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I. THE QUESTION OF INSPIRATION IN ITS BEARING ON THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE.

HOWEVER Christian men may differ respecting the nature and extent of inspiration, they are all agreed in regard to its importance. In the estimate of all it is looked upon as presenting the gravest question the church has ever encountered. Nor is this estimate of its importance to be wondered at when we consider the relation which this question sustains to all the doctrines of revelation. There is no question respecting the being and attributes of God, the mode of the divine subsistence in three persons, the origin and original state of man, the fall and the state into which it brought mankind, the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, the atonement and intercession of Christ, the office of the Holy Spirit, the nature and prerogatives of the church and her unity as the one body of Christ, the doom and destiny of the finally impenitent—there is not one of these questions whose solution does not depend absolutely upon the testimony of the Bible. Within the sacred volume, and there alone, have we any reliable information on any of these subjects.

It must, therefore, be manifest that all questions in regard to the trustworthiness of the sacred record are questions in regard to the very foundation of Christianity. When a passage from this record is adduced in support of a particular view on any of these subjects, the question arises, of necessity, on what ground is it brought into court, and why should it have any weight in determining the issue? As the ultimate authority on

IV. A SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF THE DOCTRINE OF PRAYER.

I. *Prayer instinctive.*

“There was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep. So the ship master came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper! Arise call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.”—Jonah i. 4–6. The scene, depicted so graphically in the words quoted above, is one which has been repeated many a time, on every sea, and in every age of the world.

“Wherever there is religion, true or false,” writes Dr. Dabney, “there is prayer. Even the speculative atheist, when pressed by danger, has been known to belie his pretended creed by calling in anguish upon the God he denied. This natural instinct of prayer reposes for its ground on God’s perfections and man’s dependence and wants. As long as these two facts remain what they are, man must be a praying creature. . . . To tell him who believes in God not to pray is to command him to cease to be a man.”—*Theology*, p. 715.

“Among all the moral instincts of man,” writes M. Guizot, “there is no one more natural, more universal, more unconquerable than prayer. To prayer the child applies himself with eager teachableness. On prayer the aged man falls back as on a refuge against decay and solitariness. With joy or with fear, openly or in the secret of his heart, it is to prayer that man betakes himself in the last resort, to fill up the void of his soul, or to bear the burdens of his destiny. It is in prayer that he seeks, when all is failing him, support for his weakness, comfort in his affliction, encouragement for his virtue.”—*Boyle Lecture for 1873*, pp. 66, 67.

If the statements quoted above are true,—and I think no observant, thoughtful man will call their truth in question,—then, (1), The legitimate effect of prayer is not exhausted in producing a certain subjective condition in the praying soul, as some would have us believe, but in the words of Dr. Chalmers:

“Prayer, and the answer to prayer, are the preferring of a request upon the

one side, and compliance with that request upon the other. Man applies, God complies. Man asks a favor, God bestows it. These are conceived to be the two terms of a real interchange that takes place between the parties,—the two terms of a sequence, in fact, whereof the antecedent is prayer lifted up from earth, and the consequent is the fulfilment of that prayer in virtue of a mandate from heaven.”—Chalmers' *Works*, Vol. II. p. 321.

And (2), Prayer, on the part of man is instinctive—instinctive in the strict, scientific sense of that term.

What is the meaning of the word instinct as it is used by scientific writers? Paley defines it, “A propensity prior to experience, and independent of instruction.” Whateley defines it, “A blind tendency to some mode of action, independent of any consideration on the part of the agent of the end to which the action leads.” Sir William Hamilton says: “An instinct is an agent which performs blindly and ignorantly a work of intelligence and knowledge.” A more elaborate definition than any of these, though in substance the same, is given in the *Imperial Dictionary*, in the words: “Instinct is a certain power by which, independently of all instruction or experience, and without deliberation, animals are directed to do spontaneously whatever is necessary for the preservation of the individual, or the continuation of the kind. Such, in the human species, is the instinct of sucking exerted immediately after birth, and that of insects depositing their eggs in circumstances most favorable for hatching. Instinct makes animals provide for themselves and young, and utter the voices, betake themselves to the course of life, and use the means of self-defence, which are most suitable to their circumstances and nature. The nest of the bird, the honey-comb of the bee, the web of the spider, the thread of the silk-worm, the holes or houses of the beaver, are all executed by instinct, and are not more perfect now, than they were long ages ago. In the beginning of life we do much by instinct, and little by understanding; and even when arrived at maturity, there are innumerable occasions on which, because reason cannot guide us, we must be guided by instinct. The complex machinery of nerves and muscles necessary to swallowing our food, walking, etc., is set agoing by instinct. The motion of our eyelids, and the sudden motions we make to avoid sudden danger, are also instinctive.”

In further exposition of the nature of instincts, I remark,

1. Instincts vary only slightly, if at all, from generation to generation. Instinctive methods are incapable of improvement, and experience teaches that they are not liable to deterioration. The honey-bee builds its cell to-day in the same fashion its progenitor did 6000 years ago in the garden of Eden; and the first-born child of the human race drew its nourishment from its mother's breast just as the child of to-day does. The slight apparent variations in instinct, manifested by certain animals under cultivation, in the hunting-dog, for example, seem to be owing to variations in the organs made use of—the organs of smell, or hearing, or locomotion—rather than to any change in the instinct itself. Because the instincts of animals are thus invariable, scientists have always regarded them as among the best guides in classification, and the most trustworthy characteristics in defining natural species.

2. Whilst instincts are thus invariable from generation to generation, in the individual, they are capable of atrophy from disuse. The instinct which guides the new-born infant in securing nourishment from its mother's breast, is sometimes entirely wanting in mature years; to the half-grown child, sucking is a "lost art." This is true not of instincts alone, but of other powers or faculties of the soul, *e. g.*, the conscience or moral sense. It would seem to be a general law, that proper exercise is necessary to the healthy condition of body and spirit alike.

3. Instincts in animals are congenital, although in some instances, they may not be called into active exercise until long after birth, *e. g.*, the nest-building instinct of the bird. The child draws its nourishment from its mother's breast as perfectly immediately after birth as it does at any subsequent period of its life. The first cell that a honey-bee builds, is as perfect in form and structure as any it builds afterwards. The young duck, when first it plunges into the water, swims as deftly as the parent duck. Hence, as the Duke of Argyll has well said—

"To account for instinct by experience, as Darwin has done, is nothing but an Irish bull. It denies the existence of things which are nevertheless assumed in the very terms of the denial; it elevates into a cause that which must, in its very nature, be a consequence, and a consequence too of the very cause which it denies. Con-

genital instincts, and hereditary powers, and pre-established harmonies, are the origin of all experience, and without them, no one step in experience could ever be gained."—*Unity of Nature*, p. 94.

4. Sir. Wm. Hamilton's definition of instinct is: "An agent which performs blindly and ignorantly a work of intelligence and knowledge." In its nature and operation it is like a conclusion reached by a process of sound reasoning, and laid up in the memory for subsequent use. Sixty years ago, in my study of geometry, I had demonstrated to my entire satisfaction the truth that the three angles of a rectilinear triangle are equal to two right angles, and this conclusion was then laid up in my memory. Often since, I have made use of it, without a doubt as to its truth, though the demonstration which once satisfied me has been entirely forgotten. The simplest conception of an instinct, which experience enables me to form, is that which makes it of like nature with one of these conclusions. And, as instincts are congenital, if results of reasoning, it must be reasoning on the part of God the Creator, and not of the creature whose instincts they are.

5. Instinct, in its proper sphere, is the most perfect guide of conduct with which we are acquainted. The civil engineer, if he attempts an investigation of the matter on mechanical principles, will find himself shut up to the conclusion that the best possible method of drawing a liquid from a reservoir like the human breast is to give to the sucking mouth the exact conformation, and to the tongue the exact motion, which the infant, by instinct, gives its mouth and tongue when drawing its nourishment from its mother's breast. The cell of the honey-bee has long been the admiration of the mathematician, because of the economy of space and material it exhibits. If we conceive of instincts as results of the reasoning of God, the Creator, implanted in the mind of the creature at birth, all this is satisfactorily accounted for, and we can understand how it comes to be true that instinct, within its proper sphere, is a safer, more trustworthy guide than reason. Following our instincts, we are following the guidance of God; following human reason, we are following the guidance of man.

Such being the nature of instincts, if God has implanted in my soul the instinct of prayer, and I know through consciousness that such is the fact, then has he laid upon me an imperative obliga-

tion to pray, and to believe in the efficacy of prayer. It may be that difficulties are suggested and cavils uttered—difficulties which I cannot wholly remove, and cavils I cannot satisfactorily answer. What then? Shall I cease to pray, and give up my faith in the efficacy of prayer? By no means. There is no belief which man holds concerning which difficulties have not been suggested. There is no truth which has not been made the subject of cavil. Pyrrho doubted the reality of the external world. There are Sadducees in our day as well as eighteen hundred years ago, who “say there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit.” Should some scientific engineer approach a mother with an infant at her breast, and suggest a doubt as to whether the method the infant was practicing in securing its nourishment was the best possible in the case, and give it as his opinion that, if the child would make more use of pressure and less of suction, there would be a greater economy of its strength; would not the mother, if a sensible woman, reply, “The child is following the instruction of a better engineer than you. If your conclusions differ from his, there must be some fault in your reasoning, though I may not be able to point it out. I am sure that God is wiser than man; and as the child is following God’s instructions, I will let him suck in the future as in the past.”

II. *Prayer ordinarily answered through the operation of second causes.*

In answering prayer, as in all other works of his providence, God ordinarily secures results through the agency of second causes. This the men sailing with Jonah believed, as is evident from the fact that at the same time “they cried unto their gods,” they “cast forth the wares that were in the ship to lighten it of them.” So is it with the thoughtful Christian man in our day, who, as taught of our Lord, prays, “Give me this day my daily bread,” and then, if a farmer, carefully cultivates his fields, expecting the answer to his prayer to come through the agency of a cultivated soil, and shower and sunshine multiplying his seed sown.

Our world is a law-governed world—not law-governed in the sense in which the materialist understands that expression; a sense in which the laws of nature are so many mechanical forces,

and the world itself an automatic machine driven by those forces; but law-governed in the sense implied in God's immanence in nature; and the laws of nature—in the words of Sir Isaac Newton—are but “the established modes of the Divine working.”

“If means were not necessary to the attainment of ends; if God did not carefully confine his powers to the line of established laws; if we lived in a world in which miracle, instead of being the infinite exception, was the rule, and God was constantly breaking forth with the exercise of supernatural power in unexpected places, and like the wild lightning eluding the most rapid thought as it dashes zig-zag across the sky,—we should find all thought and intelligent action impossible. We could not understand God, because we could not trace the relation of means to ends in his action. If we could not understand him, we could not appreciate his wisdom, his righteousness, or his benevolence. We could not work with him, for we could not depend upon the operation of any means; we could not hope to effect any result. The universe would be a chaos, and the community of men a bedlam.”—Dr. A. A. Hodge's *Lectures*, p. 96.

The true doctrine on this point is well taught in the old Greek fable of “The Wagoner,” who, when his loaded wagon stuck fast in the mud, and he, falling upon his knees, called upon Jupiter for help, received for answer—“put your shoulder to the wheel, and then call upon the gods.”

It is a fatal objection to the doctrine of the advocates of “the faith-cure,” as it is called, that they utterly ignore the truth, taught in Scripture and confirmed by experience, that, in all ordinary circumstances, God answers prayer through the intervention of second causes; that his answers come to man as his blessing upon the use of appropriate means. Intelligent Christians they claim to be, but the heathen sailors who were Jonah's companions in tribulation exhibited a better understanding of the Christian doctrine of prayer—and Æsop was a better expounder of Scripture—than they.

III. *The nature of true prayer.*

Prayer is, in the language of the Shorter Catechism, “an offering up of our desires unto God.” (Ans. 98.) Though words are the ordinary, they are not the only means by which man may make known his desires unto God. Actions have as articulate a voice for the ear of God as words have. When the sailors, of whom Jonah tells us, cast forth their wares from the laboring ship to lighten her of her burden, they made known to God their desire

for rescue from impending danger as distinctly as when in words they called upon him to save them. When the woman that "was a sinner" came behind our Lord as he reclined at table in the Pharisee's house, and weeping, "washed his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head," she gave a more eloquent expression to her desire for the pardon of sin than she could possibly have done in the use of words; and her prayer was heard and answered; for there came immediately from the lips of him, who as God, had power on earth to forgive sin, the assurance—"Thy sins be forgiven thee, go in peace." Luke vii. 47-50. In the words of Montgomery—

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Unuttered or expressed;
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.
Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear;
The upward glancing of an eye
When none but God is near."

This truth will enable us to understand the language of Paul, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. v. 17); "praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance" (Eph. vi. 18). Paul's exhortation to Christians is not, as his words are sometimes interpreted, to always maintain a spirit of prayer, so that if occasion offers, they may be ready to pray, but to "pray always," to "pray without ceasing." This the industrious farmer does, in so far as his daily bread is concerned, not only when in the morning, on bended knee, he utters the words, "give me this day my daily bread," but just as distinctly, and to God's ear just as intelligibly, by the turning of every furrow with which his fallow-ground is broken up, by every stroke of the hoe with which his crop is cultivated, by every thrust of the sickle with which the ripened grain is gathered at the harvest season; and we may go a step further, and say, the necessary nightly rest by which his body is refreshed, and fitted for labor in the field, has, for God, a voice repeating the same petition, and thus his whole life becomes a prayer; he "prays without ceasing." On a certain occasion, after preaching this doctrine on the Sabbath,

on Monday morning I had occasion to pass a field in which a farmer, who had been one of my hearers the day before, was engaged in cultivating his crop, when he said to me, pleasantly, "You see, Doctor, I am busy praying for my daily bread." "Yes," was my reply, "and you expect an answer to your prayer, do you not?" "Certainly," said he. "Now, my friend," said I, "if you will pray for the salvation of your soul in the same earnest, honest way, I doubt not you will secure an answer to that prayer also."

The repetition of a mere form of words, where the words are not the expression of a desire of the heart, though the form be one which God himself has taught man, is not a prayer. At best, it is but an incantation, the utterance of a charm. The ten thousand pater-nosters, counted off upon the beads of many a devotee, are but "vain repetitions," such as the heathen use. There is not a breath of prayer in them from beginning to end; and it is only in the maudlin theology of "Babylon, drunk with the blood of God's saints," that they are accounted prayers in this, our day of advanced civilization. And yet these "vain repetitions" are often counted as prayers by superficial thinkers, and as, of course, they secure no answer from God, they are counted as unanswered prayers, and brought forward as proof of the inefficacy of prayer. This, on the one hand;—on the other, the honest, intelligent labor of the diligent man, giving utterance to prayer which God hears and answers, is not thought of as prayer at all. In the sweat of the brow of the honest laborer there is a language which God understands as truly as in the tears of the penitent. And so it comes to pass that a man's life is full of prayer and the answer to prayer of which we take no account.

IV. *The range of effective prayer.*

"The natural instinct of prayer reposes for its ground on God's perfections and man's dependence and wants," and hence, it would seem fairly to be inferred, that the range of effective prayer, as testified to by instinct, is coëxtensive with man's necessities; that it is not confined, as some would have us believe, to securing relief for man's spiritual wants alone, but covers man's physical necessities as well. Certainly, the sailors who were Jonah's companions so believed, when they "cried every man unto his god"

for deliverance from the storm which threatened them with shipwreck. So the Scriptures plainly teach in the story of Hezekiah, king of Judah, who, when sick, "turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the LORD" for bodily healing, and received an answer to his prayer; a prayer as instinctive as that of the sailors just referred to, as proved by the fact that it is a prayer which has been repeated in every land, and every age.

"Prayer and the answer to prayer, are the two terms of a sequence, whereof the antecedent is prayer lifted up from earth, and the consequent is the fulfilment of that prayer in virtue of a mandate from heaven." Prayer is an efficient power in the material universe, not directly, as light, heat, and gravity are; but indirectly, by calling into active exercise the will-power of God. The efficient putting forth of the will-power of God in the affairs of our world constitutes his providential government of the world, and this extends to "all his creatures and all their actions." In the words of Dr. C. Hodge—

"The theory of the universe which underlies the Bible, which is everywhere assumed and asserted in the sacred volume, which accords with our moral and religious nature, and which, therefore, is the foundation of all natural as well as revealed religion, is that God created all things by the word of his power; that he endowed his creatures with their properties and forces; that he is everywhere present in his universe, co-operating with and controlling the operation of second causes, on a scale commensurate with his omnipresence and omnipotence, as we, in our measure, co-operate with and control them within the narrower range of our efficiency."—*Theology*, Vol. III., p. 698.

No good reason can be given why the range of effective prayer should not be as wide as the range of God's providence; and the teachings of Scripture on the subject seem to imply that such is the fact.

As already remarked, our world is a law-governed world, and there is a necessity that it should be such if it is to furnish a suitable habitation for man. But this fact is in no way inconsistent with the efficient putting forth of the free will-power of man in such a way as to control and direct the operation of law-governed mechanical forces so as to bring about results such as man desires. The ocean steamer carries her freight from one seaport to another, whithersoever her commander may determine, not only without deranging the operation of natural laws, but in perfect harmony

with those laws. If the will-power of man can operate in this way, why may not the will-power of God also? And it is on this will-power of God that prayer lays hold. That "unwavering trust in the constancy of nature which the Creator has implanted in man," which has been urged as an objection to the efficacy of prayer for certain blessings, *e. g.*, for rain, is not a trust in a constancy in any way inconsistent with the free operation of the will-power of either God or man. The sight of the ocean steamer moving whithersoever the will of her commander may determine does not disturb my "confidence in the constancy of nature." On the contrary, understanding as I do how this effect has been brought about, it confirms my confidence in that constancy.

Study the prayer our Lord taught his disciples to offer—"Give us this day our daily bread." (Matt. vi. 11.) How do thoughtful, Christian men expect this prayer to be answered? Not by miracle—God's raining down bread from heaven, as he did upon the Israelites in the wilderness—but by God and man coöperating, and by will-power controlling the operation of second causes fitted to secure that result. Man breaks up his fallow-ground, casts in his seed, and cultivates the growing crop. God sends from heaven his showers and sunshine, and so makes for man a fruitful season. In this law-governed world of ours the one agency is as indispensable, and in its proper sphere as efficient, as the other. If the man who prays to God for his daily bread does not believe that prayer is an efficient agency in securing the needed alternation of shower and sunshine, through the putting forth of the will-power of God, his prayer is a hypocrisy; if it be not effective, the teaching of instinct and Scripture alike is a delusion. The "constancy of nature," when rightly understood, furnishes no reason why the range of effective prayer should be less extensive than the range of God's providence.

In his lecture on Divine Providence, Dr. A. A. Hodge tells us—

"The great Dr. Witherspoon lived at a country seat called Tusculum, on Rocky Hill, two miles north of Princeton. One day a man rushed into his presence, crying: 'Dr. Witherspoon, help me to thank God for his wonderful providence. My horse ran away, my buggy was dashed to pieces on the rocks, and behold, I am unharmed.' The good Doctor laughed benevolently at the inconsistent, half-way character of the man's religion. 'Why,' he answered, 'I know a providence a thou-

sand times better than yours. I have driven down that rocky road to Princeton hundreds of times, and my horse never ran away, and my buggy was never dashed to pieces.' Undoubtedly the deliverance was providential, but just as much so also were the uneventful rides of the College President. God is in the atom just as really and effectually as in the planet. He is in the unobserved sighing of the wind in the wilderness as in the earthquake which overthrows a city, full of living men, and his infinite wisdom and power are as much concerned in the one event as the other."—*Lectures on Theological Themes*, p. 39.

As men, when thinking on the subject of God's providence, often err in recognizing that providence in events out of the ordinary course of things only; so, when thinking of the efficacy of prayer, do they err in recognizing as answers to prayer, remarkable occurrences alone. The quiet bestowment of daily bread as God's blessing upon the labors of the devout Christian is as truly an answer to prayer as deliverance from shipwreck, or recovery from sickness. For this reason, as well as for reasons already given, we often fail to see how full of prayer and prayer-answers the life of the Christian man on earth is.

V. *Natural and Christian prayer.*

By natural prayer, I mean such prayer as instinct alone would lead a man to offer, prayer which is simply the cry of a needy, dependent creature to a being, in whom he believes, superior to himself and therefore able to help him. By Christian prayer, I mean such prayer as instinct supplemented by revelation leads the Christian man to offer, prayer which is the cry a needy dependent sinner addresses to his reconciled Father in Heaven, in the name of Christ Jesus, through whom this reconciliation has been effected. Had man never sinned, made as he was "in the image of God," he had been a perfect law unto himself, and his natural instinct would have proved an unerring and sufficient guide in prayer, as his reason and conscience would have been in the duties of life. But man has sinned, and as a consequence thereof, his whole nature has become fatally marred, and all his relations to God fatally deranged. Looking at the matter in the light of history we learn, among other things, that man is subject to degradation under the operation of sin indulged in from generation to generation, and this to such an extent that his intellect, and conscience, and even his moral instincts almost disappear, and he himself becomes little

better than a brute, as illustrated in the case of the savage Patagonians described by Charles Darwin in his "Voyage of the Beagle." Yet as history testifies, in the case of these very Patagonians, man may be recovered from this degradation by Christianity, and reason and conscience, and the moral instincts resume their proper sway again.

One of the first effects of the degrading influence of sin—though by no means the only one—is to obscure, if not obliterate the idea of the fatherhood of God, and all filial feeling on the part of man. God becomes a stern tyrant and man a crouching slave. Christianity, which is a revelation from God, aims to restore the original relationship between God and man, in fact, and to the apprehension of man. It discloses to reason and conscience a way in which God "can be just and justify the sinner;" a way in which man may resume his original filial relationship to his Father in heaven, and so free scope be given to the operation of his instinct of prayer. Hence it comes to be true, that while all prayer is instinctive, man needs to be taught to pray a Christian prayer; there is need that revelation should supplement the work of instinct here.

When his disciples said to our Lord, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples," he said, "When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in Heaven" (Luke xi. 1, 2); and, in his sermon on the mount, when giving the assurance of the efficacy of prayer so precious to the Christian heart, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," he followed it up with the words, "What man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or, if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matt. vii. 7-12.) Thus does our Lord teach us that the doctrine of the fatherhood of God is fundamental in the true conception of Christian prayer. The correlative doctrine of the Christian's sonship the Scriptures teach in such words as these: "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry

Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." (Romans viii. 15, 16.) "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." (Galatians iv. 6.) Adoption among men is often a mere form; adoption into the family of God is always a blessed reality. In his regeneration the child of God always "receives the spirit of adoption;" and in his thoughts and feelings becomes indeed a child; and to him God is his father, not by creation alone, but his reconciled father, through redemption, and as such he approaches him in prayer. Hence it comes, that Christian prayer is as truly instinctive to the Christian man as what I have called natural prayer is to the man who is not a Christian; and revelation simply supplements without interfering with the operation of instinct.

The Christian conscious of his own ignorance and liability to err in judgment, and having thorough confidence in the unerring wisdom and perfect love of his Father in heaven, will naturally always pray with entire submission to the divine will. If he have a reverent, loving child's spirit, his most earnest prayers will always be followed, expressly or by implication, with a request that God would, after all, choose for him. An example of this feeling expressed we have in our Lord's prayer, when "being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground": "Father, if thou be willing [if it be possible, Matt.] remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." (Luke xxii. 42-44.) An instance of this feeling implied we have in Paul's prayer, thrice repeated, for deliverance from what he terms "a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan buffeting him," as is evident from his declaration when an answer is given, not in the removal of the thorn, but in the assurance, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (2 Cor. xii. 7-9.)

"There is nothing more contemptible than the presumptuous claim that God has subjected the universe to our dictation. Every really holy soul must prefer a million of times that God should reign absolutely, and do with him and his as seems good in his sight. What child of an earthly father can judge in any case what,

upon the whole and in the long run is best for itself? How much more should we insist upon leaving every decision at the disposal of our Heavenly Father."—A. A. Hodge's *Lectures on Theological Themes*, pp. 102, 103.

To the doctrine of the advocates of the "faith-cure," as it is called, I have already called the reader's attention to one fatal objection, viz., that in the rejection of appropriate means, it ignores the truth that—except in the case of miracles—God answers prayer through the agency of second causes. A second equally fatal objection to that doctrine is that it calls for faith without submission, a thing impossible in the case of a reverent, loving child of God. If in any particular case prayer is offered for the healing of disease, and the healing does not follow, the advocates of the "faith-cure" ascribe the failure to the lack of faith, and so of proper prayer, on the part of the petitioner. All such doctrine as this is based upon an entire misapprehension of the true nature of the faith characteristic of effectual prayer. Such faith is either the sincere belief of some definite, specific promise, or it is that faith described in the words, "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Heb. xi. 6.) And such faith is perfectly consistent with entire submission to God's will, even in the case of things most earnestly desired and importunately prayed for; as is well illustrated in our Lord's prayer in Gethsemane. True faith in all things submits to God's will, and delights to do so. Christian prayer is the making known of a child's desires to his Father in heaven. "Confidence without submission," as Dr. A. A. Hodge has well said, "is the most offensive form of unbelief which disgraces man or offends God"; it is unbelief which strikes at, not the word, but the very nature of God.

VI. *Tyndall's prayer-test.*

A few years ago a proposition was made—originating with Sir Henry Thompson, but brought to public attention by Professor Tyndall, and so, generally spoken of as Tyndall's prayer-test—to determine the efficacy of prayer for the sick experimentally, in a way which, it was claimed, ought to be satisfactory alike to all. The proposition, as stated by its author, was—

"For the purpose of our inquiry I do not propose to ask that one single child of man should be deprived of his participation in all that belongs to him of this

vast influence;" *i. e.*, the influence of the general prayers for the sick offered in Christian churches on every Sabbath day; "but, I ask that one single ward or hospital, under the care of first-rate physicians and surgeons, containing a certain number 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 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 secure 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 exempt 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 the electric fluid. The experiment would be frustrated. But the opposite character of my proposal will commend it to those who are naturally most interested in its success; those, namely, who conscientiously and devoutly believe in the efficiency against death and disease 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."—Tyndall's *Advancement of Science*, pp. 97, 98.

1. I cannot believe that Prof. Tyndall, when he proposed thus to test the efficacy of prayer in healing diseases, used the word prayer in its low, heathen sense, of the mere repetition of a form of words—an incantation—a charm. No Christian believes in the efficacy of incantations. No teacher has ever denounced the worthlessness of the mere repetition of a form of words more emphatically than our Lord. (See Matt. vi. 5-8.) As Prof. Tyndall, in conducting such an experiment as this, would insist that the medicines should be pure, the genuine articles, he surely will not question the Christian's right to demand that the prayer used should be genuine also. Christian prayer is the only kind of prayer in question; for while it is true that God, in the exercise of his sovereignty, may, and sometimes does answer such prayer as that of Jonah's heathen ship-mates, it is Christian prayer alone which God has bound himself by promise always to hear and answer. In the words of scripture it is "the effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous man"—righteous in the gospel sense of that word—"which availeth much." (James v. 16.)

a. According to the teaching of Scripture, Christian prayer is the prayer of a reverent, trusting, loving child addressed to his Father in heaven. In this particular the teaching of science, as Prof. Tyndall himself admits, is in perfect accord with that of Scripture.

"The theory that the system of nature is under the control of a Being who changes phenomena in compliance with the prayers of men, is, in my opinion, a perfectly legitimate one. It may, of course, be rendered futile by being associated with conceptions which contradict it, but such conceptions form no necessary part of the theory. It is a matter of experience that an earthly father, who is at the same time both wise and tender, listens to the requests of his children, and if they do not ask amiss, takes pleasure in granting their requests. We know also that this compliance extends to the alteration, within certain limits, of the current of events on earth. With this suggestion offered by our experience, it is no departure from scientific methods to place behind natural phenomena a universal Father, who, in answer to the prayers of his children, alters the current of these phenomena. Thus far theology and science go hand in hand."—*Advance of Science*, p. 102.

b. Christian prayer is "an offering up of our *desires* unto God." Words must be the expression of a real desire on the part of the petitioner, or they are not prayer. "God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John iv. 24.) The most terrible denunciations our Lord ever uttered against any sin were against the sin of hypocrisy, stage-acting in matters of religion. (See Matt. xxiii.) It is to the heart of the worshipper God's eye is directed, and it is that which he sees there, and that only, which constitutes prayer. A man may impose upon his fellow-man, he may even impose upon himself as to the true nature of his desires; he cannot impose upon God. The Christian can pray honestly for the recovery of a sick friend, with an earnestness correspondent to his love for that friend. He can pray for the recovery of the sick in general, with a real, though feeble desire, through sympathy with all sufferers, and as the outcome of his love for his brethren according to the flesh. But the prayer Prof. Tyndall's experiment calls for, is altogether different from such prayers as these. The prime object of that prayer is, not the relief of a suffering friend, or fellow-creature, but the shutting of the mouths of certain cavilling philosophers, who, rejecting God's plan of settling a question, would fain excuse that rejection by proposing an entirely different plan. Certain I am, that this is

the form the prayer would have to assume, if I attempted to offer it.

c. It is a well-known, wise and just principle governing God's administration of his kingdom of grace, that he will give such proof of the truth of the Christian religion as a whole, and of its several doctrines in particular, as shall thoroughly satisfy the ingenuous inquirer, but not "signs from heaven" to shut the mouths of cavillers. Our Lord says, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." (Jno. vii. 17.) That is, if any man will set about making all right between God and himself, and do this with the Scriptures in his hands, and making those Scriptures his guide, he shall know that Christianity—and, as a part of that Christianity, the most important, practical doctrine of the efficacy of prayer—is from God. Thousands in every age of the world, and in every country where Christianity has been preached, have put this matter to the test, and invariably with the result of coming to believe in Christianity with a faith which death itself could not disturb. This is God's plan for securing a certain result; and, in so far as I can see, it is the only plan which will preserve for man his free-agency in matters which concern his salvation and the life to come.

Now, what does Professor Tyndall propose that the Christian shall do? That he should come to God with the prayer that he would set aside his plan, pursued for long ages, and with abundant success, and give "a sign from heaven" instead;—that he should do the very thing he refused to do when proposed by the cavilling Pharisees and Sadducees eighteen hundred years ago (see Matt. xvi. 1-4), and had the refusal recorded in Scripture for the instruction of his people in after times. That a reverent, trustful, loving child of God should honestly put up such a prayer as this is impossible.

2. Professor Tyndall, as already quoted, writes:

"It is no departure from scientific method to place behind natural phenomena a universal Father, who, in answer to the prayers of his children, alters the current of phenomena. Thus far theology and science go hand in hand."

In these words he distinctly recognizes a peculiarity in the sequence of prayer and the answer to prayer which places it in an

entirely different category from that to which physical causation belongs. The free will-power of our Father in heaven is interposed between prayer and its answer. Prayer acts directly upon our Father in heaven, disposing him to attend to our wants in the exercise of his infinite wisdom and love. For this reason, prayer is often spoken of as a moral, not a physical, cause, although the answer to prayer may be in the form of a strictly physical effect. The experimental test proposed by Professor Tyndall, as has been well said:

“Is applicable only to natural order, and authorizes conclusions only in cases of strictly physical causation. That he should propose to apply it under distinctly foreign conditions, to a case involving free-will, to the moral order, was, if not mere frivolous mockery, a gross logical blunder. In the natural order, in a case of physical causation, the method named would furnish a crucial test; but, in the case proposed, it was crucial only in that it was devised to crucify the Lord afresh, and put him to an open shame.”—Professor N. K. Davis, in *Christian Thought*, Vol. III., page 17.

3. In establishing the truths of science, careful observation is as often resorted to as experiment, and its results are as thoroughly accepted. In the case of moral causation, this method is fully open to us, and, when properly pursued, is as thoroughly scientific as the other. In the most certain of all the natural sciences, astronomy, we are compelled to depend upon observation, and not experiment, for our knowledge of truth. Tested by observation, the efficacy of prayer has been satisfactorily established by the experience of Christians in every age. In the words of Dr. A. A. Hodge:

“Millions of spiritual children of God have been ceaselessly trusting him, praying to him, and proving him, from Adam to Moses, from Moses to Christ, from Christ to the present day. Our Father knows our hearts; we know and he knows the real meaning of our prayers. We know our Father’s heart. We know that when we were ‘in distress, we called upon him, and he answered us, and set us in a large place.’ The Christian is satisfied with what he knows as to the confidential relations between his prayer-hearing Father and himself. He can well afford to smile with pity when the stranger to the household criticizes his Father’s faithfulness, and tries to convince the child, against the witness of his own consciousness, that his father does not hear and answer his prayers.”—*Lectures on Theological Themes*, page 107.

That the doctrine of the efficacy of Christian prayer, a doctrine profoundly practical in the Christian life, should have been cavil

led at, and assailed from many different quarters, should cause us no surprise. In this particular, its fate has been but that of Christian truth in general. To all these cavils and objections, in so far as they claim to be scientific, the sufficient scientific answer is: Prayer is instinctive—natural and Christian prayer alike. Your cavils and objections are, at best, but results of human reasoning. Now, if there is anything certain in science, it is that, within its own proper province, Instinct is a safer, more trustworthy guide than Reason.

GEO. D. ARMSTRONG.