act of choice. Nor is it found in any

combination of the will and the affections: for by this combination, the motive to choice and the act of choice become the same; and the act of choice and the object of choice become identical. Nor is it found in any combination of the conscience with the will and the affections: for the conscience has in itself no original activity, and can communicate none when combined with the will or the affections; as a faculty, it is simply that which gives the sense or the consciousness of obligation, and, therefore, acts only as it is acted upon. But the true source of the mind's activity is in its own essence, in one of its own primal elements, unborrowed from any outward or additional source.

Seeing, then, that the source of the mind's beginning to act is found in its own essential activity, we come to our second introductory inquiry:

How can the mind begin to know? It cannot begin in the senses; for all knowing of external things consists in the interpreting of a fact, by means of an idea already in the mind; or, we can not have a perception through the senses, except through the medium of an idea already known, and in the possession of the mind. Nor do we begin our

knowing with the faculty of the reason; for the reason has neither facts nor ideas in itself, nor in its possession; nor any power of obtaining them by its own proper force; and reason itself forms ideas from previous facts given to it by another faculty of the mind; nor has it power in itself, as a faculty, either to grasp a fact, or to create an idea without a fact. Nor do we begin our knowledge with what are called the *a priori* ideas, which are found already in the mind—such as quantity, quality or relation; for we can not have an idea of a thing without knowing that thing, or something which is substantially that thing; an idea must be an idea of something; but if it be an idea of nothing, it is itself nothing; there must exist both a fact and an idea before any external thing can be known.

Believing, then, that the mind does not begin to know either in the senses, in the reason, nor yet in any *a priori* ideas, whence, then, does it begin? [And the answer is, it must begin in a faculty which has in itself a power of cognition without ideas, and also without sense perceptions; and that faculty is consciousness. Here is the true source of the mind's beginning to know, and it is only as

we know first the self, that we are in a condition, and have the power to know all other things. As the beginning, therefore, of all knowledge is of necessity subjective, the question now comes,—What is the testimony of this essential consciousness as regards man? Briefly this: man knows that he exists; and as correlative of his existence, he has a will, affections, an intellect, and a conscience; and while these attributes differ in their relation, and in the mode of their exercise, it is not his investment with any one or two of them which constitutes his true personality, but in the united possession of them. His will is free and powerful; yet, it is not that alone which forms his personality; nor yet his having affections, and an intellect, and a conscience; but it is the combination of all these several attributes in one living unity, or in one sensuous whole. But while it thus testifies, it witnesses, also, that all things have a necessary existence or a beginning in an intelligent author; and that man is contingent or dependent; and since he is contingent, yet knows himself as will, affection, reason, conscience, or a living soul, his existence is not in himself, but in another; and that other is not only higher than nature, as the spiritual is

higher than the natural, but is its own cause, reason, and ground of its existence; and there is absolute; and being absolute, it is not a thing, but a personality, and an absolute personality; and being a personality as has every personality, he has will, freedom, affection, reason, and conscience; and therefore alone can create a volitional, free, affectional, rational, ethical person, as is man. This is man's demand, and the only solution, likewise, which will satisfy the claims and the phenomena of his being. Man requires for himself, not simply a cause, but a Creator and an Author; and he demands that the cause be greater than the effect; and since he is conscious of possessing attributes which are above mere force or nature, and he is not uncaused, he must believe that they are the product of a higher personality; and as it is his possession of them which makes him man, so it is the possession of them by this Higher Personality which makes Him what He is—God. God, then, is a Person. Indeed, whenever we find an object that had a beginning, the fact will prove a beginner; and if, in addition thereto, the object have personality, that fact will prove that the beginner was a person also.

IV. That God is a person is derivable also from the moral nature of man.

That man has a moral as well as an intellectual and physical nature, we would insult no understanding with any attempt at demonstration; and that this moral nature has its own peculiar laws and teachings, is the admitted testimony also of those who have given it even casual thought. Now, the teachings of this same moral nature, in brief, are as follows: There is within us a deep sense of right and wrong, over which conscience may be said to preside, obedience to whose teachings immediately secures to us its approbation, while any disobedience as inevitably brings upon us rebuke and disapprobation; and its authority is not the authority of caprice, or of conjecture, but it is the authority of law, as much so as any law with which we are familiar. But from whence does it derive its influence? Or from whence comes this feeling of responsibility? When this law condemns our actions, to whom or to what are we amenable? And whatever else may be true of its teachings, certainly this sense of accountability is not to ourselves; for of this we are not only conscious, but we know also this is one of the decisions of this same law. In truth, the fundamental idea in responsibility is duality; while it speaks of one, it involves also the ex-

istence of another, and since that other cannot be a thing, it must be a person; and not simply to a person who may be acquainted with our nature, and the character of our actions, and who, as ourselves, can approve the right and disapprove the wrong; but he must be one, also, who has both the power and the desire to punish if we have done ill, and to reward if we have done well. And whom other than God do we invest with these high prerogatives?—and God, not as a mere force, or a law, but as an intelligent, active, and personal Being. It is such facts in our moral nature which demand the existence of a personal God.

V. But probably nowhere is the personality of God more distinctly brought out to the common mind, than in the theory which every man assumes, when, in compliance with the instincts of his being, he would endeavor to offer a pure and acceptable worship to that being or thing, which he believes merits his personal love and homage. And how numerous and diverse have been the objects which men of every nationality have selected as deserving their adorations; and what also has been the character of the altars at which they have reverently knelt, and the manner in

which this worship has been rendered, are subjects with which all, to a greater or less extent, are perfectly acquainted. And yet, varied as have been the objects which men have selected as meriting their worship, and different likewise the modes in which it has been rendered; still the theory which every one openly or tacitly admits, as often as he would render homage, be it to a stick or a stone, to a snake or to a bull, to man or to God is, that in the thing or object thus worshiped, there resides a certain consciousness and force which are able not only to reward him, if he is virtuous and good, but which will as surely punish him, if he is vicious and bad.] Or, in other language, he believes there dwells in it a personality; and so distinct, perfect and complete, as to be revealed in action; and action ever shaped by the character and the merits of the worshiper.

In truth, this is the fundamental thought of all genuine religion. Religion may and does differ greatly in its development; and it is capable of assuming and appearing in many hues; yet the nethermost thought of every religion is, in the object which is thus worshiped, there exists a personality as

genuine and as entire as it is intelligent and powerful, and as it is capable of being revealed. Men do not adore blind, immutable law, inexorable fate, ideas, mental conceptions, or mere abstractions; they worship rather, if we may use the term, agents or an agent—and an agent whose power and love, whensoever invoked, it is believed, will minister to their necessities. True, the depraved and ignorant may bow to a thing, and may experience the deepest feeling, when they worship what is inanimate; still they believe that in it there is a life or a principle; and a life and a principle as distinct from the object, real or imaginary, before them as they know they are distinct from the object; and that that life or principle also is conscious, and has the elements of person as fully as they are conscious of being persons. Say of a man that he loves the absolute, perfect, personal Jehovah, and he believes, at all times, His highest interests should not only be consulted, but that He ought ever to be honored and feared. If, however, his idea of this same Jehovah, is that He is simply an all-pervading essence or an intelligent force, and where is the ground for fear or for exercising any feeling, either of shame or alarm? Nay,

before any such feelings can animate the heart or mind, or before any genuine love for God or even fear can be experienced, must there not be in the mind of this worshiper an apprehension of God as love and fear; and not in any vague or indeterminate form, but in the higher relations of love and fear personified? Must he not only love God, and love Him abstractly, and fear Him, and fear Him abstractly; but love Him also in the full relation of person, and fear Him in the very same relation? Closely follow in thought the entire series of religious acts and meditation of which it is possible for a human being to be capable, and do they not tend, not to a thing, but to a veritable, living, self-conscious person or being? And at the very moment, also, in which one attempts to dissipate or dissolve this same person into an infinite extension, or forsake his personality, at that very moment does not his religion disappear or lose itself into something equally as indefinite?

And yet, while we thus believe in and argue the pure and perfect personality of God, upon whatever basis, or from whatever source, I am well aware very numerous have been the reasons advanced, and by the

thoughtful and the devout, as well as by the rationalistic, that Deity cannot be a person ; nor is it any more possible for Him to be such, than it is for the imperfect to become perfect, or the finite to become infinite ; and that the very idea of personality involves, as it is said, limitation ; and if God is God, and what it is claimed He should be, to be God—the illimitable Jehovah — no such attribute as this can be His : that personality, as related to Deity, is merely an assumption, or a deduction to complete our idea of the nature of God—not a necessity ; that it militates against the lawful character and reality of God ; that infinity and personality are unthinkable and contradictory, since the latter has conditions, while the former can have none ; and what the one affirms however persistently, the other, with equal earnestness, denies ; or what the one logically suggests, the other, with equal logic, denies : nay, that the one excludes the other, and in essence they are antagonistic. Still, when it is remembered that God's personality is deducible from the structure and intelligence displayed in the universe ; that it is also a logical sequence from His spirituality ; and that it is likewise a natural deduction from the nature and

character of man ; and that it is involved in every effort at successful worship ; and that the world believes this doctrine—whether from intuition, logic, or revelation, it matters not ; and that the tendency of any other notion of God conducts to the subversion of all true philosophy, as well as practical religion, and destroys the difference between belief and doubt, or the rational and the irrational ; and without the Divine personality, the attributes of God, as His Mercy, Wisdom, Love, Justice, and the like, must necessarily be mere names ; and to an existence, as is that of God, we can only ascribe power, and knowledge, and action, and other qualities as a person ; and this notion of Deity is an ultimate datum of consciousness, and involved in the constitution of the mind ; though much may be thus said against this truth, and numerous the mysteries connected with it, God's personality as a conviction remains. And the more frequently and fully the basis is examined and reviewed upon which it rests, the more surely and immovable does it become established, and the more certain are we of its truthfulness. “What,” is it said, “believe in a contradiction!—believe Infinity can be limited!—believe in that which neces-

sarily must detract from an adequate conception of Deity!—believe in that which is unthinkable, and unknowable, and illogical?” The answer is, God’s personality and the idea of limitation which it seems to involve, are yet to be shown to be in antagonism; and that His personality is unthinkable, and unknowable, and illogical; all this is as yet to be established; and no one can show that such is the true character of God. It may, perhaps, if left to mere language; but as language is simply an accommodation to human weakness, and consequently its province is the finite, and not the infinite, it cannot be expected that it will be equal to the claims which a contemplation of the infinite may demand.

And besides, whatever may be the language employed, or the thoughts which its use may suggest, the fact that God is a person stands, though irreconcilable and inexplicable through language: because it is an essential element of enlightened consciousness; and because also it is the ultimate datum of consciousness, and is involved in the constitution of the mind; and, in addition to all this, this doctrine is a revealed truth. Revelation coming not merely to the rescue of rea-

son, but confirming what reason can more conclusively establish, than what it can, to the same degree, disprove.

The argument for God's personality from revelation may be presented, in brief, as follows: God is man perfect, but to an infinite degree; and as we know man is a spirit, and has a will, and affections, and understanding, and a moral nature, and is self-conscious, and a voluntary agent, so is God; but to a degree greater as the infinite exceeds the finite, or the eternal outweighs the temporal. Anthropomorphism is discoverable upon more than one page of revelation. "I AM THAT I AM," are the words which God employed when He spake of Himself. And who can fathom the truths which lie beneath this wondrous declaration, without discovering in it a personality as real as is demanded, and as necessary as it is potential and natural? And it is this fact, with the others to which we have alluded, which leads us to hold God's personality, notwithstanding the many mysteries which invest it. For after all, it is indisputable, that whatever may be the teachings of reason, behind all words there is a certain substratum of undeniable truth. And in the relation in which we now speak, the per-

sonality of God is the great rock, or truth, which underlies all things in man, in nature, in this world, and in the world to come. And notwithstanding the numerous attempts which have been made to destroy it, it remains as an abiding experience.

But, is it asked, how is this incomprehensible fact to be believed? I answer, it is to be believed as a child believes that from soil dark, slimy, and foetid, the lily comes clothed in bridal whiteness, and distills a most delicious fragrance. To be believed, as to-day men believe that they are formed of soul and body, or mind and matter, and yet are ignorant of the where and the how of the nexus. To be believed, as when at night we look upon some placid water, and see reflected some one or more of the starry train, we believe that in those glittering dots, those trembling shining points, there are concentrated and contracted to visible images, vast and immeasurable orbs, and at a distance resembling that which divides man and God. And yet, human reason, without a demonstration, cries, this is impossible! it is impossible, that from a putrid pool, a flower should be born as sweet in its fragrance, and as pure and beautiful in its color as its soil is decayed and

offensive. It is impossible that two such existences, as the soul and the body, should be joined together, and he in whom they are united, be ignorant both of the mode and the place of union. It is out of all reason that worlds, many, many times larger than our own, can be seen as moving points, or as wavering specks! But what is the fact? What the truth? Yon flowers have come from a slimy bed; soul and body in yon form are united; stars or planets do exist; and they lie and glitter in the water as a diamond of the purest lustre and rarest beauty.

This belief in God's personality is not to be ideal, notional, or superficial; nor yet a mere intellectual conviction; still less a cold sentiment of the heart; but it is to be a belief positive and profound, and so positive and profound as to control, and guide, and influence one in all the many and varied relations which he sustains towards God and man. It is to be a belief of power, deep-seated and interwoven into the very tissues of man's being; a belief, in short, which, while it elevates the mind, and warms and intensifies the finer sensibilities of our nature, is to impel one to seek God; and having found Him, to breathe into His ear those loving aspirations

and heartfelt wants, which, in a far humbler manner, we are accustomed to pour into the ear of a human friend, or a human personality.

Nor, as a belief, can it be too greatly emphasized, any more than it can be too frequently reiterated, or too deeply experienced. For after all, here is the whole struggle between belief and unbelief, or he who would and does pray, and he who does not. This is the central bulwark, or the citadel of the fortress. Bastions, trenches, moats, and the numerous other defenses which encircle it, if need be, all may be abandoned, but God's personality, as it is the central or pivotal truth upon which all argument and the teachings of revelation rest, is to be held; and held with a firmness that knows no relaxing, and to whom such words as capitulation and surrender are positively unknown. [For it is our estimate of this divine quality, which must determine our views of prayer, in its relations to man as well as God. For, say God is a mere unseen force, or the life principle in the universe, or that He is simply existence, or anything else than a person, and a distinct and independent personality; and where, in this wide, wide world he who, with the hope

of benefiting his condition, in whatever way, would think of praying to any such force—principle, or ideal existence? Or what intercourse is it possible to hold with an absolute abstraction? True, an occult law may secure certain definite results, as the operation of any force; but where the possibility of these same results becoming changed, or in any way experiencing modification? Or if God is nothing more than the soul of the universe, how can things be different from what they now are? Where, where the room for the display of agencies which Prayer presupposes, or for any modification in that which is believed to be unintelligent, and whose action is irresponsible and independent? Nay, is it not because of the dim and shadowy notions, which so many have of God, as to what He is, both in nature and character, that He is not more frequently and persistently sought? And is it anything less than the personality of God which makes prayer at all possible, or available? And so, also, of answers to prayer. Just as there is nothing either inviting or elevating in a mere existence or a life principle, that would induce one to commune with it, so there is nothing in these things, whensoever they may be addressed,

leading to the hope that they may be swerved. Law may and does direct, and law is mighty, but law cannot hear; law cannot be persuaded; law has no will; nor can it act of itself. And so, likewise, of a certain life principle, or of any mere intelligence, whatever may be our conception of it less than personal, whether in man or nature. It cannot discriminate; it has no freedom; nor is it capable of diversion. Men may worship the most grotesque images, and bow before a shrine, the thought of which may deaden instead of awakening the conscience; but who has ever labored to pour out his heart before an unintelligent cause, or of influencing, to any degree, mere life or abstract being? Or who has ever contemplated moving an unintelligent, self-existing force? What latitude is there here for recognition? Surely no self-existent force or principle, or first cause, or pure being, is capable of imparting what true prayer involves? Moral favors are the fruits of moral agents, and therefore they demand the possession of moral attributes on the part of him from whom these favors are sought. And, as has already been observed, the noble qualities of our nature, as gratitude and love, can have their

exercise only as these feelings are directed, not towards things, or mere existence, but to a person. Who seriously contemplates thanks to the law of gravitation, or would think of propitiating any of the mere forces of nature?

[But say that God is a Person, and is as intelligent in His personality as He is personal; and all His actions, whatever they may be, are the results of this wisdom, and that He is the governor of the universe; that laws and principles and forces are merely His agents, as the clouds, which do His bidding; then, and only then, have we reason to believe that He will not only hear the pleas of His creatures, but that He will allow their prayers to enter into some of His numerous plans and designs. And since it is the personality of God which gives room for the exercise of prayer, it is the denial of this fact which not only limits it to a subjective action, but which deprives it, also, as we shall hope to learn, of that wondrous significance which thus far it has possessed, and which has made it so profitable and endearing to the race.]

Is it asked, How is God to be conceived of as a person? In answering this great and difficult question, we would say: he who would have, as the Israelites at the base of

Sinai, a visible God, must bring to remembrance Jesus Christ, as it is in His glorious person that "God is manifest in the flesh." In Him the Father is revealed. He and the Father are one. And he who hath seen Him hath seen the Father; and "in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the godhead bodily." But if it be said; all such conceptions of God as are manifest in Jesus Christ detract from a true notion as to what God is, and minister in a measure to a kind of idolatry; then we answer, if men will not have a visible representation of God, but something far less bounded by sense and flesh, do not conceive of him as a mere power, nor yet as an abstraction, or as the first cause—as an unknown reality—as a mighty something, pervading all space as air or atmosphere; for it is debatable whether our highest conceptions of these natures, essences, or powers, any the less contribute to idolatry, than a contemplation of the royal person of Jesus Christ. If you cannot conceive of God, and recognize Him in the person of His Son, then, borrowing my illustrations, so far as material things can minister to spiritual, the following process may assist you.

In yonder gallery there is an organ, and as when you look upon that instrument and

hear its sounds, your eye does not rest or stay on the iron, or wood, or metal of which it may be composed; but as the music rolls forth, at once you invest wood, and pipe, and metal, and bellows with a certain spirit, and were you called upon to worship the organ, you would worship not the wood, nor the frame nor the metal, but the hidden spirit to which we have referred; so, having looked upon the world, and as you see the sun, and moon, and stars, or nature, or cause and effect, or love, or power, do not here pause but as you have endowed the instrument with what, for convenience, we have termed a spirit, in like manner conceive this same sun, and moon, stars, all nature—everything in fact as endowed with a similar spirit, and one not only in perfect harmony with the objects or events which you may behold, but with one which as fully insinuates itself into all you may there have contemplated, as tone or note insinuated itself through pipe of wood or iron; and regard this spirit, this indefinable, but knowable something—conceive it as God.

Or, in your dwelling, you have a beautiful painting; and, as you examine it, you feel that some painter has embodied in it his very self; and yet the result of his drawing and color-

ing is no more the painter than you are he. And as you study it, you cannot help tracing in stroke and shading the artist's purpose. Nay, as you look upon it and begin to master its representations, you discover in every form and figure, as it were, the soul of the artist; and so much so, it may be, as to feel that he is there with you, and you see him drawing his lines or spreading his colors.

In like manner, stand before nature; contemplate what God has made, or what He has done or is doing; and as you thus meditate, as with the artist in the picture, you will not only discover God, distinct from His work, but you will meet with a Spirit far mightier, holier, and grander, above that which the painting reveals, as the Infinite is above the finite, or the Creator is above the creature; and that Spirit—that Personality is God. Such is another channel through which the loving heart can pass to God.

But though nature may be thus suggestive, as we have said, if we would know and see God as He is, it is accomplished, as we gaze upon and contemplate the person of His Son Jesus Christ. And observe, as the late Dr. Guthrie remarks, how "the Infinite is brought within the limits of our narrow understand-

ing. The Invisible is revealed to my sight; I can touch Him, hear Him, see Him, speak to Him. In the hand He holds out to save me, I have what my own can grasp. In that eye bent on me, whether bedewed with tears or beaming with affection, I see Divine love in a form I feel I can understand. God addresses me in human tones; God stands before me in the fashion of a man; and, paradoxical as it appears, when I fall at His feet to say, with Thomas, 'My Lord and my God,' I am an image-worshiper, yet no idolater; for the Being before whom I bend is not a mere man, nor a graven image, nor a dead thing, but the living, loving, eternal, "express image" of the "Invisible God."

But to return. From what has been previously said, concluding that there is a God, and that He is not, as some would have us believe, a mere existence, an abstraction, or the distributing force and thinking power of the globe,—the sum of creation; but a Person, and as fully distinct from what He has done and is doing, as man is from what He may have done or wrought; in His relations to the petitions of His creatures, the following, we believe, may then be reasonably predicated of Him.

First. That He would provide some method

by which such as are made in His image might commune with Him.

Second. That He would listen to the desires of such as He is, *i. e.*, of persons, though they may merit no such favor. That God would trifle with, or be indifferent to man's deepest convictions, mock his sublimest motives, or scorn his holiest and noblest efforts, is as illogical as it is irrational, and as irrational as it is unnatural.

Third. Since prayer is an element of our common nature, it is reasonable to suppose that He, who thus fashioned us, would not only provide for its exercise, but would make some provision also by which it might be gratified. If God has made nothing in vain, as all who believe in His nature and character must admit (and He is love), never would the desire or the instinct of prayer have been implanted in man, unless He had made abundant provision for its gratification.

Fourth. It is reasonable to suppose, also, since God is Omnipotent, He has the power to answer such requests as His creatures may make of Him, provided they ask in the right way, and for those favors or mercies which do not conflict with any of His special designs or purposes.

Fifth. Since God is the Author and Creator

of all things, and the intelligent Author and Creator, it is reasonable to say, that should He be pleased to answer the prayers of His servants, they would not interfere with the operations of His providence as related to other things. In the government of a wise ruler there are no antagonisms.

Finally. On the supposition that prayer is a power in the universe, and God is intelligent, as He is, it is not unreasonable to say, that when the world was called into being, and all things were so adjusted as ultimately to secure His honor and glory, He would have made full provision for the play of this power as for any other force.

All this every unbiased mind, we think, will admit. What inquiry, then, just here, more important than this? Are these and similar demands presumptive, or have the hypothetical become categorical, and the conjectural, demonstrative? Are these statements mere theories? or has the theoretical become changed into the actual, and the supposititious into the unanswerable and undeniable? In other language, has God met these rational demands? An inquiry which leads us to ask: first, Whether God can answer the prayers of His children? and secondly, Whether He has thus done?

LECTURE III.

PRAYER AND ITS RELATIONS TO SCIENCE; OR,
CAN GOD ANSWER PRAYER?

III.

PRAYER AND ITS RELATIONS TO SCIENCE; OR CAN GOD ANSWER PRAYER ?

WHATEVER may be said confirmatory of the proposition that God can answer prayer, it is also to be remembered—

First. No one can prove that it is impossible for Him, who is All-wise and All-powerful, to allow the prayers of His creatures to enter into His plans and designs. Arguments presumptive may be mentioned, from which deductions might be made pointing to this conviction, still it cannot be demonstrated; and particularly in the form, and with that fullness with which a skeptic in prayer would have it established.

Second. Nothing can be derived from the character of God, which would make it impossible or improbable for Him to answer prayer; rather, since God is Omnipotent, He has the power; and as He is Benevolent, He has the disposition; and as He is Infinite, He cannot be limited in any of His operations. And what with man may be pre-

sumptive or possible, with an infinite being may not only be probable, but certain.

Third. Since to answer prayer involves, as it is said, new complications and difficulties, physical and moral; peradventure God can answer it, His nature and character would be invested with far greater majesty and sublimity, than to believe that He cannot answer it.

Fourth. If God did not answer prayer, we have no reason to believe that its practice would have been so universal; nor would the testimony of men to the fact have been so willing, clear, and general.

Fifth. So far as God has revealed His feelings and sympathies towards the race, He has said that He would answer prayer; in other words, we have yet to learn that it is not His will.

But to the inquiry: Can God answer Prayer?

No sooner are we brought face to face with this important question, than we meet with thoughts which, even after mature consideration, seem to invest this proposition with grave doubt; and which have found lodgment in the hearts not merely of those who deny the existence of a moral governor over the

universe, but among those also who daily aim to invest God with that glory and honor which they believe to be, at all times, so justly His due. And the form which this doubt has assumed may, in general, be summed up as follows: To say that God can answer prayer, involves on the part of man the supposition that it is possible for the creature to change the Creator's will; and on the part of God, limitation in His numerous plans and purposes; and on the part of nature, the constant modification of its multiple and varying laws in man's interest: whereas God has plans of action entirely independent of the will of His servants, and He is also unlimited; and in every realm, all things at the beginning were established in accordance with law; and therefore, it is no more possible to change law, than it is possible for Him, who is self-existent, to annihilate His being.

Such, in a few words, is the tone of the doubt which is breathed against prayer, and breathed with a sincerity on the part of some, worthy not only of the highest respect, but also of the gravest consideration.

It does not come within the plan which we have proposed to ourselves here to pause, in order to note, still less answer the numer-

ous objections which have been urged against the doctrine of prayer. But as there is a subtle error underlying the majority of these would-be potential objections to the efficacy of prayer, it is wise, perhaps, at this particular period in our investigations, that we give it that candid consideration which every disbeliever in prayer has a right to demand, and which its relation to a proper understanding of the true doctrine of prayer seems so imperatively to require. The ruling error to which we now refer, in substance, may be thus expressed: God governs the world in obedience to certain laws; and these laws, both in their relation to man and nature, were fixed, when all things were fixed, at the beginning; and therefore, in their operation, they are ever uniform and unchanging. Indeed, throughout all these there extends an inevitable chain of causation, which never has been nor can be interrupted; and nothing happens without a cause, traceable to natural law. Since, then, the universe is thus governed, and governed by a definite system of laws, immutable and fixed, there is no conceivable place for the interference of any other force or power, as prayer is said to be; conse-

quently, it is not only illogical, but irrational to suppose that God, because of the mere will of a creature, would, if He could, thus introduce another force into the universe, or change any of His laws; on the other hand, all things must remain as when primarily called into being. Let it be said that there is room in the universe for another force, or that God can be diverted from His original purpose, or that laws established can be changed; then the universe is not only liable any moment to be thrown into utter confusion, but the idea that all things were originally determined, immediately disappears. It is, then, the relation of prayer to established law, to which we are now brought. Let this topic occupy our present attention.

And if we have fairly given the animus, perhaps, of the most influential objection against the possibility of God being moved by the pleadings of His creatures, on those points where there is any room for honest and heartfelt difference at the outset of this inquiry, it might be well to remark that this position assumes—

1. That fixed order and sequence cannot possibly be influenced, though that influence be exerted by a personal God; that a con-

scious Personality is far inferior in dignity to the whole world of matter.

2. "That all the events of this world's history, however intimately connected with man's happiness, are dependent for their accomplishment on physical laws only, rather than upon those laws liable to be modified in their operation, by the intervention or volition of moral agents."

3. That God has no liberty of action; but, in all His relations to the universe, is bound by law as immutable and unchangeable as are those laws which, it is said, should God answer prayer, would be disturbed.

4. It is assumed, also, that it is impossible for God to make provision for the exercise of the prayer of His children, as forces in the universe; and that all the modes of His action, and of the operation of nature, have come under man's observance.

5. That God has wound up the universe as a clock, and has retired from its superintendence; and the results or developments which to-day greet us, are the product of agencies long since set in operation, as the hour which the clock now reveals is the result of this morning's winding.

6. Should God interfere with the pre-

existent and established laws of the universe, the place or the spot of this interference is discoverable by, or open to, the cognizance of man.

Such are some of the assumptions which this general objection involves; and they are as gratuitous as they are derogatory to the nature and character of God.

What, then, are God's relations to fixed or established law? Here let us go back to the beginning of things, and yet only so far as a reference to them may be necessary for a proper understanding of the point under investigation.

God exists; and He is not only Omniscient, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Benevolent, Immutable, and Eternal, but, as we have seen, He is a Person; nor in every proper conception of Him is His personality any the less required, than that He should be invested with the attributes which we have just named. He created the world. It was His omnipotent fiat which called all things into being; and now having called all things into being, He gave to or associated with them, whether things animate or inanimate, material or spiritual, perishable or eternal, certain properties or principles which should belong to them as

long as they remain what they are. Nor can these original properties be divorced from the primal objects with which, at the beginning, they were connected, any more than a robe can be washed without wetting it. In fact, we cannot conceive of a universe as worthy the hand of God, unless the laws which, with every act of His creative skill, He had interwoven in it, were not constant and unchangeable. It is their invariableness which, at every period of the world, has called forth from so many, of every degree of faith and nationality, their highest praises.

But when it is said that God, at the beginning, gave to everything which He then called into being a peculiar and special law, or so happily adjusted cause and effect as to secure results which are daily witnessed, and which have commanded the admiration of all who have studied them; it is not meant that these same laws, in whatever realm they may be discoverable, or whatever may be their mode of operation, are irrevocable; or that they act or possess a force independent of the will by which they were begotten; or that they have an inherent and ungoverned energy. No such ideas are designed to be suggested. †What is

Law—we mean when it is defined in relation to the topic, and the comprehensive term with which it now presents itself?

Law is not a self-sustained, invisible, and immanent force, whose presence is discoverable through the slow development of experience; nor is it any irresponsible energy, whose cause of action is as uninterpretable as its fruits may be varied. For, say Law is some self-sustained, invisible force, or an inherent and independent energy, and not only is the nature of God impugned, but we remove Deity from the universe, and virtually make Law, in this connection, His rival; and God can have no rival. If God is anything He is everything. Nor can He have such a thing as a competitor. Opposition may exist and revel in the plane of the finite, but it has no place in the infinite—the very term excludes it. Self-existence and independence, therefore, are God's prerogatives, and His alone. Indeed, as in the very idea of self, the existence of that which is not self is involved, so in our idea of God, as only He is self-existent, all else must be contingent and dependent. True, in Law conceived as already expressed, we may have power — not necessarily intelligent power; and action, but not

will or volition. Force, in fact, is the product of will, nor are we capable of having any other conception of it. If we run our eye down along the stream whose waters have borne to us the ideas which we associate with the word force, we shall find that all our notions of its nature have their origin in what has been termed "our own consciousness of living effort;" and as is that effort, so does it reside in the divine or human personality. As such, force can have no other origin. And though there may be difficulty in showing, as in some phenomena in nature, just where personality may appear, still its existence will none the less be a fact; for the fact may be discoverable, although its interpretation be unknown. The force which drives the locomotive on its rapid career is no independent self-existent force, any more than the law is the wisdom which constitutes it; but it is a combination of forces, whose seat is not in any self-existent or vital potency; but in the mind which conceived that combination, and the will which gave it effect. All its power is due to will, or the conscious intelligence which produced it. For, separate the will which produced that combination, resulting in its motion, and the engine is as dead and power-

less as though all its parts were in their native beds. True, all the individual forces which entered into its construction are there, but never would this new force, or merging of potentialities have been developed without an act of will. † In one sense, therefore, force is intelligence. And what is thus true of a compound force, is true of an elementary or primary one. As the one would not have been without volition, no more can the other be without the exercise of the same agency. Centralization does not destroy the fact of previous unity, any more than unity necessarily forbids the possibility of combination. When we are confronted with force as such, so far as its existence is concerned, the only real question before us is, whose will does it express? Is it the product of divine or human volition? Or is it immediate or mediate? That mind governs matter is no new truth. And mind is not only itself a force, but it is also the generator of force. All or every mind-product, whether subjective or objective, still is force. Nor does result effect the original essence or possession. And volition is purely dynamic, whether it be direct or indirect, and when wisely put forth it can no more fail of results than the operation of

any secondary or mediate power. Force, also, is the measurement of purpose, and with this word we never associate such ideas as independence or irrelation, rather dependence, design, and will.

But if Law is not a self-sustained invisible force, nor an inherent and irresponsible energy, it is asked; what then is it, in relation to the investigations before us? And generically, Law means a rule of action, or an enactment, and can be predicated of, or ascribed to, an intelligent agent. But the term is used figuratively, to describe an observed order of sequence, or the uniformity of antecedent and consequent, which everywhere is discoverable in the universe. When we speak of the law of gravitation, we mean the now admitted fact that all bodies known to us attract each other with a force, which varies inversely as the square of the distance, and directly as the mass of the attracting body. But, and more specifically, since Law suggests intelligence, and therefore can be ascribed only to an intelligent agent, Law is the principle which guides the Creator in His government of the universe; or the expressed will of a person impressed on the subject-matter, and which is revealed as the subject-matter acts. It is,

therefore, the mode in which God decided matter and its forces should act, and be acted upon. Such is Law.

As often, therefore, as we are called upon to speak of Law, or to consider either its existence or its fruit, we are not speaking of some indefinite, irregular, and inconstant action; nor are we introduced to any blind, selfish, ignorant, and irrestrainable power; but to will, to powerful will, and the free will of a wise, intelligent, and sympathetic Being. We are brought face to face with a Person, a distinct Personality, and in whom the power of choice resides, not as a dead and lifeless prerogative, or as an attribute which is never to be called into action, but as one whose exercise is fully as pleasurable to the actor as is the exercise of any other endowment.

† In brief, then, Law is God's method of action—His will made manifest—His purpose. It is Deity speaking, and in utterances as may be the nature and the working of the thing or object upon which His will primarily was centred. And yet it is not mere will, but it is the action of will; nor is it inherent power, but the action of power conferred; and hence it is objective and not sub-

jective, or contingent and not necessary. In its relation, therefore, to phenomena, it is not a cause, but an effect—a sequence, a result—and consequently it is not uncaused, but caused; for say that Law is uncaused, then its existence must be a necessary existence, as that which exists by necessity is self-existent. But since it can be shown that there is a Deity who exists entirely independent of the universe; if Law is also self-existent, then we have a duality of self-existences—a conclusion as difficult to believe as it is illogical to accept. Deity, likewise, is personal; Law, as expressed, is impersonal; we speak of Deity as He; our language of Law is it; with Deity we ever associate the attributes of volition and freedom, while no one thinks of connecting any such qualities with Law. Law, then, is not in antagonism, nor is it in any way inconsistent with the idea of a supreme personal Will. It forbids no such thought, nor does it militate against any such conception; rather, as thought is inconceivable without a thinker, and contrivance without a contriver, so is Law inconceivable without a Legislator. This it presupposes; it presupposes a personality; it presupposes will; nor can it by any possibility inhere in brute matter. Let there be

eliminated from the conception of Law the idea of will, and the problems which we are called upon to solve are not only that Law is self-existent and self-maintaining, but that the power from which it primarily came so willed, or so made it, as in the future to be beyond the possibility of improvement. And this cannot be demonstrated. Scientists may be able and do trace effects up to their ~~beginnings~~, just as explorers follow rivers up to their sources; but as with the one, so with the other—there they rest; and while the latter may account for the abundance of water which they may see by the pouring in of numerous streams, though ignorant of their rise, the other may explain the phenomena with which they are confronted, by denominating them as certain effects or causes; nor have they any solution to their cause or force, any more than explorers then may know, why a stream should intersect a river here and not there, or there and not here.

The utmost that Science can say is, things are as they are, because they are; or certain effects follow from certain causes; or certain causes precede certain effects. This is the limit and the extent of its empire; and therefore, so far as the fact of causation is con

cerned, or the why of its existence, it is for another and a far different oracle to speak. All that Science has accomplished in the world is the tracing of cause back to the independent action of will. This, we are assured, is the only ultimate cause which it recognizes. And when it speaks of causation, it is not as a blind, unintelligent existence, but as intelligence itself. With the scientist, causation, if it means anything, means supremacy, and the supremacy of personal intelligence and will over material things. It means mastery. And if it is true that, so far as natural laws are known to him, they are used for the accomplishment of special purposes, is it any the less true that a Higher intelligence cannot also use laws for the accomplishment of His special purposes?

Seeing, then, that Law is but a name for the modes of the Divine will or operations, and that it is a derivative and not self-existent, and differs from God as thought expressed differs from the thinker, or the thing fashioned from the hand that fashioned it—if the universe, in all its multiplied development or nature, is the sum of God's work, and the forces or laws connected with it are the expressions of His will concerning its operations, where the un-

reasonableness of saying that this same universe, with its numerous and varied laws, cannot be controlled or modified? nay, that these same forces, these laws—this will, if need be, cannot be changed? And can a Personal God, an Absolute Sovereign, be otherwise than free and untrammelled in His actions? Shall Almighty Power be denied the exercise of those prerogatives, which it is man's greatest wealth to wield? Shall liberty of will, or the power of choice be refused the Creator, when it is His grandest gift to the creature? He who holds the reins, shall not He guide the steeds? We do not so understand God's being or His nature, or that such are His relations to the world at large. If, then, the laws of nature are the channels through which God discloses the methods in which He is pleased to act, or the manifest expressions of Divine will, and if they manifest the tendency or the workings of the thing in which this same will is revealed, shall there not be accorded to Him that freedom of action, that liberty and choice, the possession of which is man's highest boast and crowning glory? Surely, since God is not a myth nor an idea, but a person, a distinct, conscious Personality, under no circumstances, still less

in the relation in which we speak of Him, is His synonym necessity or subjection ; but wisdom, intelligence, volition, free will. It is not compulsion, nor bondage, nor fate, but spontaneity, freedom, liberty. And as this is God's true character, He can arrest or can continue, can abbreviate or lengthen, can add or diminish, modify or change, as may be His sovereign pleasure. And in the exercise of God's sovereignty and freedom were a change to be made, this seeming departure from His previous purpose would be no infringement of law, for the reason that law is His will, and only so long as it is such can law be law. When God ceases to reveal Himself through nature, as is now discoverable through the harmonious law of gravitation, or through any other known physical force, her laws cease to be laws. As, when He breathes, the winds blow, and when He speaks the waves are stilled ; so it is His will upon which all things depend, and to which all things are obedient ; unless we say God has abandoned the universe, or has no will in regard to its end or establishment, or that the clay is greater than the hand that molds it. And these thoughts do not accord with our idea of an omniscient, benevolent, and omnipotent Being.

As Law, then, in its relations to the material universe, is simply the will of God, we ask,—May not God so interpose or modify His will, or re-combine or re-arrange, if need be, the laws of nature, that peculiar results may be secured and the universe not become deranged? Certainly the power is His as well as the privilege. But will He, especially in obedience to the requests of men? So far as God is concerned, if He is omnipotent, no barrier can hinder Him; and if He is benevolent, and is ever seeking the welfare of His children, He may be disposed thus to act, and the more so if it is for their good. But will He?

Now whether God will change any of His numerous purposes, which He has already disclosed in His relations to the world, especially as they are readable in the distinct utterances of nature's laws, no one, from any merely *a priori* considerations, can possibly determine; nor have we any method of knowing. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? There is no searching of His understanding. His ways are past finding out! Who knoweth His will?" Nor can any information on this point be ascertained from considerations of His immutability. For when it is said God

is immutable, it is not meant that the power or possibility of change is not His, but He is ever the same, both in the aims and principles of His government. And on the other hand, if God is omniscient, there is no reason to believe an occasion will ever arise in His government, where such a necessity as change of action will appear; all things were established by Him at the beginning.

But while all this is unmistakably true, it is to be observed, when it is said all things were fixed at the beginning, and that the universe, in its constant unfoldings, is simply the disclosure of the pre-established purposes of a wise and benevolent Being; and that God is a Person, and is invested with all those varied attributes which characterize individuality, and in the sum of which all genuine personality consists, and therefore cannot know any such experience as interference or restraint; and that the numerous laws of nature, in whatever realm they may be seen, are the expressions of His will; and should He so desire, He could alter or modify His will, as it has been made known to us by means of whatever phenomena; and that it is not only possible for Him to hear the requests of men, but if He so determine, to allow them to enter into His plans; it

is not meant, that should He so do the universe, which is now so harmonious in its movements, is to be overturned or disturbed; and in those portions where order and regularity have so long triumphantly reigned, some new force is to be introduced, and violence, with its attendant disasters, mounting the throne, is to sway the sceptre of universal empire. It is not meant, that man has a controversy with God, and would dispute with Him the mastery of the universe, or that God has retired to some unknown realm, having committed the development of the universe to the hands of His creatures; and as may be their will, so are to be its unfoldings, its experience, its history. It is not meant, that man can rightly ask God to change what he believes to be fixed, *e. g.*, that the colors of the flowers may be altered, or the numerous dead should rise and re-occupy their familiar homes. It is not meant that, in the government of the world, a special force is to rule where now natural or physical laws hold such an important part, whose regular action has made known to us the purposes of God in regard to their operation. Nor is it meant, that man is so familiar with the working of law, or such is his knowledge of God and His relations to the

universe, and the modes of His revelations, as to be acquainted with the chemistry or the process by which his petitions are heard and answered, any more than a child knows the anatomy of the hand which may give him a drink. But when we say that it is possible, should God so desire, to alter or modify His will in answer to the prayers of His children; and law, or the universe, suffer no shock or derangement, it is meant—that God is not only the Maker and Ruler of the universe, and the Creator of all things therein, animate and inanimate, but also that He is our Creator, our Preserver, and our bountiful Benefactor—nay, our Father; and thus being of Him, and by faith in Him, though we have been disobedient, He watches over and cares, and guides, and controls us in all our ways, and in all our actions. And because of His relations to us, and of our relations to Him, there has been a way opened along which our wants may pass to Him, and through which His favors may come to us. It is meant, that God is a Person, and therefore the universe is governed not by caprice, nor by chance, but by a personal will, and a personal power; and since He is omniscient and omnipotent, He has established everything at the beginning, and with every-

thing which exists, and in any and every kingdom, laws have been associated as certain and as invariable in their action as that they are laws, and do act; and since He is God, He is not bound by any one specific plan of action, but there is such a thing as His so interposing, modifying, or restraining His will or law in its outward development, as to secure results which would not have been secured without this restraint or modification. It is meant, that while the essence and development of every law are predetermined, and know no change in any of the degrees of their operations, still any, and if necessary every law can be so adapted or related, as that without the generation of any new power, special or particular fruits will be gathered, the immediate product of their new adjustment or this new relation. It is meant, that there is one system of law acting within the realm of another system, as centripetal and centrifugal forces act in nature or among the planets; and yet there is no confusion, no violence, nor do they commingle, or the one destroy the action of the other. It is meant, that a Higher power or causation itself may interpose in His government; but the when, and the manner, and the how of that inter-

position is beyond all mortal vision and discovery. It is meant that, as man may control events or determine results in that narrow sphere of which he is master, so is it possible for God to continue the direction of forces in that outer sphere of which He is Master. It is meant, that God can make infinite combinations of His purposes or His laws, and yet no existing law be disturbed, nor the universe, in any of its parts, become in the least unsettled or destroyed; rather, after His act, it will be as perfect and remain as tranquil as, when surveying it, He pronounced it "very good." It is meant, that while the world is pervaded with law, and God has willed to administer His entire government by the succession of laws and sequences, an answer to the prayer of any of His children may be given, not in opposition to these laws, but through them. It is meant, that physical nature is not the only realm which God has established; but mind has its realm as well as matter, and spirit its realm as well as mind; and in all these kingdoms every law is as fully established and as accurately defined, as is any law in the material world; and in that realm in which prayer lies, its laws will act, and do act, as other laws in other realms. It

consequence of this principle, etc.

is meant, that there are relations far, far beyond the cognizance of mere physical science, and forces in operation, outside and above the empire of the material; and as the scientist, by his labors, is daily bringing to light, so to say, new laws, or as his special realm yields him fruit, as with tireless industry he explores it, so in the realm of prayer: for him who prays, God has in store answers fully as real, and as much the result of asking, as any that have ever followed in the wake of labor and obedience. And it is meant, also, that prayer has its sequence and its functions as have other agencies; and that the will of man, though affected by sin and limited in its operations, may so move God as to lead Him to make, such combinations, as He may not have made, had not man reverently sought it; that it is possible for the finite to travel in the plane of the Infinite; and when it then does, the action of God, resulting from this union, may be regarded as truly a response to man's demand, as though his will were the only will which had been expressed.

For, as we have said, prayer is not demand nor exaction, but request—desire. Nor does it mean constraint, peremptoriness, nor dictation; but its language and sentiment are, “if

it be Thy will;" and it is this formula upon which it bases its effectiveness. And therefore its relations to law are not those of enmity, but peace and good-will. Nay, prayer simply tells us there are forces higher, far higher than those which we daily see exhibited in the physical universe; and that their operation, in this ultra-material domain, are as regular, and have their sequences, as have other laws in their domain. Consequently, prayer nowhere attacks, cripples, or destroys law, nor does it defeat or render nugatory any previous wise established purpose, nor impair its workings; but it looks to law for its prescribed sequence, as much so as any force in the universe is scanned for its results. All its products, as well as its action, are predicated upon law, and the constancy and regularity of its operation. For it cannot be, that the loftiest feelings of which the human soul is capable have no consequent in the spiritual universe. If so, we have a cause without an effect, an effort without a result, an aim without a purpose. Rather law is the interpreter of prayer; it is its handmaid, by which, under the will of the Highest, all its blessings are borne to the race.

Let law in any of its numerous realms fail,

and it is not only true that the physical universe would be involved in irremediable chaos, but every universe—mental, moral, spiritual—would share in the general confusion. And since prayer, in its last analysis, is desire, the desire of the heart, connected with its exercise, there are laws, if success is to be achieved, which are to be recognized and obeyed, as is any law or force, associated with whatever phenomenon.

Though the forces which have swayed the world differ both in name and nature, their differences are not found in that they have no defined rule of action; but in their modes of action, and in their limit of operation. Their variety consists in their tendency and limitation. Each has its function in the economy of nature; each is assigned a sphere in which it may operate; and each has its limits beyond which it cannot pass. Cohesion is not in its nature like gravitation, nor gravitation like cohesion; for while the one operates upon particles of matter of the same inherent character, the other causes bodies to approach each other. And so of all forces, prayer not excepted; each is limited in its operation. Its function, the function of prayer, is as surely designated, and its boundaries fixed, as are

those of other forces. Nor is it in antagonism with any force. For all forces are co-active and essentially harmonious. They are all in alliance and confederation. We have yet to learn that there is a dynamic war in the universe. And law is as omnipresence; and being such, it pervades everything; and this everything does not include merely the material universe. For there is the universe of mind, as well as of matter, and of spirit, as well as of mind; and there is also the universe of feeling, of sentiment, of emotion. As the former has connected with it laws which control it in its manifold developments; and the worlds of mind and of spirit have rules by which they are governed, and their trophies are won; so has this latter universe laws for its achievements; and as prayer is a part of it; since this phenomenon inheres in the spiritual world, it has provisions for its action, as has anything which may belong to a different realm. And its laws, whether known or unknown, or to whomsoever they may relate, whether God or man, angel or devil, and whatever may be their extent or efficacy, are as much the representations of God's will, or of His purpose, as is gravitation the representative of His will in the material universe. Will does not cease

to be will, because the modes of its revelation may differ; any more than man ceases to be man, though he may not appear in the vestments of a man. And as prayer is a reality—a phenomenon, God has stamped upon, or associated with it laws, as He has impressed upon other realities their laws whose operation express His will concerning them. In our study of the universe, is it true that material forces are the only forces to which we have been introduced? Or that agencies are not recognized or considered until we know their full relations and complete workings; that the invisible and silent are not as real as that which we daily see or hear, and which may be demonstrative in its activities? Is it true, that there is no realm beyond the physical, or no world beyond that of matter? The cosmos is as complete to-day in all its entity and substantiality, as when it came fresh from the hands of its Creator; and so far as we know, in its history, not a single force has been impaired; nor has there been any withdrawn; nor any new one, new in nature, generated. Things remain as at the beginning. And is the same any the less true of mind? Has time deprived it of any of its original tendencies, or robbed it of early endowments

and principles;—those God-given and heaven-sealed principles, with which it was primarily invested? Is it not the same in every essential character as when God brought it out of His infinite treasury; the same in its nature; the same in its development; and the same in all that pertains to its existence? Is not the same true of the soul? In any sense, has its organization been changed, or new instincts been given to it? And so concerning Prayer. Has anything been added to or subtracted from the primary laws which were impressed upon its exercise? Notwithstanding all the errors which have been added to it by men, is it not in fact the same, in its being, as it ever was, the same in its origin, the same in its bearings, the same in its claims, and in its rewards? And since it is a force, or an agency, are its laws any the less a disclosure of God's purposes in regard to its establishment, than are other forces the manifestations of His will in realms less loved, or less sacred? No, indeed. Prayer and the laws for its workings are the same as they have always been; and since law is the synonym for God's will, and prayer has laws, then its laws are just as much the exponents of His will in the kingdom in which

it moves, as may be any law the exponent of God's will in another kingdom; though the difference between them as forces, may be measured by that which exists between the mental and the moral, or the world of matter and the world of spirit.

Regarding, therefore, prayer as a force in the universe, and believing there are connected in its exercise consequents as much so as in the exercise of any agency; and that its laws and sequences, whatever they may be, are as much the will of God, as are other laws and sequences; and as other agencies have their realm of operation, so has it—Where then the difficulty of God's answering whatever prayer may be addressed to His throne? In obedience to the desire of His servants, can He not, if He determine, interpose to secure results, which would not have been, had He not been requested, and yet no law suffer infringement, and the prayer answered, the universe remain as quiet and peaceful as though He had not thus done? No objection to his action can be derived from any *a priori* considerations, nor from His omnipotence, benevolence, or immutability; for who knoweth the unrevealed capabilities or powers of the Infinite mind? But can He do so? Can He answer

prayer, when that prayer involves, as some express it, the violation of pre-established or known law? Let us here illustrate.

Suppose, for special reasons, one is moved to pray that rain, free and copious, might descend, in order that man, and beast, and nature—all might be refreshed. And should

“The clouds consign their treasures to the fields,
And softly shaking on the dimpled pool
Prelusive drops, let all their moisture flow,
In large effusion, o'er the freshened world,”

it is the opinion of some, that it would have rained, prayer or no prayer. But in the supposition, we contemplate no such results, save as answer to specific, positive prayer. Our inquiry then is: Is it possible for God to open the clouds in answer to the prayers of His children? Numerous, as we know, are the physical agencies which are necessary to secure the presence upon the earth of such a phenomenon; and what these agencies are we need not stop to enumerate. It is sufficient, if we remember that rain is the condensation of vapor in the atmosphere, and its falling in drops to the earth; and that it is brought about by a strict obedience to natural laws, the more apparent of which are heat, and currents of wind; all of which laws are as invariable in

their action, as their actions or results are evident.

Now that man, and if need be, a child, either by design or by accident, can generate heat, and of sufficient quantity also to alter the relative conditions of the atmosphere, no one, we think, will question. This the very humblest physicist will admit; and it is a fact also which is taught us on nearly every page in our books of Natural Philosophy. For let Portland, Chicago, Boston, or a prairie be again fired, and the end is secured. And now this heat generated, and on its mission, its presence will produce a movement in the atmosphere, or start air currents, and such as we have no reason to believe would have been started, had it not been thus generated. This is another fact concerning which, we apprehend, there can be no intelligent dispute. Indeed, the only questions which here present themselves are not those of ability or power; but of purpose, means, and opportunity. Secure the agent and the means, and all can be accomplished. And what is to be observed in this supposed conflagration and its results, no new forces have been introduced, nor has there been an infraction of law; still less have the normal relations between cause and

effect, or antecedent and consequent, been disturbed. There is no anarchy nor any interruption whatever to the reign of law; rather every force, as such, or every law remains the same, both in its nature and sequence, after the proposed experiment, as it was before the starting of the flames. Simply existing laws have been operated upon, and in such a way as to disturb other laws; or by means of a certain phenomenon, the previous balancings, in the heavens, of laws in connection with phenomena have been lost, and a new adjustment made as has been, or as were the disturbing forces. The air is rarefied as it was before, only the more so; and the wind still moves, only more rapidly. And what is also to be noted, the effects of the flame, whether where generated or elsewhere, and this new movement of air currents, whether then apparent or otherwise, were not the result of the reversal of law, but of the operation of law; and that law, the law of heat, and it began its workings through a child, or through the will of a man. In other words, were the suggested experiment carried out, we would have as a result the following:— That it was possible for man, through an existing agency, and in perfect obedience to

fixed and established law, to bring about certain consequences, which would not have been secured had he not so determined; and in this action no law experience the least infraction. If heat be the agent which is applied, none of its laws were violated; or if it be the atmosphere which is acted upon, here no law is broken; and all that the will of man, the immediate cause of the action, may do, is likewise fully as obedient to law, as the physical agency which he was pleased to employ. Or, as this same fact may be reduced into a narrow compass: it is within the power of man to produce results in the physical universe, through physical laws, which would not have been produced without his action, and the means employed, as well as the results secured, shall be, at the same time, in perfect obedience to known conditions and laws.

And if man, weak, erring, ignorant man, can secure special and desired results without the infringement of any law, and in obedience to his own will, and if after his act, the normal nature and character of the laws used or disturbed remain the same, as though he had not interfered with them, will it be said that God, in obedience to this same will, cannot secure like particular results, and still no law, in any realm, suffer infringement?

If humanity can bring about results, and such as it may covet, not in contravention of the established laws of nature, but by an interference in accordance with law, or by an obedience to it, shall we say Deity cannot do the same? Is it so, that the illimited is not greater, and greater in every conceivable excellency, than the limited? Man, in order to effect his purposes, can so lay hold on the course of nature as to modify the current of events, and the laws of causation experience no derangement; and cannot God, in like manner, interpose, in obedience to the requests of His creatures, and so interpose that the laws of causation shall not be disturbed, and events flow in a far different channel from what they would had he never thus asked? Surely under the reign of law, mighty, invariable Law—Omnipotence can at least act in power equally with the creature. Shall we deify humanity, and not Him who is the true and only Deity?

Or let us allude to another familiar phenomenon. It is the law of water to seek its level. The drops, which start from the summit of the mountain, do not there remain; but after trickling awhile among the roots and rocks, combining, form themselves into little

rivulets; and after perhaps a most circuitous course, finally lose themselves in the ravine below. This is the law of that colorless, ponderous, and transparent fluid. Now that this same mountain stream cannot be diverted or arrested in its course, whether when it appears in the form of a gentle rivulet, or as a leaping, dashing torrent, and arrested through the operation of law, who will doubt?

That across its pathway a dam cannot be thrown, and its passage stopped, who can question? This is a daily act, and at a proper point, its arrest can be accomplished by the feeble hand of a child. And what is to be noted: in its check no law of fluids has been violated, nor has any force been curtailed or disturbed; simply another law, and greater than the law of fluids, has been brought into play; one force, and a natural force, has been arrayed against another natural force. In fact, so far as the law of liquids is concerned, its power is fully as much present, now that the water has been impeded, as when it went leaping down the mountain side; a truth which the withdrawal of the opposing force will at once reveal. In no respect has there been any violence to the reign of law; simply one law, through will, has

been confronted by another law; or one law has been put into such relations to another law, and by a personal will, as to achieve consequences which would not have been achieved had man not thus interposed; and yet neither the law of fluids, nor that of gravitation or resistance, and the like, has suffered the least abridgment. And therefore we again inquire, if it be man's prerogative, thus, through the existing forces of nature, to accomplish ends which would not have been accomplished, had he not so have done, and no force, neither that one whose power has been invoked, or that which has been acted upon, experience infringement, but both remain the same, in every conceivable particular, after as previous to their adjustment; will it be said that the Framer of law, the Master of the Universe, Omnipotence, cannot thus do, and established order not be disturbed? Can it be so? The law of miasma can also be counteracted by other laws; and still its inherent nature, and that of its opposing force, remain as though it had not been interfered with. Such certainly is the teaching of chemistry, and it is a result which daily can be witnessed. Cannot the Teacher do what he who is the learner is said to do, and what we know he does?

When the cord which threads the passenger train is suddenly pulled, and the engineer, in obedience thereto reversing his engine, stops the train, no law is violated, nor is there any law annulled; simply the power of another law is invoked. If the engineer can thus do, cannot He who holds in His hands all the forces of the universe, exert an equal power? Yet more; if we with our finite wisdom can discover a motive for re-adjusting or modifying the laws of nature, for the attainment of certain ends, may not God discover a similar motive, and do what we, with our limited powers, can perform? Assuredly, we cannot refuse to God doing under law what man can accomplish. Man the only master, or the human will the only known will in the phenomenal world! Say this, and the logical conclusion of such assumption is, his mind is the only mind in the universe; for we cannot conceive of mind inherent in brute matter. But is it so? or has it been so? or will it ever be so? But one intellect, a single mind, and that intellect—that mind, the intellect—the mind of humanity! Is this the teaching of nature, setting aside those deep-seated and firmly-rooted teachings which come to us through consciousness, through experience,

and which appear on the pages of inspiration ! And how happily does this idea of God's power and relations to the universe harmonize with what we know to be His character ? Indeed, this freedom of will, and power, and liberty of action of which we speak, necessarily results from His intelligent, self-existent, and independent nature. For intelligence is not a passive, but an active, quality ; and if the Divine intelligence act at all, it must act freely ; for there is no external power, nor any circumstance exempt from its influence to control it. Without free will, God's intelligence would be only a passive consciousness or feeling ; a perception of what was passing in His mind ; and a knowledge that all things originated with Him, without any power to direct His thoughts, regulate His actions, or govern creation.

But passing from the realm of reason, the Scriptures make known to us, and with no mean significance, that God, for His own wise purposes, can use the laws of nature, and yet the established order of things be not in the least disturbed.

The Bible supplements the distinct teachings of reason. When that royal mandate was issued unto Moses : " Speak unto the

children of Israel that they go forward," accompanied with the promise that they should "go on dry ground through the midst of the sea," it is nowhere said, that those liquid walls, which rose up on either side of the astonished hosts as they moved across the gulf, were erected by the destruction, suspension, or reversal of physical laws; this the narrative does not affirm; rather the recorded solution of the phenomenon is: "The Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind, all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided." Existing forces were employed, and at a time and place, in which, by their own nature and tendency, they would not have acted. Consequently, the miraculous nature of the phenomena did not consist in the creation of any new agencies, or the annulling of existing ones, but in a greater knowledge of the use of such forces. A path was made for them by the combination of forces already existent. The miracle was a scientific miracle. And so of other miracles, as the falling of the manna in the wilderness, the gushing of water from the rock; and their kindred ones in the New Testament, the feeding of five thousand with a few loaves and fishes, and the conversion of

the water at the feast into wine. And so likewise of those seemingly stupendous miracles, as when the valorous Joshua, in the sight of Israel, said: "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon; and the sun stood still, and the moon stayed." Or, as when King Hezekiah prayed, that his life might be prolonged; and "the shadow in the dial of Ahaz was brought backward ten degrees." In obedience to these requests, we have yet to know that the solar system experienced derangement; that law in the heavenly world ceased to act; that it was abrogated, or for the time set aside. Nay, on the other hand, those same natural forces which now govern the movements of the earth and the heavenly bodies, still were in successful operation; nor were they robbed of any of their primal play; rather law was arrayed against law—or a more effective force met a less effective force. And as in the adjustment of other agencies of varied degree, results are secured, while there is no suspension or abrogation of law; so here, because of the introduction of this greater force, sequences followed which otherwise would not have been witnessed, had not this same more effective force been interposed. There

was no creation of a new power—simply a skillful adjustment of forces already existing. And to say that God cannot thus do, or that there are not more forces in the universe than those with which we may now be acquainted, would be to affirm, not simply, that man is wise as the Deity, but that science likewise has completed her work; and henceforth, nothing now is left to her but to sit down and calmly enjoy the result of her long-coveted victories. And where the man who will thus speak? Has science fulfilled her mission?

The fixedness therefore of nature in no way interferes with God's answering prayer; rather it is because law is immutable, that answers can be given to prayer, and yet the universe, in none of its parts, experience the least violence. Prayer in no sense is in antagonism with natural law.

What then, it may be asked, is the relation of Prayer to established law?

In answering this important question, it may be said, prayer presupposes the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, benevolent, immutable, and personal Being, the Creator and absolute Sovereign of the universe—the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Therefore, being God, both in name and nature, there exist between Him and His creatures certain relations, which are suggested by such terms as Father, and Son,—parent, and child. And since also the universe is of such a high and holy origin, it has not been abandoned to fate, nor is it governed by wild and fitful caprice; but it is controlled by the operation of wise and efficient laws, as regular in their working as they are unalterable in their nature; and which, where-soever, and whensoever, and howsoever they may be revealed, and under whatsoever circumstances, and in whatever domain, are neither independent nor self-existent; but are the distinct impressions of His holy will; and as will is the particular prerogative of personality, in this personality there is involved the attribute of freedom, which, though already manifested, can still be exercised, as much so as though it had never been expressed, or impressed on a single object of His creation. Indeed, such is God's freedom of action, if He so determine, He can suspend or reverse any law; not by the introduction of any new force, nor yet by any change of previous purpose; but under and by the influence of other laws; or through higher ex-

pressions of His will,—higher in degree ; and it may be also as to the ends which He would accomplish. And the establishment of these laws were not only for His own guidance and happiness, but for the guidance and happiness of His creatures ; and it is possible, nay certain, when man reverently asks Him for such favors as may be in accord with His will, these favors shall be given to him ; not by violating law, or by throwing the cosmos into confusion ; but by means of agencies already in operation. And since we find Prayer among the numerous spiritual agencies to which we have been introduced, and it has laws for its operations as have the material forces and phenomena their laws, and as forces already existing can be combined, arranged, modified, and in a manner that will secure results which would not have been secured without this same re-combination ; re-arrangement, and re-modification ; and no law, or His will as expressed in that same law, receive ^{any} no check or violence—so can prayer, as a force, be combined with other forces ; and because of this interposition, sequences will be obtained, which would not have been secured, had it not been employed ; and yet no law suffer violence or the least abridgment.

Or should prayer be not answered, it would arise from no unwillingness of God, nor from His inability thus to do, but foreseeing an answer would not be expedient for the interests of the universe, or for the petitioner, in kindness He withholds it.

Or, in other words, the theory of prayer presupposes—yea teaches the existence of a personal will behind and above all the developments of nature, with power to use all its phenomena, not by any destruction or the reversal of law and order, but by their order and operation. Existing laws, therefore, are the concomitants of prayer—its accessories; and upon the regularity of the action of law are its holiest conquests predicated. It calls for no new creations in any realm, neither is it the friend and associate of disorder; nor for its exercise does it demand what is abnormal, irregular, and exclusive: on the contrary, law and order are the channels through which it operates, and through which also its results are expected. When, therefore, men pray, it is not that God, in obedience to their requests, would destroy, or convert the universe into a Babel of law, as the world was once in speech; nor is it that matter, in any of its inherent qualities, may be altered—

that miracles may be wrought—or a minority of confusion be set up; but if it please Him, with the power at His control, He would direct a force in one direction rather than another; or that He would on His own infinite scale do for us, what at times, in a far humbler way, we can do for ourselves. When we pray, we ask that old, or existing and established forces may be applied in another form, than we may see them to be, at the hour of prayer:—that there be such a readjustment among them, or adaptation of present energies, as will secure that for which we may petition; and all be done in obedience to law; that new effects be accomplished through old causes; and in the wisdom which is His, and out of the innumerable resources of which He is Master, some plan might be devised, which, without disturbing law in its proper sequence, such benefits might bring forth as would not, were He not thus to act. Yes, and if need be, if not acting through some law known to us, He would still act through law; and as we pray in obedience to the law of our spiritual nature, so through law, to us known or unknown, there may flow the blessings sought.



LECTURE IV.

THE PRAYER TEST.

IV.

THE PRAYER TEST.

A little more than a year ago, the religious world was awakened by a proposition, emanating from a well-defined source, which contemplated the solution of some of the phenomena of Prayer, in its application to the material universe, by a series of certain prescribed experiments; a proposition which, in all circles, literary, scientific, and theological, has since been known as the "prayer gauge," or "prayer test." Perhaps no single question of the present day, of a religio-scientific nature, more profoundly stirred the mind and thoughts of believers of every denomination. And no sooner was it made, than discussions appeared in journals and magazines,—secular, scientific, and religious,—on the nature and character of Prayer, its province, its relation to law, physical, mental, and spiritual, as well as on its efficacy.

Who was the immediate author of this bold and comprehensive proposition, whether it had its origin in some humble heart, which

craved a more extended acquaintance with the principles upon which the results of prayer had been previously predicated, in order that it might be wielded in a realm which, in its experiences, it had not been employed; or whether it was the offspring of

“The curious questioning eye,
That plucks the heart of every mystery;”

that spirit which seems, in this age, to have so largely pervaded every class of society; or whether it had its beginning in a desire to bring reproach upon that system of belief of which prayer forms no insignificant part;—to cast contempt upon the numerous votaries of Christianity, and thus lessen the many deceptions in the world; or, whether it was proposed merely to illustrate the intellectual progress of the present over previous eras—matters not. It is enough to know that the proposition has been made; and on its appearance, as well as since, it has received the approbation of some of the noblest minds in the world of science; and notwithstanding the numerous adverse criticisms which it has evoked, these same comments, rather than inclining the author or authors to withdraw their proposition, on the contrary, have led

them to defend it, and with a vigor worthy of high commendation.

↙ The immediate channel, however, through which it was first given to the public, was Mr. John Tyndall, of London, England; a name, wherever mentioned in the field of science, meriting the highest respect; especially for his recent valuable contributions to that noble department of study so nearly related to theology—the science of physics and chemistry. And in Mr. Tyndall's own language, when alluding to this proposition, the thought which was uppermost in his mind was, "to ascertain, by a practical test, the value of prayer in behalf of the sick. It was my aim to invite the attention of all thoughtful persons; but I desired co-operation, especially for those who have a firm belief in the value of such prayer. And the ultimate aim of my proposal was, that the value of prayer might be not only estimated, but also utilized to a larger extent than heretofore on behalf, at any rate, of our great charitable institutions."

Such were the motives which prompted this lover of man and of science, to submit his proposition to the world. Nor can we do otherwise than admire his intentions, though

based on an entire misapprehension of the nature of true and successful supplication. And the language in which he submits his proposition is as follows: "I ask that one single ward or hospital, under the care of first-rate physicians and surgeons, containing certain numbers of patients afflicted with those diseases which have been best studied, and of which the mortality rates are best known, whether the diseases are those which are treated by medical or by surgical remedies, should be, during a period of not less, say, than three or five years, made the object of special prayer by the whole body of the faithful, and that, at the end of that time, the mortality rates should be compared with the past rates, and also with that of other leading hospitals, similarly well managed, during the same period. Granting that time is given, and numbers are sufficiently large, so as to insure a minimum of error from accidental disturbing causes, the experiment will be exhaustive and complete.

"I might have proposed to treat two sides of the same hospital managed by the same men; one side to be the object of special prayer, the other to be exempted from all prayer. It would have been the most rigidly

logical and philosophical method. But I shrink from depriving any of—I had almost said—his natural inheritance in the prayers of Christendom. Practically, too, it would have been impossible; the unprayed-for ward would have attracted the prayers of believers as surely as the lofty tower attracts electric fluid. The experiment would be frustrated. But the opposite character of my proposal will commend it to those who are naturally the most interested in its success; those, namely, who conscientiously and devoutly believe in the efficiency against disease and death of special prayer. I open a field for the exercise of their devotion. I offer an occasion of demonstrating to the faithless an imperishable record of the real power of prayer.”

Such are the plain and forcible words in which a “prayer test” has been submitted to the christian and believing world. And since we have given such prominence to the author’s name and plan, and in his own well-chosen language; whatever may be the habit or thought of those who sympathize with him, we feel it is due this distinguished scientist that we should give also his views of prayer; and more especially since he has

recorded them in connection with his world-wide proposal. And they are as follows: "It is not my habit of mind to think other than solemnly of the feeling which prompts prayer. It is a potency which I should like to see guided, not extinguished, devoted to practicable objects, instead of wasted upon air. In some form or other, not yet evident, it may, as alleged, be necessary to man's highest culture. Certain it is that, while I rank many persons who employ it low in the scale of being, natural foolishness, bigotry, and intolerance being in their case intensified by the notion that they have access to the ear of God, I regard others who employ it as forming in part of the very cream of the earth. The faith that simply adds to the folly and ferocity of the one, is turned to enduring sweetness, holiness, abounding charity, and self-sacrifice by the other. Christianity, in fact, varies with the nature upon which it falls. Often unreasonable, if not contemptible, in its purer forms prayer hints at disciplines which few of us can neglect without moral loss. But no good can come of giving it a delusive value, by claiming for it a power in physical nature. It may strengthen the heart to meet life's losses, and

thus indirectly promote physical well-being, as the digging of Æsop's orchard brought a treasure of fertility greater than the treasure sought. Such indirect issues we all admit; but it would be simply dishonest to affirm that it is such issues that are always in view."

Such are this philosopher's views of the domain and of the efficacy of prayer.

But to return to the proposed "test." In our consideration of it, let us primarily observe some of its many assumptions. If we interpret it aright, it assumes,—

First. The possibility of professional skill being able to assort patients in a ward, in such a manner, that it may be said of them they are afflicted with the same, and only with the same malady. Now, that it is possible for a physician, even of limited experience, to pronounce correctly upon the evidences and presence of ordinary disease, we do not question; but that it is possible for him to affirm, and with scientific correctness, that the ten, twelve, or more patients who may have been selected for the proposed trial, are afflicted with, say—typhoid fever, and only with this malady, we at once deny. True, this fever may be most distinctly apparent and manifest in the mulberry-colored rash, and

præternatural pulse, and coma, and other signs; but at the same hour in which its lassitude is felt, that there may not be in that same prostrate frame other diseases, if not as palpably developed, certainly in their incipency, and whose presence will largely interfere with the restoration of the sick one, who is able to say beyond the possibility of a doubt? If the fires of consumption reveal their presence in the hectic flush, it is no evidence that there are no other flames kindling, if not burning in other parts of the system, and whose heat deepens the scarlet already upon the cheek. And if this be true, how can a certain number be selected, of whom it may be indisputably affirmed, that the only disease from which they are suffering, is that for which they have been specially chosen? Yet this the "test" presupposes; it assumes that the patients to be prayed for, and those for whom prayers have not been asked, are exactly of the same constitutional temperament, and are afflicted with the same malady. Where the professional skill or insight equal to the task here proposed?

The suggested experiment assumes also,—

Secondly. That the restoration of those who may have been prayed for will be for the

highest good and happiness of the world. Now, that God has not His special purposes, as have other persons, in all His numerous acts, whatever they may be; and in order to secure certain ends, knows many modes of operation; and that it may not be for His glory, as well as for the well-being of the invalid, that he should not be restored, cannot be successfully questioned. A storm is far more welcome and desirable at times, than the brightest sun or the clearest sky. And when it is remembered, how indifferent some are to the blessings which they may daily receive; and how also God, in order to secure His purposes, abandoning smiles, is forced to employ frowns and blows, and the great end of chastisement, and His numerous hidden purposes therein—who shall say, if the sick one is not restored, though prayed for, it will not be as much for his ultimate happiness as for the honor and glory of God?

“— a friend that frowns,
Is better than a smiling enemy.”

And is it true that this kind of visitation contemplates but one end, and that to test the skill of physicians, or the devotions of the pious? Does this merit our belief? And

since, at times, the moral fate of an invalid may depend upon his remaining ill, is it in harmony with the teachings of reason to believe, that God would permit the moral future of His meanest child to be sacrificed, to convince the doubting of the true value of prayer? In brief, the whole question here is—Are all of God's purposes in sickness to be ignored, His will set aside, in order that a certain test may be applied to gratify the curiosity of an experimenter? Can such an estimate of God be successfully defended?

The "test" assumes also,—

Thirdly. That between the moral and physical worlds there is a division as marked as are the agencies which are employed in these worlds. That the prescription of the physician may accomplish something is admitted, and that prayer has a certain value is also conceded; but has prayer a value in the realm of the physical? Now what are the immediate relations which exist between the moral and physical worlds, or how they are woven or interwoven, we do not propose to say, beyond remarking—that they are intertwined, and in a manner apparent even to a casual observer. Mind, we are well aware, is a force in the world, and upon nearly every

object with which we are familiar we discover traces of its potent influences; and whenever it is exercised, it affects, in some form, the bringing about of events in the physical world. It can cover arid wastes with refreshing waters, and make deleterious swamps so healthful as to become the abodes of men. Indeed, every mental effort affects in some measure our physical frame, and so ultimately affects the world without. And so of our physical frame. It is not only most intimately related to the mind, but its condition influences the mind; and between it and the mind there is a most wondrous sympathy. As to the exact mode in which mind acts on matter, or conversely, in which matter operates on mind, it does not come within our purpose to discuss, beyond observing—that the one does act upon the other, and acts either directly or through a medium. But where the acknowledgment of any relation between these two distinct worlds, if it is proposed to isolate a certain few, to the operation of special influences, while from the others this same influence shall be as sacredly withheld?

This leads to the remark, that the proposed “test” assumes,—

Fourthly. That certain events, to which we

are subject in this life, however intimately they may be allied with our present happiness, depend for their fulfillment upon the action of physical laws, and physical laws only; rather than upon the operation of those laws, which are subject to modification, in their operation, by the intervention of man or the will of a higher being,—as God. Now cures may be wrought, and most thoroughly, through the normal operation of medicine; and this may be the channel through which may come healing in many of our homes and hospitals; but while this may be conceded, it is equally true, that the remedies may be interfered with. For the law of a specific drug is not an omnipotent law, since it can be thwarted as can other laws. Should one of the chosen invalids so determine, what is there to prevent his defeating, by the mere act of will, the natural results of the drug which may have been prescribed for him, either through excessive exercise, forced wakefulness, studied carelessness, or by exposure?

There is power in certain prescriptions; and their effect, with a certain degree of exactness, can be predicated; but though most carefully compounded, and adapted to the sufferings of the patient, is there not

room for another power--will; and may not the character of its action secure results, which would not have been secured, had it not been exercised, as it may have been exercised? Are we to believe that a patient cannot intercalate a force which may affect, and largely, the action of the drug which he may have swallowed! But where, in the proposed experiment, the recognition of this power? Or who can tell, whether in the designated ward there may not, by the exercise of will, be a series of constant interferences with the legitimate action of the medicine, and of a character that must disturb the reliability of any conclusion, which may be rendered, as to the real forces which have been in operation?

The "test" assumes,—

Fifthly. That the power of prayer, in the case or realm alluded to, is not to be believed, until it has been tried.

As if faith were not an element, and a necessary element in successful prayer, or that a prayer abounding in scepticism could be efficacious. It may be possible to so adjust scales, as to detect the very smallest discernible material substance; but who can construct balances which will allow for such a

force as faith? Or is it possible to subject to a positive experiment an agency of which a necessary constituent is immaterial? True, the density of the atmosphere, and the velocity of the wind, and the presence of other invisible forces in the material universe, have been weighed and measured with a correctness creditable to human skill; but how can that force be measured, the efficiency of which depends upon childlike, humble faith, and faith in him who would use this force? Or what can be predicated, from the exercise of an agency, when a vital element in that agency is to be withheld, or held in suspense? Measure a force and yet keep back part of it! Conclusions are reliable only as they embody the constituent factors of both premises. And yet the proposed experiment assumes, that a reliable conclusion can be reached, though but a single premise be considered; or that a result may be regarded as reliable while an element, which largely affects it, is held in abeyance, or withdrawn until it, the result, is known.

Such are some of the assumptions which this famous gauge involves; and they are as gratuitous as they are extravagant, and incapable of successful defence.

But let us examine it with greater directness. And since we have seen what Prayer truly is, what it involves, and its relation to physical phenomena, it will be only necessary for us to comment upon some of its peculiar characteristics.

I. The first remark, therefore, of a positive nature which we would make in regard to it, is this: the "test" is wholly inapplicable to the thing which is to be tested.

The proposition is, as has been stated, to measure the power of prayer, in its relation to the sick, in a special ward of a hospital. Now it is well known, that the methods by which we acquire certain facts, pertaining to many of the phenomena of the world, vary as do the objects concerning which we have a more extended familiarity. Would we know, *e. g.*, the velocity of the wind, at once we expose to its current an anemometer, and if it is correctly constructed and adjusted, as would be the pointer upon its dial, so would be the speed which, at this same hour or minute, it would be traveling. Would we ascertain the density or the rarity of the atmosphere, we would subject to its influence an aerometer; and as would be its disclosures, so would we believe to be its then condition.

Or would one acquaint himself with the sensible heat of a body, as water, or the atmosphere—by exposing a thermometer to its action, at once he would have the solution sought. Would we know the extent of a farm, we apply to it the chain; our fuel we measure by a pole or by weight; fabrics are measured by the yard; and food in general by the pound. In brief, as is the object whose relations we desire to know, so is the character of the test which we employ; nor would one any more think of familiarizing himself with food, as bread or beef, by means of an anemometer, than of measuring the speed of the wind by a chain, or the size of his farm by a weight. Every object has its own specific tentative method; and these methods are no more interchangeable than are the objects themselves. And the value of a test, as we know, consists in its uniformity. Variety and irregularity may be appropriate and revel elsewhere, but not when a standard is the strategic point. Indeed, it is the presence of regularity and uniformity which give a test its true value: nay, in the word itself, we recognize the result of previous trials; and therefore, in one sense, its synonym is proof; and proof arising not from inconstancy or

changeableness, but from a previous fixedness, or regularity of action. And a scientific test, if it mean anything, means an absolute demonstration, or a regularity which is the product of but one rule or mode of action.

Seeing, then, from the very nature of the case, that the test which is to be applied to an object differs, and differs as is the character of the thing to be inquired into, and that the value of a scientific test consists in its aptness and uniformity; how is it possible to apply to prayer a test, in which, so far as its answer is concerned, the action of the will of a person, as is God, is to be included? For as we have already observed, answers to prayer are not predicated upon the mere desire or demand of a petitioner, but upon that sublime hypothesis, "Not my will, but Thine be done." Its replies are conditional. And can any test be applied to prayer, in relation to the individual, which can take cognizance of this same will—the free and active will of God? Extensive have been the acquirements which man has made, both as regards his own name and nature, as well as the world in which he moves. He can measure the depths of the sea, and along its uneven bed lay a line that can be made the

medium for words of congratulation and of love. He can know the altitudes of the highest mountains, though his feet never press their snowy sides. From a chamber in his dwelling, he can ascertain the diameter of every sun—the occultation of every planet, the weight of every comet, and the return of every heavenly body. All the flowers, from the humble mountain-bell to the full-grown and magnificent lily of the tropics, he can classify as children of the same parentage, and of the same household. And from the hills he can quarry stones, and out of them chisel forms and figures of such marvellous beauty, as shall not only invest his name with deserved honor, but also crown him with unfading glory.

But, notwithstanding all the skill which he has thus far applied, and the ingenuity which he has put forth, and thought—hard, patient, persevering thought—where and when, and of what and by whom was there ever a gauge constructed, by which even his own volitions could be measured, still less, the will, the infinite will, of God?

Give to mind all that the most enthusiastic may desire to claim, and allow to every instrument the most perfect sensitiveness of which it may be capable; and admit also that

the adaptation and adjustment of all parts were accurate in the extreme; yet on what soil, by what hands, and of what fabric has a criterion been fashioned, which is capable of detecting the influence of that faculty of the mind, by which we determine to do or forbear? This has never been accomplished; nor have any claimed thus to do. Where, then, the applicability of a "test," which makes no provision for such exercise?

It is far from our purpose here to discuss the character and applicability of evidence. It is sufficient, if we say that the nature of the evidence which is required to establish certain truths, is as variable as may be the truths whose demonstration is sought. As "all flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, another of birds, and there are also celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial;" so also with evidence; it is of varied species. And that is not the only evidence which is to be received, which comes to us through experiment. For there is such a thing as spiritual evidence and moral evidence, as well as scientific and mathematical evidence; and as physical truths, for their confirmation, require experimental evidence,

so do moral truths, for their establishment, require moral evidence. And since prayer is a moral truth, its proofs are not as those which come to us through certain prescribed tests; but they are as is prayer itself; and what other mode have we of establishing truths, having a moral signification, than by moral means?

Given, *e. g.*, as a problem: "sloth makes all things difficult, but industry all things easy;" or, "what maintains one vice would bring up two children." How are such moral facts to be substantiated? If we are to satisfy the demands of the scientists, their proof is to be purely scientific. What then shall it be? Shall they be such as we would employ, when we would prove the fertility of the soil; the density of the atmosphere; the velocity of light; or the specific gravity of solids? Nay, can such truths be thus proven? Or, in yonder home, there may be a bright, cheery lad, yearning, perchance, to occupy the special field for which he feels God designed him; and his parents, deeply sympathizing in the noble purpose which he may have formed, and alive to the perils with which, in his career, he must be threatened; to impress still more upon him,

than as yet they may have done, the importance of purity, industry, and perfect integrity in all he may do, tell him anew, if he would be successful and loved in life, and rewarded, and happy in death, the paths of virtue, of honesty, of godliness, and of temperance are the only paths in which he must walk. He must be pure, and chaste, and honest; truthful and holy; and avoid, so far as he may be able, every known path which leads to sin. But doubting, in a measure, the perfect truthfulness of these parental counsels—suppose to verify them, he were to propose, that in a certain home, or in some reformatory, the experiment be tried of allowing a certain number of its inmates the very indulgences against which he has been cautioned; while, on the other hand, others, in the same institution, should be most sacredly guarded from every temptation and sin,—how quickly would the parents of this same one arrest the discussion, by showing to their loved one, that virtue and honesty,—nay, that every moral and holy act is to be obeyed, not so much because it is commanded, as for its own sake; and as they have their own reward, so have they also a natural claim on every one's obedience. Or discarding the

proof demanded, would they not at once point their boy to the issues of virtue and honesty, as already discoverable in the lives of others, and tell him there is more than one method by which great facts or truths can be established? Would it not be maintained, and could any one question, that there are evidences as conclusive, and as convincing, and fully as irrefutable, in the department of morals, as other kinds of evidence may be in the special arena to which they may appertain? The devout scientist believes in the existence of a God; and yet he cannot absolutely demonstrate God's existence. He may render it possible, nay probable; but not certain. For after he has marshaled together all his numerous facts, bearing on this question, as others, he must end his investigations by simply believing. It is through faith that we come to accept the first cause; "through faith," as the apostle expresses it, "we understand the worlds were framed by the Word of God." And so in the realm of which we are speaking. As it is not through the channel of so-called "scientific experiment," that purely moral truths are to be known, any more than scientific truths depend for their acceptance upon a moral demonstration; but

as the objects differ, so likewise must the evidence differ; and as proofs, in one realm of investigation, are fully as conclusive as are the proofs in another realm; and as the kingdom of nature and the kingdom of grace are different; different, therefore, must be the modes of establishing the facts aimed to be proven, appertaining to these separate realms. And hence to demand for the truthfulness of a moral or spiritual phenomenon, such kind of evidence as can only be found in connection with physical phenomena, is not only unnatural and unscientific, but it is as wild, and as ungenerous, as it would be to demand of the believer in prayer, through the laws by which he was led thus to believe, that the world was a globe, or that all right angles are equal to each other.

Not so! As every realm of knowledge has its own peculiar modes of investigation, keeping to its own proper field, let each test all the phenomena which may relate to it, by its own particular and heaven-given laws. The chemist is to demonstrate what he would have us receive, by the mode of proof which belongs to his study; and the geologist is to verify what he would have us accept, by his specific mode; and the mathematician is to

make good his assertions, through the process of demonstration; and so with the scientist and others; and what each may severally substantiate, under the laws of the realm to which he may appertain, must be accepted. And what in the world of grace may be established, in harmony with its mode of demonstration, is likewise to be accepted. And as the chemist would not ask the mathematician for the evidences of his assertions, through a process known only to the laboratory; or the mathematician expect his theorems to be demonstrated as the geologist would prove his affirmations; but each would produce those evidences, and only those, which relate to his own field, so with the scientist. As all moral evidences are wholly inapplicable for testing physical phenomena, alike irrelevant is the application of any physical test for ascertaining, or for verifying, the truthfulness of phenomena purely spiritual.

But not only is the proposed test inapplicable to the thing to be tested, but—

II. It is neither recognized nor admitted in the true theory of prayer.

Now what is the true theory of prayer, as established by reason, and confirmed by experience and revelation, it is not necessary for

us to repeat, beyond remarking, that acceptable prayer never stipulates for any particular form of belief, nor does it contain in it any element of doubt, still less is it imperative either in its tone or manner; nor does it contemplate selfish or ungenerous ends. These form no part of genuine prayer; on the other hand, true prayer is supplicatory and submissive, rather than peremptory and dominant; and its sentiment and language are of entreaty, not of demand. And yet, if the "test," which has been submitted, means anything, it means that if a certain number of believers in the efficacy of prayer should give themselves to supplication for a number of patients in a hospital, if it avails in this realm, cures would be wrought in answer to it; but should the sick be no further advanced in recovery, or should there be no decrease in their mortality, than in the opposite ward, where prayer, as an instrumental agent, had not been employed, it would be because prayer did not possess the power which had been claimed for it; nor did it avail in that kingdom, in which its might, if might it is, had been solicited. As though God had put the government of the universe into the hands of His creatures; or as though

prayer had in it such elements as force, or necessity; or that God had stipulated, even with His praying children, what should be the exact character of His answers to their petitions; or that there were not times in which it might be said even of the elect, "ye know not what ye ask;" or that there could be holy prayer, which, whatever may be the language employed, or ends sought, the prayer or prayers having been offered, its power depended upon God's answering it in the special way or form, in which a return to it had been demanded. And must it be said again, that the spirit which is manifested in such a prayer, has no existence in holy supplication? For, as has been remarked, prayer is contingent and never imperative; God's will is a prominent factor in all answers to it. And if the demand which may be made of Him is "according to His will," then, says the one who would pray aright, "let this my wish, O Lord, be granted; but if it be not Thy will, as Thou seest the end from the beginning, and knowest what is best, and I know not what to ask for as I ought, still give me what I need, but not in the form in which, in my ignorance, I have asked; but in that form which shall be best for Thy glory, as well as for my happiness."

Indeed, if God had ever distinctly stipulated, that His answers to the prayers of men would be in perfect conformity with their requests; if they sought at His hands bread, bread they should receive, and not a stone; or if they asked a fish, He would give them a fish, and not a serpent; or if we had any reason to believe, that the universe had been set up and arranged in all its many parts, very much as an organ has been set up and arranged by its maker; and having reeds and pipes of different sizes, and of different metals, with key-board, and stops and pedals, so that, by our playing upon it by prayer, we could obtain responses, fully as sweet and regular as the touch of hand or foot responds to the organist's will; then we might hope, as were our requests, so would be our replies. But is this God's mode of action? Where is the evidence that He has withdrawn from the universe, and left it to His children, as some instrument upon which as they play, so shall be the response; if the bass pedal receive our pressure, large shall be our gifts, or the minor key is moved, small shall be our return! Or dropping the figure, if our prayers to Him are comprehensive, free and bountiful shall be our supply; while should they be limited, narrow, and as superficial as the cry of an infant, so also

should be our reward? Where have we been thus told; or through what means, or upon what tablet, do we find chiselled any such record?

Let us assume for a moment, that the position which the scientist here adopts concerning acceptable prayer, is the true condition, and established by a mode of proof with which he may be satisfied; see to what it logically conducts us. A certain number intercede with God in behalf of a special favor, the granting of which, in their estimation, will not only be to the honor of God, but of great advantage to themselves; and that favor may be the recovery of certain prisoners from a dangerous malady, who are confined in a well-known hospital. Others again, prompted by no such mock sympathy, but feeling it would be far preferable, both for the prisoners and the public generally, that they should not be restored to their accustomed health, plead that God would hear *their* prayers. Now if it be true, that prayer should be answered because it has been offered, and in both instances, the petitions which were winged heavenward came from the heart; God is bound to answer the prayers of the one as well as of the other. But how can

He thus do? Is an antagonism any the less antagonistic because it confronts God? Can even the Infinite harmonize admitted contradictions? If He answer the prayers of those seeking the recovery of the criminals, then He does not answer those, equally as earnest, and equally as sincere, who have asked that they be not healed; and if, on the other hand, He refuses to restore, while replying to those who thus importuned, He has turned a deaf ear to those who would have Him act differently! If the true notion of prayer be, so far as an answer is concerned, that it has been sincerely offered, how is God to act, when prayers of equal earnestness are presented to Him, having purposes entirely different? God, and we speak it with the greatest reverence, can no more be guilty of an inherent impossibility than can His humblest creature; His very being forbids this. But say that prayer is conditional, God's pleasure, and not only is there still reserved to Him the uncontrolled management of His universe, but there is room for the desire of every heart, whatever it may be; and all can pray with the same degree of earnestness, and with the hope, that their petition will be heard, and enter into His plans and designs.

But the scientist, in substance, responds No; if devout prayer be offered to God in behalf of the sick and suffering, and remains unanswered, it is because it is limited in its scope, nor has it any influence in the physical world. Never can this be true, nor is it to be admitted, until it is shown that the recovery of the subject, for whom intercession had been made, is for the glory of God, and for their own happiness; and that it is God's will that they should be restored; and that Omnipotence has surrendered His care over the world—nay, abandoned it to the caprices of His creatures.

But again, we regard the proposed test as impossible, likewise,—

III. From the fact, that it could never be known how much acceptable or true prayer had been offered for the few, for whose benefit it had been requested.

In this the nineteenth century, the sun shines with no greater brightness than when God placed it in its orbit; nor are the flowers of deeper tint or purer in dye, or the air which floats about us any sweeter, than what our first parents breathed, as they walked the glades of Eden. Unintelligent nature, in no essential feature, has changed

since it became the visible smile of God. Not so, however, with man, God's masterpiece, in whose image once he stood resplendently clothed. But, notwithstanding his ancestry, his endowments, his capacity, in one sense, how limited have been his attainments, and especially in those things which relate to his name and nature! How circumscribed his knowledge of the origin of his thoughts, of the causes which influence him in his actions, and of the mode in which the forces within him act; and in the many avenues open to him, how numerous are the obstructions which have yet to be removed!

Now, in the department in which our investigations are being conducted, that it is not possible for man to experience want, and to express it in a way that may be pleasing to God, certainly no one, familiar with the workings of his own heart, will be disposed to dispute. But though conscious of personal needs, and able to give them such expression as will contribute largely towards their alleviation, by what process can he know the real condition of the heart of his brother; and whether the words which may fall from his lips, or the actions of which he may be guilty, are, in any respect, truthful

transcripts of the soul,—the one answering to the other, as the seal to the die, or the die to the seal. True, he can pray; there is an outlet for the movement of his heart, as there is for every spring which gladdens the earth; and as the spring has many ways of reaching the surface, so there is more than one method by which he can make known his soul-felt desires. But who will dare affirm, if one hundred professed believers should agree to pray for the accomplishment of a certain event, their prayers would be their true desires? Not that we mean to say any would solemnly pledge themselves to intercede with God, reserving to themselves the privilege, whensoever inclined, to vitiate their vow; or that they would enter into such a covenant as holy prayer demands, with a secret determination never to abide by it; but much which is called prayer, after all, is not prayer; nor is all that which is popularly denominated supplication, the kind which God hears. And if, therefore, our prayers be such that God does not hear them, or are not the true exponents of the then condition of the soul, as we have intimated, though in language they are as sweet as the tinkling of the bells which hung round the hem of the high priest's ephod,

still there has been no prayer. Formalism is not prayer. And who will say that, at times, this charge might not justly be laid at their feet. True, it may be, when the hour for their special devotions arrived, their souls fairly travailed for the afflicted; and, on the contrary, is it not quite as true, that habit may have usurped the throne of feeling?

Yes, they recalled the heated brows, the exhausting lassitude, the thirst, and the like; and they recalled their vows, and knew, perhaps, that the eyes of the world were turned upon them; and as would be their verdict, so would many believe or disbelieve; yet that some of their prayers—once, twice, thrice, or more frequently—were not the product of formality, rather than of deep inner feeling, of the lip than of the heart, or from a sense of required duty than from absolute love and desire, who here can say? How can this fact be disproved? And that it is not a fact, we need but sharply scrutinize the workings, at times, of our own heart.

Reduce prayer to its very lowest conceivable level, and call it, if it be desired, a drug; and is it true, that it can be weighed as a drug; and be compounded and analyzed as a chemist analyzes a prescription? Is it true,

that it can be gathered up and measured, as an apothecary gathers up and measures the materia medica in which he deals? The properties of any prescription can easily be ascertained; but is it so with supplication? Is there any chemistry by which true prayer can be detected from that which is false; any litmus paper by which it can be tested? Or is that true of a subtle essence, as is prayer, which is true of matter? And can that be a scientific test, in which a peradventure or a contingency is involved? The scientist clamors for facts, and justly; as it is with these that he deals, and upon which he bases his affirmations; and yet, in the realm of prayer, he will receive and believe that, and only that, which can be scientifically demonstrated; when the very factors upon which he can predicate what is true, are not given nor can they be ascertained. Or he would accept as an accurate test a result, based upon assumed conditions, while perfectly ignorant of their character.

Suppose the Christians in this community should pledge themselves, in their morning and evening devotions, to pray for such as may be sick, in a certain district, in this or in a neighboring city. And these same Chris-

tians are no better, nor are they any worse, than others bearing the same happy name, wherever found. Now of the number who may thus have promised, how many may it reasonably be supposed would really and truly pray? We do not ask, how many would comply with the form of prayer; for we presume, when a vow falls from the lips of a believer, or he resolves to do a thing, it is with a fixed determination to perform that vow, and to fulfill that resolve. But how many, of those thus born anew, would pray the prayer of genuine feeling, of holy, heartfelt faith? There is the attitude, and the language, and the look, and the tone, all the accompaniments of prayer; but how much real, fervent prayer would be offered? And if their aim be merely to test its efficacy, we have our answer—there would be no genuine prayer: and for the reason, that God hears no petition which at best may be but a half-believing inquiry; or which, while it would seek a favor from Him, at the same time questions whether He will give what may be asked. Would God himself abide by the humiliating conditions of a prayer-test? But suppose much of it—nay, the greater part of it, to be such as God approves,

even the true and honest conviction of the soul; yet, as we are so frequently reminded, since science deals with facts, and with facts only, and discards all else; and as it not merely requires, but demands that all which it receives should be established upon a basis that can admit of no dispute; how is it to be known, what proportion of the prayer offered was genuine, acceptable prayer? The problem, observe, is to test prayer, not as a believer would, but in obedience to the requirements of science, or scientifically. Now science does not deal with hypotheses or probabilities. Its chief boast has ever been, that it holds the hypothetical, the presumptive, and the conjectural in abeyance, till every vestige of doubt is removed; and until then, it refuses to give its decisions. And still the proposition is, to test in a way that will admit of no doubt, or by facts that cannot be gainsayed another fact, or a certain experience, when the data by which it is to be established cannot be approximately, much less scientifically, ascertained. Or in other language, if the community, whose intercessions have been requested, plead as desired, as it is only upon the supposition, that they have acceptably prayed that any result can be affirmed, and

upon a supposition only ; since the scientist rejects all conjecture, and demands the positive and the absolute ; how can this requirement be met ? Or how can he secure that datum upon which he would be justified in announcing a conclusion, and such as may be reliable ? Were a supposition of the same force as a fact, or could there be known how many in truth engaged in the service asked of them, then the conclusion to which he might come, in view of these facts, would be such as results from known factors ; but when there are other factors lying beyond his cognizance, which must also enter into his conclusions, can that be a scientific conclusion, which not only ignores these same facts, but to which there is given the same significance, as though they were known ?

Though then praying for the afflicted, may be a most benevolent service, and justly asked of a community ; and though many may have pledged themselves to an honest observance of such a request ; still from the impossibility of ever knowing who, of the number asked, did really and truly pray, and who did not ; or since it is only upon known data, that any correct conclusion can be based ; and as in the case before us, all the

data cannot be known, though the test be applied, and a conclusion announced; as it must have that which is conjectural or problematic for its basis, it cannot be reliable. And just what science rejects, in this relation, reason also rejects. For aside from all special laws, which sway the sceptre in the natural and physical worlds, it is the teaching of reason, that nothing can absolutely or irrefutably be affirmed of that whereof all the factors, which enter into the same affirmation, have not been fully weighed, and their influence as fully allowed.

When man has the keenness to look into the heart of his fellow man, and to read what therein is concealed, then will he be able to estimate what is feeling, and what also is formality; or what in prayer is tone, and what is language; and how far these agencies represent the actual condition of the soul. And until that hour comes, such opinions as he may have formed, based on the conjectural condition of one's inner heart, are to be held in abeyance. And if the Bible is to be credited, as it is, that hour will never come—for this is God's prerogative; as we read: "for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward

appearance, but the Lord looketh upon the heart."

But, finally—

IV. The test is impracticable; and for the simplest of many reasons which so easily might be adduced,—that no man, or number of men, though sincere in their motive, could get any community to enter upon any such service, holy as it is, under the conditions associated with it.

As we cannot be too familiar with this proposal, let me once more repeat a few of its most prominent features; and without re-quoting the author's language, let me put it in the form in which, had the Christian public accepted it, it would no doubt have been presented to them. And had it been carried to a successful issue, whatever may have been the language which its author or authors would have chosen to have announced it, I do not know; but if they had given full expression to their aim, in obedience to its tenor, it would have read, perhaps, something as follows :

TO THE CHRISTIAN PUBLIC :

DEAR FRIENDS :

Convinced as are we, the undersigned, that the Christian public, especially, will be interested in all that pertains to the happiness of their fellow-men, and above all

others, that they will be inclined to do what others would refuse, and the more so since what is now about to be asked of them, is not only in immediate harmony with their profession, but their joy and comfort ; and believing, also, that they are ever ready to lend their aid in testing the value of any remedy, which may contemplate the alleviation of the sick and suffering, and their restoration to health ; and as it is a principle, in the profession which we represent, never to deviate from an accustomed path, till that in which we would enter is shown to be preferable to the one in which we have been walking ; and knowing that the special agent to which your attention is about to be called, is one which you frequently use ; it is the purport of these lines to say, that yesterday morning, in your own city hospital, from the ward known as the fever ward, there were selected ten patients, in all respects, so far as could be ascertained, similarly affected, who were removed to another ward in the same building ;—the same in air, light, and heat, as that from which they were taken. It is believed, that these same ten sufferers are no more moral, nor are they any the less vicious, than their comrades, who still occupy the old ward ; still the division has been made among them, in order that special prayer might be offered in their behalf. Not indeed, that we cannot pray, nor yet these same afflicted ones ; but we covet, if possible, a new remedy ; and not knowing but what prayer might be a healing agent, and aiming to utilize any and every instrumentality that may tend to mitigate distress, and diminish the death rate in the world, we propose to have its virtue in this relation thoroughly tested ; so that if it be a physical curative, it might be ranked where it belongs, and such place given it in *materia medica* as it may justly merit. And to make this same test authori-

tative, in order that its conclusions may be beyond all possibility of error, it is proposed that your prayers be offered in their behalf, for three or five years. It is to be distinctly remembered, you are to pray that the selected ten, and only these, may be restored.

Respectfully yours, in the name of the physicians and nurses in charge,

LUKE.

Suppose such a bulletin, printed in golden letters, were to arrest your eye as you passed the door of a certain hospital; or such a request were to greet you as you opened the morrow's paper; and you a Christian man or woman, what would be its most natural effect upon you? Yes, you might at once respond, prayer is a weapon with the Christian, and his most potent weapon; and as in days past its achievements have been great, its early conquests are but mere preludes to victories far more complete and extended. And in these latter days of indifference, and irreligion, and skepticism, it is refreshing to see it acknowledged as a force in the world, and that the believer in Christian truth possesses an agent whose influences are coveted; and that there is so much virtue in it, as to incline some to utilize it in behalf of the sick: blessed be God, His relations to the race are becoming more and more distinctly

acknowledged — but would this be all? Would any humble believer here rest? Nay, as the eye scanned, and it may be re-scanned, these same golden letters, which call as the sweet voice of the muezzin in the East to prayer, and as we realize that our petitions are solicited for ten, and only for ten of its inmates, to the exclusion of others who may be pining in the other wards, would we then and there, or the Christian public pray only for these same chosen few? Is it so, at the announcement of such a request, prayer would be wafted heavenward for those, and only for those for whom it had been specially solicited? Is this the feeling which would throb a Christian's heart? Is this the genius or the animus of his faith? Has he so learned Christ? Rather, from the fact that in another chamber there were many others suffering, possessed of the same feelings and of the same susceptibilities, afflicted with the same diseases, having similar burnings, similar pains, similar thirsts, similar anxieties, and bound for the same judgment, and ultimately to appear before the same God, and inheritors of the same immortality — since prayer had not been requested for these, would this not be the reason why appeals, fer-

vent and earnest, frequent and continuous, would be sent heavenward in their behalf? Are some to be humbled, that others may be exalted? Is this the spirit which has given Christianity its power, and made the name Christian a name of such honor in the world? Would the Christian public acquiesce in a demand, which contemplated the making of a certain number outcasts in the world, for whom no heart should feel, no arm be raised, nor voice be heard? Amid all the possible achievements of which Christians, as such, may be guilty, is there room for such a possibility?

On the other hand,—would not the consciousness, that some were not prayed for, elicit such a sympathy, and a response from the entire believing world, as would give those for whom intercession had not been asked, so to say, far more and deeper prayer than those for whom it had been sought? But admit there is room for the supposed possibility; concede that intercessory prayer is offered by the Christian community in behalf of the few to the exclusion of the many; what reason have we to believe that the neglected will not pray for themselves? and should they, how can such a test as is pro-

posed be final, when the very element which the supposition requires to be excluded, is in reality in operation, and accomplishing its benevolent mission? And it is this truth, together with the fact, that any knowledge on the part of the Christian public, that some certain few were being prayed for, would lead them to unite in intercession for those who were not remembered—thus giving to those for whom prayer had not been sought, the service asked in behalf of others,—which renders, as we have intimated, the proposed test wholly impracticable.

And it might here be added, admitting that it be practicable, that were it tried, and God to decline to answer such prayer as a company of believers might offer in behalf of the sick, since He is a Personal God, and therefore is influenced in all His acts by motives; His motive for doing, as He may do, may never be known. That God is ever laboring for the highest happiness of His entire universe, is, we believe, the concession of all who are acquainted with His character, and the relations which He sustains to His creatures. If, therefore, He ever decline to answer special prayer, it must be for some wise purpose. Now, suppose that these few, for

whom special intercessions had been asked, were "without hope and without God in the world;" and suppose, likewise, God, in order to teach some men more plainly, than He may as yet have done, the folly of postponing their peace with Him, till worn and wearied with disease, in the midst of a terrific storm, should send a flash of lightning and smite the building in which they lie, resulting in their death, would such a visitation be any evidence that God does not hear prayer in behalf of the sick? On the contrary: since wisdom marks all His pathways, may not the death of all the special patients be more to His glory, and for the highest happiness of the universe, than their recovery? If prayer clash with God's purposes, what then? Is it to be surrendered, or is the test to be given up? The adoption of the proposed test, therefore, so far as God's faithfulness is concerned, would test nothing, nor would it reveal anything. For so long as God acts, and acts wisely, as He must, and is guided by the highest motive, He may set aside the prayers of a community for purposes, far more holy than the healing of a certain few burning with fever. Is a father's declination to give his son what he may have

asked, any evidence of his inability to meet the demands of his boy, or that he has not in store for him greater favors than what he may have sought? Or should he give him what he has requested, because he requested, is he not the victim of constraint and demand, and under the control of his child? And do such views of paternity accord with our notions, of what is true and what is false? The test, therefore, is likewise morally defective; for its tone is not, "if it be Thy will"; but the converse,—“Let my will, not Thine, be done.” And if it be not as desired, it will be because prayer has no power in the realm in which its influence has been invoked; or should it be as wished, it is because God, through my prayer, has been constrained to answer. What, then, becomes of the moral character of God?

Finally, that the test does not suggest, also, insincerity and duplicity, who can well question, that will remember,—while the restoration of the sick is a most noble aim, and the demonstration likewise that prayer is a curative agent, and may be susceptible of quantitative analysis—that the real motive is to measure the influence of man with God. How can it escape this

accusation? And when this same gauge is stripped of all its relations and consequents, that this is not its intent, the testing of human power under the guise of prayer, how evident, when we recall the fact,—that belief in the efficacy of petition is held in abeyance, until its power, in the realm sought, is established.

LECTURE V.

PRAYER AND MIRACLES.—DOES GOD ANSWER
PRAYER ?

V.

PRAYER AND MIRACLES.—DOES GOD ANSWER PRAYER ?

THIS inquiry has very often been proposed in our investigations, and no definite reply has been given ; let it then be our aim in this closing lecture to respond to it ; and with the same degree of directness in which it has been presented, and which its practical significance demands. But, before we speak in positive language, in reference to this question, it may be well for us to consider :—

First. If God, both in nature and character, be such as we have endeavored in previous pages to prove that He is ; *i. e.*, neither a myth, nor a mere force, nor a principle, nor yet a name for the moral order of the universe ;—but a Person, and as distinct in His personality as man is distinct in his personality ;—we have great reason for affirming, that He can hear and answer prayer. For nothing is more evident, than that man, who is also a person, can hear and answer requests which may be made to him. This is an

occurrence daily witnessed. It is observed among all classes—among the poor, as well as the rich; the debased and ignorant, as well as the cultivated and learned. And if God is a like personality, but of unlimited perfection, He certainly can do what the creature is able to do. “He that planted the ear, shall He not hear; or He that formed the eye, shall not He see?” Or, as the Saviour utters the same truth: “If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.”

Second. Nor can we invest God with greater glory, than by believing that He can hear and answer the prayers of His children. Whatever may be the numerous purposes for which God exists, is as far from our power to know, as it is to measure the space, which separates the infinite from the finite. But among these same purposes, that it is not reasonable to say, the well-being of His creatures is the most important part, who can disprove? God, as we often say, is the sum of every

conceivable perfection ; by which language it is our aim to exclude from Him all such conceptions as suggest indifference, selfishness, malevolence, and insensibility. Certain it is that He exists, and He exists for something ; what is that something ? Is it for His own glory ? While having a right thus to do, does such a view of Him harmonize with our notions of a perfect Being ? Is it to administer the laws which He has established for the government of the universe ? It may be so. But if there be a realm higher than the mere material, and as much above it as the incorruptible is above the corruptible, and He is honored for the regularity and beauty of His government in this former kingdom ; with how much greater glory would He be invested, were we to believe, that in this latter realm His influence and sway were fully as great, as in the realm of mere matter :—and the more so, if in this spiritual kingdom, though confronted with the power of other wills, they were under His control ; and that He could meet the demands of a nature primarily as His own, as well as all the requirements of the physical universe ? Mind, in its nature, is far more noble than mere matter. And since the spiritual outranks the mere material,

may we not say, by however much He may exist for the latter, so much the more does He exist for the former; and to a degree measured by the inherent difference between them?

Third. Aside from the fact that God is a person, and greater glory will accrue to Him, by answering than by denying the prayers of His children, His nature is of such a character as to demand that prayer should be answered.

There is no single attribute, perhaps, which has been bestowed upon God more universally and willingly, than that He is a God of kindness. It is this virtue, which has especially endeared Him, to every member of the human family. His benevolence is not measurable and narrow, but immeasurable; nor is it inconstant and irregular, still less is it susceptible of any adulteration. In its exercise, He recognizes neither age, rank, sex, color, nor condition. So also in His sympathy. As it exists for all, He has likewise feeling and relief for all; nor are any willing to acknowledge, that they are beyond the reach of His sympathy. It is this fact, which leads the soul to tell Him, what it refuses to breathe in any human ear, and why many so often seek His presence.

The same is true of His love; it is boundless and eternal.

“ Could we with ink the ocean fill,
Were the whole world of parchment made,
Were every single stick a quill,
Were every man a scribe by trade ;
To write the love of God alone,
Would drain the ocean dry ;
Nor would the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.”

His affection for the race is beyond all language fully to describe. And if this be a truthful view of God, have we not a right to feel, that He will regard petitions which may be agreeable to His will ?

Poor, erring humanity, though possessing these same virtues in a limited degree, delights in their exhibition. And shall we ascribe to the creature, what we would withhold from the Creator ? Is it true, that only man can relieve; that he, and only he, can bless ? Shall we say, that in those gifts which we love to designate as godlike, man has greater capabilities, and is more willing to exercise them, than has, and does his Maker ?

Fourth. Since prayer is an element in the constitution of man, unless we believe that God answers it, we have the existence of a desire without a provision for its gratification; and

we have yet to learn that incompleteness is discoverable in any part of God's creation. The material world is a world of the most wondrous balancings; and the same is true of the animal world. Fitness—adaptedness—is the rule everywhere, and not the exception. If an animal has been made susceptible of thirst, in some beautiful vale, or near some moss-covered rock, God has opened a fountain where its desire can be gratified. Where carnivorous food is necessary for the sustentation of life, there we find not only the food provided, but contrivances for its mastication. Nature, neither animate nor inanimate, is the same as that which girdles the equator. And so in that realm, in which man is the chief agent and actor. God has not given to him certain cravings, and yet made no provision for their gratification. If it were so, then man is the only imperfection in His entire creation. And since prayer is a divine implantation, as much so as any mere physical appetite, there must likewise be provision for its gratification. It will not be maintained, that while, in the purely material realm, nature is always just in her compensations, there is no relief, for similar needs, in the world of thought and feeling; or that Infinite

Wisdom has deceived man, by enduing him with an element which is valueless, save as it gives birth to sighs and longings, which are never to be relieved or gratified. Rather as prayer is an instinct, and therefore appertains to our nature, He who produced the disposition, and gave the power to pray, would also provide an answer. And the more so, since God was not constrained to endow man with this instinct; but having so done, the possibility of gratification is necessitated.

Fifth. Should God answer prayer, in no sense, could it be derogatory to His character.

We shall not attempt here any description of God, as to His nature or character, either as manifested in His word or works. It is only necessary for us to remember, that He is a Spirit; and the sum of every conceivable perfection; and that were we called upon to define Him, and to use familiar language, it would be by ascribing to Him all the perfection of our own being and nature, extended to an unlimited degree. And it is because God differs so largely from man, in every conceivable excellency, that we love to call Him by that name, which our lips were so early taught to lisp—God. The spirit of God and the spirit of man, considered as spirit, since

man is His image, in popular language, are the same; save that the one is infinite—the other, finite. But of all those holy attributes with which we invest God, and whose union make Him what He is, were He to answer prayer, which would be impugned? Certainly it is not His immutability; for He, who is infinitely perfect and independent in His being, is not capable of change. Nor does prayer or its answer contemplate any mutation in His purposes. Is it His omniscience? But prayer does not seek to inform God, nor does any one approach Him feeling, that He is ignorant of His condition. God knows all things from eternity. All things are “naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” Is it His benevolence? But whatever be the prayer of the suppliant, and whatever the ignorance which it may exhibit, as it is the glory of God which he is seeking; he would not have God entertain his petition, were it not in perfect harmony with the highest happiness of the universe. Indeed, we pray—all men pray, hoping thereby, by their prayers, to accomplish a far greater good than though they did not pray. In fact, it is God’s benevolence which not only prompts, but also which encourages the burdened heart to seek

the throne, and to lay before Him its many wants. Is it His holiness? and is there anything humiliating, in a holy being hearing the cries of a broken and crushed spirit? Though God hate sin, and have no fellowship with evil, He does not therefore necessarily withdraw from those, who would be cleansed from their impurity, and become like Himself. For He is not as is man, capable of contamination; nor is He impoverished by giving. His own unsought command is, "Be ye holy, as I am holy." Indeed, it is just here we discover such a difference in the character of God, from that which is exhibited in the character and action of man. Men, when conscious of any so-called perfection, and prize it, withdraw from the companionship of those who are not equally as perfect. Men also are discriminative and partial; favoritism more frequently influencing them, than true merit and goodness; men covet also the applause of the honored and the great, nor are any more welcome to their presence, than they who occupy the high places of earth, and whose names may be embroidered with titles; men likewise have an ear for the influential, and a hand open for flatterers; and aid and congratulations for him, whom they hope some

day will reward or serve them. It is not so with God. His greatness has not its origin in any lofty ambition, nor does it contemplate the exhibition of any personal glory; on the other hand, His constant desire is the welfare and the happiness of all, of every name and condition. He hears the cry of a child, as surely as the more polished periods of a man; and He has an ear for the humble, as well as for the exalted. Nor does He regard the outward appearance; as it is want, towards which His face is constantly turned. Surely, if it does not militate against the character of an earthly potentate, to listen to the petitions of his subject, though the humblest in his realm, can it be any the less true of the mighty potentate—the King of kings, and the Lord of lords? When her Majesty, the Queen of Great Britain, so recently sought through prayer the restoration of her son, did her act in any way compromise her character or position?

Sixth. Nor is it to be forgotten, that God has commanded us to pray; and He has also promised to answer prayer. Now what are His commands, and what likewise are the numerous promises which He has connected with acceptable petition, do not so much con-

cern us, as to remember that God would enjoin no duty upon His creatures, unless He had connected with it certain conditions, which would be surely granted when the duty is performed. Since He does not need the praises of any to add to His excellency, the requirement to pray cannot have reference so much to His honor and happiness, as to the welfare of the petitioner. God's commands must contemplate other ends than mere obedience to them. Indeed, knowing that man, through sin, voluntarily cut himself off from communion with Him, still desiring his good, He would have him return, and in the prescribed way obtain the favors he needs. Hence that sublime declaration, which, in one sense, may be regarded as the embodiment of all His commands, in this important relation, "Ask and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened."

Concerning His promises connected with prayer, the only question here involved is, whether God is a God of veracity. For answer this inquiry affirmatively, since He has thus promised, He must answer it. That a God, meriting our highest love and worship, can be otherwise than truthful, is too

puerile a proposition to detain us. "His word abideth for ever." "God is not man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent; hath He said, and shall not He do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?"

Finally. God has made abundant provision, for the presentation and acceptance of prayer. Says St. John: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." And St. Paul: "But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." And again, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that has risen again; who is ever at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." It is thus that revelation speaks, where reason must be silent. And that God would have made provision for the presentation and acceptance of prayer, without purposing to reward such as should comply with the prescribed mode of approach to Him, is as unnatural, as it would be to arrange for the salvation of men, and then withhold it from them.

Seeing, then, so far as we know, that there is nothing, either in the nature or character of God, which would interfere with His answering the prayers of His creatures; but, on the other hand, God has commanded men to pray, and made also full provision for its success, whensoever and by whomsoever it may be offered—let us now leave the field of presumption, and enter that in which we can be as positive in our statements, as is our confidence in the revelation, from whose pages we purpose to quote.

In replying, therefore, directly to this far-reaching inquiry, we would say, at once, God does answer prayer—a fact attested by the Bible, as well as by the great and good of every nation and of every age, so far as their opinions on this important question have been expressed. We have here no controversy with those who regard the Scriptures as a mere compend of pre-historical myths, or as a compilation of stories gotten up centuries ago, to minister to the cravings of minds fond of the marvellous and imaginative; nor yet with those who look upon its contents as an embodiment of the teachings of the early philosophers and moralists; still less with a later few who regard its sublimest inspirations

as being what we sometimes call the inspiration of the poet, of the painter, of the sculptor, or of the musician. Nor have we any dispute with such as may question its genuineness and authenticity; for we believe the Bible to be the Word of God—His absolute word, given unto us through those whom, in His infinite wisdom, He was pleased to select as the immediate disclosers of His will; and that it was penned by those to whom, for so many ages, it has been attributed; and for the following general reasons:

Man needed a revelation; and what is called the Bible most fully and completely meets this want; and there are throughout associated with it, just such evidences as reason naturally demands should be possessed by a volume claiming heaven as its origin, and the present and future happiness of the race as its single end and purport. While some may be inclined to cavil at the ground of our acceptance of it, it might be well here to observe, that it is not within the power of human genius, nor of human learning, to prove that the Bible is not what it claims to be—or that there is more evidence why it should be rejected, than that it should be received and consequently believed. Nor can it be denied,

if the Bible is not of God, that its existence is a miracle infinitely far more astounding than any fact, or series of facts, which its pages anywhere record.

Accepting, therefore, the Bible as the infallible Word of God, what, then, are its testimonies on the question now immediately before us? In making this appeal, let it be remembered that if the Bible is what we claim it to be, no multiplicity of its statements can add to its truthfulness. Still, let us not confine ourselves to one of its numerous examples—rather we shall refer to several; and chiefly that we may admire the plainness and directness of the record, as well as note its wondrous fullness and variety.

In following the generally received order of its canon, we read, that the servant of Abraham prayed: “O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come 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 shewed kindness unto my master." And now, continuing the narrative: "And it came to pass, that before he had done speaking, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder. . . . And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man; and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way. . . . And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife."

And Jacob prayed: "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant: for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sands of

the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude." And it is added: "Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked; and behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids. And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost. And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept."

Moses prayed: "Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? What shall I say unto them?" And it is written: "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."

Joshua prayed: "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou Moon, in the valley of Ajalon." And it is written that "the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies."

Hannah prayed: "O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thy handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head." And it is added: "Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord."

But without repeating the language of other prayers, and their recorded answers, let me say, Saul prayed for thunder and for rain, and the same day the Lord sent thunder and rain. David prayed that the counsel of Ahithophel might be turned into foolishness; and Ahithophel, seeing that his counsel was not followed, went out and hanged himself. Elijah prayed that the son of the widow might be restored; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived; and that it might not rain these years according to my word; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

And Elisha prayed that the eyes of his servant might be opened; and the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And Hezekiah prayed that his life might be prolonged; and in obedience to the prayer of Isaiah, the sun-dial is turned back, and his life is prolonged.

Jabez prayed that his coast might be enlarged, and that God might be ever with him; and God granted him what he requested. And Nehemiah prayed for the captive remnant of Judah; and his prayer was answered. Job, with a body wasted by disease, and with sorrow deep and heavy in his heart, prayed for answers to his numerous petitions; and the Lord answered his cries. The Psalmist prays again and again; and fully as oft as were his supplications, so complete also were God's answers to them. Isaiah prays, and the camp of the Assyrians is smitten to the amount of one hundred and eighty-five thousand souls. Jeremiah confesses the great sin of Israel, and pleads that they may be delivered from the consequences of their transgression; and the Lord hears and regards his petitions. Ezekiel continues in further intercessions for Israel, and his supplications prevail. Daniel besought the Lord for an interpretation of the

king's dream, and it is recorded, "Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision." And so likewise the prophets Joel, and Jonah, and Micah, and Habakkuk, and Zechariah prayed; and as were the felt necessities of these seers, so did each receive from the Lord answers, fully in consonance with their requests.

Nor are these the only Scripture testimonies to the power and success of prayer. Passing to the newer dispensation, in the later revelation of God's will, we read: A certain leper prayed that he might be cleansed from his leprosy; and he was cleansed of his leprosy, and immediately. A Roman centurion pleaded that his servant might be healed; and he was healed:—the disciples prayed that the storm might cease; and the storm did cease:—one Jairus prayed for the recovery of his daughter; and she did recover:—two blind men sought their sight; and it was given to them:—Peter prayed that he and his companions might not be swallowed up by the waves; and they were not swallowed by the waves:—a woman of Syrophœnicia plead that a devil might be cast out of her daughter; and it was cast out:—a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum, prayed for the re-

covery of his boy; and he did recover:—the apostles entreated that wisdom be given them in the choice of a brother; and it was given to them:—the Church prayed; and the Holy Ghost was poured out upon them:—and it interceded for Peter in prison; and “the chains fell off from his hands:”—at midnight, Paul and Silas prayed, and “suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one’s bands were loosed.” Such is the Scripture record, and its testimony to the efficacy of prayer. And these references are merely a tithe of its revelations.

Nor are the confessions of the good and great of every age, of every nationality, and of every degree of culture and attainment, any the less plain, direct and positive. What these numerous testimonies are, we need not repeat; for we believe, were it possible to submit to the entire race the question, whether God answers prayer, there would be no inquiry to which the race, as a race, would bear a more cordial witness. No moral phenomenon has been more universally attested. It is the great pyramidal truth of the world, than which none is more broad, none more certain-

ly established, none which has been more thoroughly experienced, nor has there been one more successfully demonstrated. Indeed, prayer has been resorted to with the same confidence, with which men resort to forces purely mechanical, for the attainment of material ends. Martyrs have verified it in their hours of extreme torture. Fathers have verified it in their seasons of trial and calamity. Mothers have verified it in comforting them for unrequited love, and in filial devotion and conduct. Children have verified it in behalf of unbelieving parents. Friends have verified it in their affection for their associates. Widows and orphans have verified it in their bereavements, and the sailor in the storm, the soldier on the battle-field, the traveler in his perils, and the prisoner in his captivity. When all other modes of relief have failed, myriads have verified it in their diverse and perplexing experiences; and at this very hour, it is receiving new and countless verifications. When the Man of Nazareth thus spoke, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened," did He speak truthfully or otherwise?

Though difficulties, therefore, may be connected with prayer, and it may be embarrassing to explain some of its phenomena—in view of the facts just given, and particularly since some of them are the attestations of consciousness—to deny the efficacy of prayer, is as unwise and unphilosophical as it would be for one born blind, to dispute the existence of light; or for one deaf from birth, to deny the beauties of musical harmony. For here is not problematical, but experimental evidence; and, therefore, it is positive; and as positive as it is possible for any evidence to be; and such as the mind, if in a healthy condition, can accept and rest upon as quietly, as when possessing any fact, whether the fruit of discovery or of demonstration. Allowing that some potent objections can be brought against the efficacy of prayer, still these objections do not affect the proof, on which rests the fact, that God does hear and answer it. For as there is more than one quarry, from which materials can be secured for the building of a house, against which wind and storm may beat in vain; and sandstone, though soft, is as truly stone as is granite; and out of either an edifice can be constructed, strong and durable: so of evidence—it is of many types and from many sources; and that which is born in

consciousness is none the less valid, than what may come to us through the channels of history, or be the fruit of demonstration. And the inner witness of mankind is, God does answer prayer. Nor can this testimony, and the truth known in the realm to which it appertains, be set aside, any more than other historical evidence can be disregarded, and the truth known in the realm where its mode of proof avails. The testimony of consciousness is as logical, and as reliable, in its sphere, as may be and are other proofs in their sphere. Though a thousand unbelievers, therefore, say that God is not the answerer of prayer, if there is one, who from consciousness can contravene this assertion, the latter is to be believed; and for the reason that no number of mere negations can destroy a single fact attested by consciousness. Suppose a tribe of unlettered savages were to deny that there is any reference in the Bible to a plan of salvation, weighty and conclusive as some may regard this evidence, it avails nothing, however, with him who can read its pages. For the latter knows it does speak of salvation; and on this single fact, his evidence far outweighs the testimony of all to whom its letters are less intelligible, than tracks upon the sand.

True, the source of his conviction may be unknown to those who would dispute with him; but though unknown, is it any the less real, worthy, and reliable? As we have intimated, it is the testimony of those who pray, that *God answers Prayer*; and this is the solution also of their continuing to pray. But is it said, the testimony of consciousness is unreliable, and all who accept it are the victims of a fraud and superstition? The answer is, man is not a lie unto himself.

But to return to those responses, which inspiration has recorded as answers to prayer. As we have seen, here are prayers having the most diverse ends. Rain is prayed for, and it is given; life is asked to be prolonged, and it is prolonged; the sick request restoration, and they are restored; deliverance is sought, and it is granted; kingdoms are enlarged, the wicked are punished, the blind see, the dead rise. These and other wonders are all set down as direct answers to the petitions for these same mercies; and we are perplexed to know which most to admire, whether the boldness and the faith of the suppliants, or the promptness and the absolute fullness of their answers.

Here let it be distinctly observed, that

these Biblical evidences are God's witnesses to the efficacy of prayer; they are His testimonies. And they are facts; and consciously or unconsciously, the disbeliever admits them; else where the material for dispute? Nor is the inability of any one to understand how people can thus pray, or why God has thus done, to be any measure of the fact, but what they have thus prayed, and God has thus done. As in days past much was regarded as false, because it was considered unnatural and unscientific, which time has since clearly demonstrated was not only truthful, but perfectly scientific; so coming years also may be able to establish, to the satisfaction of every one, who now may reject these prayers and their replies, their harmony with the laws of mind; as well as with those laws, likewise, which rule and reign in the physical universe.

Difficulties are not contradictions. Nor should the present teachings of reason, or of science, be regarded as final, particularly when they seem to conflict with the Word of God. Dogmatism may be admissible in the realm of the limitable; not, however, in the kingdom of the absolute and illimitable.

The question, however, which at this point

meets us, is this: In view of the fact, that the Bible unmistakably and unequivocally declares that God does answer prayer, are these, its assertions, to be believed; or are we to cast them aside as unworthy our confidence? Certainly this latter course we cannot adopt, as we have assumed and declared our belief in the Bible. We are then reduced to this—the doctrine of those who disbelieve in God answering prayer, by whomsoever held, must be untrue. And if science teaches that God cannot answer prayer, then science must be false. But is science false? If not false, then our theology must be false. And the answer is, science, true science, is not false. And true science and true theology, since they are each a systematic arrangement of facts, all of which have their origin in the same mind, never can be in antagonism. Harmony is not the least of God's attributes. How, then, are all such phenomena, like those of which the Scriptures speak, to be harmonized with science? Or as this inquiry may be more comprehensively put; What, then, is the relation which may be said to exist between Prayer and Miracle? For it cannot be denied that the answers to prayer, to which the Bible so frequently bears wit-

ness, are of a character which belong rather to the miraculous or the extraordinary, than to the natural and the common. And in these days, were supplications to be addressed to God, for favors equally as stupendous and exceptional, as those which have been referred to, have we any reason to believe that He would answer our petitions, and in a way corresponding to what the Scriptures declare Him to have done in days past?

It does not embrace the ends which these lectures have in view, to enter into any discussion of the general question of miracles, their nature, their origin, the causes for which they were wrought, or of their numerous relations either to God or man. Rather shall we allude to them, as far, and only as far, as they are connected with the subject immediately before us.

And, therefore, we at once observe, that when we read of answers rendered to prayer as immediate and extraordinary as those to which the Scriptures witness (admitting their truthfulness), a solution to such phenomena is not found in saying, that these were palpable violations of the laws of nature; for, as we have seen, the true notion of prayer involves the violation of no law, nor does an answer con-

template any disruption of the order or harmony of the universe. But since prayer is a force, as much so as is any force, mental or physical, with which we are familiar; as, at the beginning, full provision was made for the exercise of other forces, as gravitation, or any natural energy; so at the hour in which it was determined prayer should be a force, there was made full provision also for its exercise. It, as a cause, has its effect or consequent, as has everything else. And just as God knew what would be the aim of prayer, and what it would accomplish, and its end, and so far as He knew also that its exercise and results would be in accordance with His will, so far did He provide for its operation. We do not thus speak, nor would we have it understood, that this is any demonstration of the fact, that such answers as we find the Scriptures ascribing to prayer were given as answers to it; for it is doubtful, if any such connection between prayer and its answer, as the word miracle suggests, can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of any one who rejects revelation. But this is a hypothetical solution of these phenomena; and a hypothetical explanation, in that realm where our knowledge is limited, if it neutralize every adverse presumption,

is at least tantamount to a proof, that no valid or conclusive objection can be urged against it. And any solution which might satisfactorily account for phenomena, were our knowledge more extended and precise, while not a solution of the difficulty, is certainly more than presumption in its favor. Nay, when nothing can be urged against it, though not positive, it partakes of the character of direct evidence. In truth, whenever there is produced, in favor of any proposition, the highest kind of evidence of which it admits, and in a sufficient degree to outweigh all that can be brought against it, that proposition may properly be said to be proved.

But to understand more clearly the solution of the phenomena which the Bible contains, as far as we may be able, let us go back, in imagination, to the very beginning of things, and contemplate God, as He may be said to have appeared in relation to this world, anterior to His creation of it.

We behold Him existing and active; for He is ever active. But the hour (relatively) has now come, in which He purposes to fashion our globe, and to invest it with such varied creations as shall subserve His own high-

est and distinctly chosen plans. Nature, inanimate and animate, is called into being. And now existing, as God is a God of order and not of confusion, He impresses upon everything which He has formed such laws, as may be necessary to guide and control it to a special and peculiar realm. Does He create a tree—He makes soil also in which it may grow. Does He form a fish—waters are provided in which it may swim. Does He fashion an animal—food is also furnished upon which it may live. And so of the other objects of His creating power. Does He invest a certain portion of His creation with mind; not only is there room provided for mental energy, but material is also prepared upon which it may feed. Does He endow man with affections, appetites, proclivities; all things are so adjusted as to minister to their gratification. Is the world to be the arena of great achievements; means are provided for their accomplishment. Indeed, every conceivable experience to which He knew the world in its history would be subjected, has been provided for; nothing, however insignificant, has been forgotten.

When God thus formed the world, and so arranged every event that it must come

to pass, and while He made provision for the exercise of every physical law, as the movements of the tides and planets, and the laws of heat, and cold, and gravitation, and the like; and provided also for the operation and supply of those laws which govern man in his lesser needs; that He did not also have in mind the dispositions, and desires, or prayers of every intelligent being; and that then everything was arranged so as to harmonize with all his experiences, numerous and varied as they may be, who so bold as to disprove? Who, we say, can disprove that when God arranged the events, of which this world was to be the theatre, these same events, whatever they might be, would not be also in perfect unison with the desires or the aspirations of His sentient creatures?

Full provision certainly was made for the exercise of every purely physical law. Nor was God in the least forgetful, of the actions of the numerous other forces, which form part of His universe. And is it not fully as reasonable, that He should have made provision for the play also of any and every force, weak or powerful, direct or indirect, and upon whatever kingdom it may bear? May it not fairly be supposed, that the spiritual and the

material throughout the universe were originally so blended together, and have such relations to each other, as in their successive developments to be in perfect harmony? Nay, is it at all impossible or improbable that such a series of causes and effects, then and there, may not have been designed, which, while securing general provision for the several species of existence or being, might not also have been made for particular cases, and yet, nature not be disturbed, or the universe subjected to even the faintest jar? True, to man this is a mysterious and bewildering thought. For, as we know, in his ignorance and feebleness, he cannot anticipate the needs of a single day, nor provide for them, still less have a care for the necessities of the race, and for all time. But is it so with God? Can it be thus with the Cause of causes? Indeed, when we remember what God is in His nature, His character, and His being; that He is omnipotent, and, therefore, can do what we cannot conceive to be possible;—that He is omniscient, and, consequently, is perfectly familiar with every part of creation, even to its minutest detail; that no sparrow falleth to the ground without His notice; that He knows not merely the stars by name, but

numbers the very hairs of our head ; and that He is omnipresent, and, therefore, is neither indifferent to, nor absent from, His works ; but at all times is at hand to execute what He may determine ; and that He is the sole cause of everything, and a God of unity :—no other than just such an adjustment of things as would thus meet any and every force which might be employed in the universe, is in consonance with His character. From a Being so wise, so good, so great, so powerful, it is this perfect provision for everything which we should expect. He who created the light, created the eye ; and He who created the eye, created the light ; else their adaptedness is inconceivable. He who made the lungs, made also the air ; the one is fitted for the other, as they both are necessary to existence. And we do not hesitate to say God made the light, and the eye, and man, and the air upon which he lives ; and if we find Him making such provision for our physical nature, shall we not believe that in some way, also, He has made adjustments in the universe by which the deepest feelings of the soul can be met ? Certainly man's agency in his direct relation to physical phenomena, in the beginning, was provided for, as we daily witness its exercise ;

and yet there is no apparent disturbance of law; as, after its action, all things are as calm and regular, as though this potent force had not been exerted. Man, likewise, is God's instrument for the accomplishment of His purposes. If God, therefore, thus assigns to the outward actions of His creatures a special place in carrying out His purposes in the world, is it conceivable that this same Being has made no provision for the spiritual effects of the same creation? or that the cravings of a redeemed spirit, the travailing of a soul bent as much as God himself on the accomplishment of His divine will and glory, shall be less efficacious or less provided for, than the outward and ordinary agency of human action?

Recall, for a moment, what prayer is. It is the loftiest feeling of which man is capable—the desire of man craving perfect harmony with the holiest will; it is the soul giving expression to its purest and grandest instincts. I therefore ask, can we believe, that while God has so arranged the universe, as to provide for the exercise of all the other forces in the world, and while each has its special complement, there has been no similar provision for that force which, in nature, is as far above

the purely physical as the immortal exceeds the mortal, and which, whensoever brought into play, would move in the plane in which God himself moves? Responses to efforts which are intensely mental, and efforts which are intensely physical, and provision made for their complete gratification, yet no such thing as provision for our moral activities! and no responses for the soul in its sublimest flight! That the spirit which bears the impress of God himself, and which, when in its fullest exercise, would be in accord with the highest will, should be incapable of awakening an echo! Can this be?

But so far as human contrivance may be employed to exemplify God's pre-adjustment of all things at the beginning, and in that adjustment, provision made for just such phenomena as the Scriptures have given us, as answer to prayer, let me here illustrate. For this purpose, I refer to that curious machine, which bears the name of its inventor, Mr. Charles Babbage, constructed some years ago for arithmetical purposes. Without attempting any description of it, in his own language, I would say, "Let the reader imagine that he sits down before this engine and observes a wheel, which moves through a small

angle round its axis, at short intervals, presenting to his eye successively, a series of numbers engraved on its divided circumference. Let the figures thus seen be the series of natural numbers, 1, 2, 3, 4, etc., each of which exceeds its immediate antecedent by unity. Now, let me ask how long you will have counted before you are firmly convinced that the engine, supposing its adjustments to remain unaltered, will continue whilst its motion is maintained, to produce the same series of natural numbers? Some minds, perhaps, are so constituted, that after passing the first hundred terms, they will be satisfied that they are acquainted with the law. After seeing five hundred terms, few will doubt; and after the fifty thousandth term, the propensity to believe that the succeeding term will be fifty thousand and one, will be almost irresistible. That term *will* be fifty thousand and one: the same regular succession will continue; the five millionth and the fifty millionth term will still appear in their expected order, and one unbroken chain of natural numbers will pass before your eyes, from *one up to one hundred million*.

True to the vast induction which has thus been made, the next succeeding term will be

one hundred million and one; but after that, the next number presented by the rim of the wheel, instead of being one hundred million and two, is one hundred million *ten thousand* and two. The law which *seemed* at first to govern this series, fails at the hundred million and second term. That term is larger than we expected by 10,000. The next term is larger than we anticipated by 30,000, and the excess of each term above what we had expected, forms the series of triangular numbers, 1, 3, 6, 10, etc., each multiplied by 10,000.

If we still continue to observe the numbers presented by the wheel, we shall find that for a hundred or even for a thousand terms, they continue to follow the new law relating to the triangular numbers; but after watching them for 2761 terms, we find that *this* law fails in the case of the 2762d term. If we continue to observe, we shall discover another law coming into action, which also is dependent, but in a different manner, on triangular numbers. This will continue through about 1430 terms, when a new law is again introduced, which extends over about 950 terms; and this, too, like all its predecessors, fails, and gives place to other laws, which appear at different intervals."

“ Now, it must be remarked, *that each number presented by the engine is greater by unity than the preceding number*, which law the observer has deduced from an *induction of a hundred million instances*, was *not the true law* that regulated its action; and that the occurrence of the number 100,010,002, at the 100,000,002nd term, was *as necessary a consequence* of the original adjustment, and might have been as fully foreknown at the commencement, as was the regular succession of any one of the intermediate numbers to its immediate antecedent. The same remark applies to the next *apparent* deviation from the new law, which was founded on an induction of 2761 terms, and to all the succeeding laws: with this limitation only—that whilst their consecutive introduction at various definite intervals is a necessary consequence of the mechanical structure of the engine, our knowledge of analysis does not yet enable us to predict the periods at which the more distant laws will be introduced.”

Such are the disclosures of this extraordinary machine. Now, far be it for me to say, that the greatest creations which may emanate from any human being, however cultivated, in any way match either the skill, de-

sign, or purpose which God has displayed in the creation of our world, or in the universe, of which our globe is such an insignificant part; as divine and human handiwork are incomparable. Nor are we unwilling to acknowledge, that it was by no foresight of the inventor, after a certain number of revolutions of his ingenious mechanism, a break in the chain of sequence occurred; or that there was a conscious provision made for the appearance of other results, than had been contemplated. Nor would we disbelieve, that these same apparent violations may not, after a protracted observation, be reduced to law; for they can be; and to a law, as regular in its operation as any other law.

But foregoing these imperfections, and admitting, that in many respects, it affords no adequate illustration of the thought, and contrivance, and purpose which God has shown in His material creation, still, since it was so constructed as to cause different series of numbers to be presented one after another, without the alteration or re-adjustment of any of its parts,—in like manner, may not that larger and more complex machine, which we call our world, nay, the universe itself, have been so set up originally, as to have provided

for just such results as the Scriptures assert as the consequence of prayer; and which could have been given, and no more disturbance experienced in the world, than was exhibited in the machine, when it recorded the peculiar phenomena to which we have referred? In other language, in that which seems to be regular, is there not provision for the irregular? Strange as it may appear, this extraordinary contrivance included both successions of figure, and both were included in the original law, which, by its wondrous combination, was impressed upon it. And may it not have been in some such manner with this globe, when at the beginning it was set up?

“Or, to introduce a more familiar illustration: There is in operation on some of the railroads in our country, a brake, which is known as the “Air brake.” How this appliance is constructed, or how it is adjusted to the car—as these inquiries belong to the department of mechanical philosophy, we here have nothing to say; but its purpose is suddenly to arrest motion. And the peculiar feature of the invention is, that the power which checks the car, is not a power from without, but is provided in the running of the train. It is part of the working

of the engine, and exists by virtue of the construction of the engine; and the inventor had this, the source of its power, in his mind in the beginning. May not God, in some such manner, in creating this world, have made some similar provision for such necessary contingencies? Heat is expansive; should we therefore take water at 32° Fah., and subject it to the action of heat, in obedience to its law, we should expect it to expand. But does it expand? If we raise its temperature one degree, it does not expand; even if we increase it two, three, four, five, or six degrees, it still contracts; and this contraction goes on till we pass the mark of 39° , when the phenomenon becoming reversed, it resumes its previous power or law of expansion. There is here no irregularity; it is the law of heat; it is law working through law; and in the beginning, surely this deviation was fully as much provided for, as the previous and subsequent regularity of its action.

Indeed, if the Creator, while making provision for the operation of other forces in the universe, has not so arranged it as to meet such desires of His creatures, as may be in harmony with His will,—since He foreknew

the circumstances,—it must have been either because He could not, or would not. And if He could and would not, remembering the frequency with which the heart, the real man, turns heavenward for that relief which it alone can give, and how heaven's responses gladden the soul,—how can God's failure thus to do, be reconciled with His love for the welfare of that soul? Let it not be said, heaven's eye is ever upon the good of the majority; or that God knows not the interest of one, when the many are imperiled; for while such a principle might rule and gain applause among men, in the realm of the Infinite it has no place; and what is impossible with men is possible with God. Besides, the supposition does not involve God's giving that to one, which might militate against the welfare of the many; but when a favor can be bestowed, and no one injured, how can God's neglect to grant such a return, be in harmony with His character of infinite holiness and perfection? Is it true, that we are to believe God has made full provision for the soul in this life, and in the life to come, and so arranged all things at the beginning, that in the fullness of time a Saviour appeared; and yet has ever been, and is indifferent to the in-

terests of the soul, during the periods of its greatest trials and temptations?

Or, adopting the other alternative, shall we say that God could have made abundant provision for answering prayer, but would not? How can we ascribe to Him any such purpose, and at the same time make such a disposition accord with the character, with which we know and believe He is invested? We are driven to no such extremity. There are some things which even God cannot do—such as involve an inherent impossibility. But where is the inherent impossibility of the Creator so constructing a system, like that in which we now move, and in which, while making provision for the exercise of other forces whose action causes no confusion, provision should not likewise be made for a moral and spiritual force; whose action, while at times it may appear extraordinary, nay, marvelous, yet would not disturb the universe any more than the operation of other forces? Where the inconceivableness of this, particularly since God has both the will and power thus to do; and when no reasonable objection can be urged against such a previous arrangement? In this exercise of the Divine will, and our faith therein, we have the true solution of

phenomena, otherwise dark and uninterpretable.

It is to be observed, however, that this connection between God's pre-establishment of all things at the beginning, and prayer, is not, as some may think, either independent or arbitrary, but analogous, if not identical with, that which we know as existing between means and ends, and which is everywhere manifested in the economy of nature. If anything is true, it is that cause and effect everywhere prevail—that it is omnipresent; and that God accomplishes His purposes through the use of means, and while His actions may be immediate, they are more frequently mediate. The field glistens with golden grain, not simply because it was provided for in the beginning, independently of the ploughing and the sowing of the husbandman, but because God knew that some one in that very spot would plough, and sow, and labor; [in other words, it is the fruit of employed instrumentalities.] And so with the sun,—it shines to-day, or the rain falls, or the child is restored, or the pestilence is stayed, not because all these were arranged independent of the means by which these and other results were to be secured; but they are the product of certain

causes, or the result of certain means. For God, in nature as in all other economies, is a unity; nor does He any more pre-establish results, than the agencies by which they were to be obtained; both are included in His eternal plan. { If, then, the agency be provided, as well as its effect, and, as in the realm of prayer, if it be the acknowledged instrument through whose use pre-established results are to flow, when employed; what is there to hinder God's honoring it, in the securing of answers likewise pre-arranged, any more than His honoring the agency which the husbandman employs in securing the harvest, which is also contingent upon the use of prescribed means?

God, then, in His arrangement of the universe, fully as much provided for prayer, as for the operation of any other force of whose existence we may be conscious, and which, in the universe, is daily being manifested.

But for the benefit of those who may disbelieve in God's pre-establishment of all things at the beginning, including answers to prayer, as much so as other phenomena, admit that the answers which we have in the Bible as connected with prayer are miracles.

What, then, we may inquire, is a miracle? Whatever reply may be given to this important question, in no sense is it a violation of law, nor need it necessarily involve any such thought. If there be any such phenomenon, it is certainly an effect; and as an effect, its primary cause cannot be anything less than that of other effects — the will of God. Trace a miracle up to its proper home, and since all things had a beginning, and God is the author of all, its cause must be acknowledged to be as truly the will of God, as what we term natural or physical law. Because a phenomenon is universal or extraordinary, is it any the less of God than one that is common? If, then, there are answers to prayer which we denominate miraculous, these answers are no less the will of God, than are the laws, which they seem to contravene. And cannot God reveal His will in that realm where the soul is supreme, as in the natural kingdom over which the soul is master?

But it is replied, perhaps, such answers as the Scriptures attest as having been returned to prayer, are violations of law. With this, as an abstract question, we have nothing to do. But if by this language it is meant, that such answers to prayer as those of which we are

speaking, involve the miraculous, in the sense that law is set at naught, the answer is,— this is not the view which he who receives these phenomena cherishes in regard to prayer. For he who would plead with heaven, for what may be called unusual interventions or favors, which some may be pleased to designate as miraculous, does not ask that, in his behalf, any of the laws of nature might be suspended, nor that anywhere there should be the least infringement of law ; he contemplates no such change, but that an answer be given him, extraordinary, astounding though it be, if it be in harmony with the will of God, and in perfect accord, also, with all as established at the beginning. No man prays that water may run up hill ; or that the grass may suddenly change its color ; or, while heaven gives him a favor, that the same should be withheld from others ; for all such feeling is foreign to true and holy prayer. Selfishness, disruption, disorder, or violation of law, do not enter the mind of him who would pray, and pray aright. Rather he believes, since prayer is itself a law, its working will be in perfect obedience to law. Nor does he profess to know the full workings of this same law ; nor is it necessary that he should.

All that he need know and feel is, that prayer is a force, and from its exercise results can be secured, as from the exercise of any other power; and if his petition be in harmony with God's will, though extraordinary or unusual may be the answer, still it is an answer to his prayer.

Or say, as others would have us believe, that God neither pre-established all things at the creation, nor are such answers, as those of which the Bible speaks as returned to prayer, worthy of confidence, since there is a fixedness about nature, which can neither be disregarded nor disowned; still, may not such an element be introduced into the world which, while having perfect play, would not be productive of discord, and an element to which all answers to prayer, of whatever character, may be legitimately attributed?

Let us here glance, for a moment, at our own nature, and bear witness to a truth in our individual experience. And we have reference to this—that while mysteries invest our being, and quite as great as any discoverable in the outward universe, still we are conscious of constantly introducing an element into the affairs of the world, whose use gives us consequences which, if it had not been put in operation, much which we

now have, and which we regard as its fruits, would not have been ours; and that element is, what we term *the will*. Now, what the will is, or what is its relation to the other faculties of our being, matters not; but what force in the world more disturbing, or more frequently in operation? And, as we know, it is daily exercised, and by every living sentient being; and the disturbances are numerous which it is making among, what are designated as, the established laws of the universe. Yet though it is ever in motion, it in no way conflicts with the regular operation of any of the laws, which govern the universe, and which give to nature its stability. And how varied are its achievements! In obedience to it, I need but raise my hand, and the law of gravitation is at once suspended; or I need but lash the air, and its previous equilibrium is immediately disturbed; I move my body, and coterminous with my effort, the law of inertia is overcome; ever is it working in law, and by law, and against law, and yet anarchy is nowhere discoverable, nor is there the faintest cognizable disturbance of what is believed to be fixed. This is man's actual relation to that world of law and order, in which he lives, and moves, and has his being.

Hence, shall it be affirmed that God, notwithstanding the so-called fixedness of nature, cannot do, and in a far higher degree, and in a more comprehensive way, what we are certain of doing, and disturbance nowhere be felt in the universe? Shall we withhold from the Creator, what we feel He has delegated to the creature? Does free agency stop at the human stage? Or is there a sphere of free-will, above, far above the human; in which, as in the human, not mere physical law, but spirit moves matter? The free will of the creature pervades and penetrates the world, and does not the free will of God penetrate the entire universe? If so, such phenomena, as the Bible gives in answer to prayer, are as natural, recalling the might, the power, the fullness of this same will, as are events in this lower and physical world, which are the results of our will. If not, as has been said: "The seat of the great Presiding Will is empty, and nature has no Personal Head: man is her highest point; he finishes her ascent, though by this very supremacy he falls, for under fate he is not free himself; all nature either ascends to God, or descends to law." Rather, shall we not say, God can accomplish by the immediate exercise of His

will, what is beyond the power of man to obtain, in answer to prayer, and the world suffer no more violence than when the will of man operates? And should God thus act, as He does daily, have we not reason for saying, that at times these same responses would be such, as, while revealing His nature, and manifesting His power, would show that He has not abandoned the universe, and is not indifferent to the needs of His children?

Thus it is, whatever avenue we travel, whether through that which is suggested to us by God's pre-ordering of all events at the beginning, by considerations of His nature and character, or by a remembrance of what we are, and how constituted, we arrive at the same conclusion—that such replies, as the Bible has given, as answers to prayer, are in no way impossible, nor are they at all improbable; but they are just such as we should expect from a wise, good, holy, and personal God, and who has assigned to man that wondrous part, in the government of the universe, which we know he now, and has ever enjoyed.

Is it said, that a far higher and nobler conception of God would be ours, and it would be one more in unison with His nature and char-

acter, were He viewed as momentarily inspecting the whole and every part of His universe, and ordering it by His omnipotent will, than as having pre-arranged everything at the beginning; or which would speak of Him as watching His creations; and as an operator of the telegraph, who, so soon as an inquiry or a prayer came along the line, at once needs but touch a certain spring, and the prayer is answered? Be it so. So far as we may measure the greatness of the infinite by our feeble conceptions, all this may be true. But it matters not. It is unimportant what may be our theory, as to the method in which God governs the universe, whether mediate or immediate; or how we may account for certain phenomena; so long as the phenomena themselves are admitted. And as this latter theory admits the fact, it is all that is sought.

Am I here asked, Are such answers to prayers as the Bible has recorded possible in these days? We answer, all true prayer, offered in the appointed way, and in faith, if it be in harmony with God's will, He has promised to answer.

But this inquiry suggests another; and as it is one which relates largely to the experiences of many, let us not only recognize it, but give

it a calm and dispassionate consideration. For after all, explain as we may, many of the phenomena connected with prayer, this fact remains—that often truly holy, heartfelt prayer is offered, and no voice is heard, no hand is outstretched, nor is there the smallest seam discoverable in the heavens; God apparently has remained as indifferent to the cry of His child, as though He were a God, like the god of the heathen. And how often the inquiry, Why is this? Though I may be charged with going beyond the topic given me in these lectures, as this is such an universal experience, I feel it merits, at the close of our discussions, an honest consideration. Let me, therefore, give a few sentences to it, and confine myself strictly to such answers, which, so far as the petitioner is concerned, to be regarded as answers, must be made known while he lives. In replying to this question, I would observe,—

First. That there is far less genuine or acceptable prayer, than we are apt to suppose. Without attempting to describe the prayers of many, let me say, in brief: some supplications are purely mechanical; others, again, are grandly ceremonial; others are merely beautiful language, threaded as beads are threaded on

some golden string; some also are oratorical or argumentative, cold and lifeless; while others are destitute of a clear, sharp, distinct belief in a personal God, as the hearer and answerer of prayer. What true prayer is, has already been described. But it is not until we have subtracted all the dry and turgid forms of prayer, together with what we know is not holy prayer, from what is denominated prayer, are we able to learn how much true prayer has been winged heavenward. Nor is it to be forgotten,—

Secondly. That were God to answer some prayers, fervent and honest though they may be, they would be far more detrimental to the happiness of the petitioner, than were He not to answer them: a truth suggested to us by such words as these, “ye know not what ye ask;” “and we know not what to pray for as we ought.” To possess some things which we covet would be our ruin. A child, seeing a serpent gliding about in its folds of green and gold, and its ruby eyes glistening in the sun, may covet it as a toy for play, and may weep because the hand of its parent does not give it him, in order that he might nestle it in his bosom. But what hand would be outstretched to seize the reptile? Or who would think of

answering its appeals, though they float in tears? And so in our relations with God. There are times in which, through pure ignorance, one asks for favors, which, were they granted, would be as injurious to him, as the giving of a snake would be hurtful to a child. God withholds all that may be detrimental to one's best interests, however earnestly he may pray for it.

Thirdly. We must not expect all our prayers to be answered. Not that we must pray with this feeling; nor yet that God is unwilling to grant our requests; or that His treasury is a limited treasury; but there are times, when, at the same hour, different and antagonistic favors may be asked of Him. Should one pray that to-morrow noon it may rain, and another with equal fervor and a motive fully as holy, that at the same hour the sun might shine in glorious splendor, God cannot answer both prayers; for He has not put the government of the world into the hands of His children. All true prayer is conditional. Nor is that acceptable prayer which does not express a desire in unison with the will of God; and where the want of the petitioner is not limited by a holy acquiescence in the Divine will. How clearly is this truth

brought out, in the structure of that prayer, which the Saviour gave the disciples in answer to the appeal, "Lord, teach us how to pray;" whose first three petitions are expressive of a desire for God's glory, acquiescence in His will, and zeal for the extension of His kingdom. If, therefore, our prayer be not answered, it is not to be attributed to God's indifference or unwillingness; but from some higher end which He has in view; and an end which we would approve of, were we to see and know its bearings, as God sees and knows them.

Prayer may be unanswered,—

Fourthly. Because the hour for its reply has not arrived. Seed does not spring up at once; often many days and nights are required ere it reveals any vitality. God is as frequent in delaying, as He is immediate in answering; as is so plainly illustrated by the parable of the unfortunate widow, particularly where it is said: "And shall not God avenge His own elect, who cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them?" By which we are taught, that while prayer is answered, for certain reasons, also, it is postponed. Indeed, the history of prayer shows that God is not uniform, in His methods of response to it.

Sometimes the answer is given immediately; frequently after a long delay. "Beloved," says the apostle, "be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

God's modes of answering prayer are various; and in the main, they are as follows:

First. He often answers not according to the language of the petitioner, but according to the desire.

The mother of St. Augustine, aware of the snares which beset great cities, and knowing the propensities of her wayward boy, prayed night and day, and day and night, that in some way God would thwart her son in his purpose to visit the Italian capital. But though she thus prayed, bidding his mother farewell, he was soon amid the scenes and temptations of the great metropolis. But while at Rome he was converted. Monica's prayer was, that her son should not enter the city; while her desire was that he be converted. The particular thing asked for was withheld, and yet the desire of her heart was gratified.

Secondly. God frequently answers the prayers of His children different in form from their desire; or, He seems to set aside our im-

mediate wants, that He may give us greater blessings. As one of the fathers expresses it, "*Si non ad voluntam ad utilitatem.*" "There was given to me," says Paul, "a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. And for this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." His trial was not removed, and yet we hear him afterwards glorying in his infirmity. God answered his prayer, not in the removal of his sorrow, but in giving him strength to bear it. And who will say that Paul did not feel, that his request had been heard? In the same manner also, one of Christ's prayers was answered; not in the removal of the sorrow, but in giving Him strength to bear it—the direct answer denied, yet the prayer really replied to. In the garden, He prayed, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." But did God answer this urgent cry by removing the cup? Did He not rather strengthen Him for the scenes, which then were so near at hand? God is not shut up to a single line of operation in bestowing the favors, which may be asked of Him. There is a lad rolling on the ground, and foaming

at the mouth, and biting his tongue until the blood flows, and flows freely. Alas! how he writhes and struggles! What contortions! What agonies! What groans! What fearful wrenchings! But it is all over. The strain has been too much for the suffering boy. Some may say, "He is dead!" But is he dead? Nay, the Saviour has been expelling an unclean spirit from him; exorcising the devil which was in him. You may say, "That would not be my way of casting out a devil;" but it is God's way. If God regards one's well-being more than his present wish; or if He confer upon one greater blessings, by a denial of what may be asked of Him; or if He gives an individual grace to bear what He has called upon him to bear, his prayer is really answered.

Some think a tree can be large only as it grows on its outer side, or from without; God's method is to increase it from within.

But is it asked, What are the prayers to which replies may be immediately looked for? And the answer is, *promised blessings*; if we pray for them in faith. Thus Daniel prayed for the restoration of Judah, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem. In the same manner, also, the disciples prayed for the Holy

Ghost, before the day of Pentecost, depending on the Saviour's promise to send the Comforter "not many days hence." The Holy Ghost is specially promised in answer to believing supplication, as we read: "If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." Pardon is also promised, with spiritual blessings here, and eternal life in the hereafter. "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them," applies here in all its force.

And while we should pray in faith for *unpromised blessings*, our expectations should not be so great, as though we were seeking those which had been promised. Here God's will is to be the measure of His response, and in His character we are to discover the foundation of all our hopes.

"O THOU THAT HEAREST PRAYER,
UNTO THEE SHALL ALL FLESH COME."

20.

92.

100.

108

110

116.

119,

113,

225,

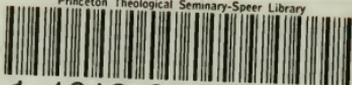
228.

DATE DUE

~~JUN 15 1984~~



Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 01015 4112