

Original Contributions.

Is Prayer Natural?

NUMBER IV.

It must be apparent to every one who has studied at all, the laws and nature of the human heart, that an honest and sincere desire or prayer of the soul to be submissive to "the will of God," and an implicit faith that God is causing all things to work together for his good, will have such a corresponding influence upon his own heart, as to fill his soul with a calm and peaceful resignation and trust, and inspire the unfaltering conviction that all things are working together for his good. This beneficial fact of itself, if God had no natural resources, and no natural command of those agencies, would well repay us for the true spirit of trust, and the constant use of sincere and earnest prayer. If its only benefit was its reflex influence upon ourselves, there would still be great "profit if I should pray unto him." I need not enlarge upon this side of the question, for the influence of real fervent prayer upon ourselves; and the great benefit and importance of that influence admitted by every intelligent psychologist. But we repeat the original question: Is prayer a natural force, or one of the forces of nature? It seems to me that the cries of the dependent young, and the ready and willing response of God through their parent mothers, is proof conclusive upon this point. By just such analogies God has taught us his cure for us, as well as what real prayer is, and the methods of its answer. In many things we are equally helpless and dependent. We are not only "his offspring," but "every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from the Father of light."

If God can and does answer the prayers of the young raven, and the lamb, and the calf, why should it be thought a thing incredible for God to answer our prayers? Has he no resources adapted to our natural and spiritual want? Or doth God care for oxen [and other animals] only?

I must conclude, therefore, that real prayer to God, is so perfectly in accord with the analogies of nature, that whoever knows and admits the former, should also understand and admit the naturalness of the latter. So that, as science is but a systematic arrangement of the truths of nature; and we have

shown that the helpless and young in nature, always pray, and that it is a successful and natural force in nature; how can there be any antagonism between science and prayer.

I know that there is very much that is called prayer ("falsely so called") that it is no more prayer, than the revolutions of the heathens "praying wheel," that are also "driven by the wind." Real prayer, can only come from actual need. It must also be within the scope of God's natural and adaptable means. If a man's helpless condition is clear outside the reach of God's natural and available means or agencies; who will say that God will, or can answer our prayers? If a man is buried in the depths of a colliery, by fire, water, or some terrible disaster; so that God cannot relieve him through human help, who will say that God can rescue him? If the ship goes to the bottom and the crew are left struggling in the water a thousand miles from any boat or human help; who will say prayer can save them? Could prayer bring relief to the perishing crew of the Jeanette when there was no natural means of relief at hand? No man than God, can heal a wound, or sin against the body, "that is unto death." In answer to our prayers, God gives us day by day our daily bread. But no one has ever received or eaten his "daily bread," that was not the natural product of the resources of God through nature.

God has promised the spirit of Christ, or holy spirit, to them that ask him; or who "hunger and thirst" for it. But no one need expect it, and no one has ever received it directly from heaven and by prayer only: any more than they have received their "daily bread" directly from heaven.

As in nature, so in grace, God has provided the means by which we may grow, and increase in the spirit of God. We might as well pray for some other "power" for salvation than the Gospel, or for some other "way" to heaven, than Christ, as to pray for the spirit, outside of God's Scriptural and natural means of imparting it. In all things there should be first, a sincere and fervent desire, and then an efficient and effectual "co-working together with God," and if it be "according to his will" he will hear and answer, and not otherwise.

S. C. ADAMS.

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"Ye Are Not Under Law, But Under Grace."

NUMBER I.

It is one of the weaknesses and follies of men, to think that wicked men can be made good by law.

They forget, or do not understand, that all that law can possibly do, is to forbid, and punish such evil, or conduct of men, as becomes overt and public. That so far as changing or affecting the heart, that all statutory and commanded law is perfectly "weak and beggarly." Although God tried the power and virtue of this kind of "law" for 1500 years, and then pronounced it a miserable failure, in that it was "weak and beggarly" and "unable to make the comers thereunto perfect," as "righteousness could not come by law;" foolish and carnal men are still trying to obtain righteousness by law, and still trying to keep "the church" pure and godly by law. In this article two use the term "law" from the Jewish and civil standpoint; as meaning statutory or commanded law; and having no reference to the physical law of God that is written in our bodies and in the book of nature; nor to spiritual law of God that Christ writes on our hearts, and in our minds and consciences. For in its proper and true sense, these are the only kind of laws that God ever had; for they are the only kind of laws that God or godly men are ever controlled and governed by. I proceed to say then, that godly men, are not under statutory or commanded law. This is just as true of godly men, as it is of God himself. A few quotations will show that this is clearly set forth, as the distinguishing feature of Christianity. Acts 13-39, "from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Rom. 3-20, "for by the deeds of law, can no flesh be justified in his sight." Rom. 4-15, "for the law worketh wrath." Gal. 2-16, "knowing that a man is not justified by the works of law, for by the works of law shall no flesh be justified." Gal. 2-21, "for if righteousness could come by law, then Christ died in vain," 3-10, "as many as are under the works of law, are under the curse," 3-13, "but Christ hath redeemed us [all godly men] from the curse of law." "Christ was born under law, to redeem them that were under law, that they might receive the adoption of children." Gal. 3-12, "for law is not of faith." I.

Tim. 1-9, "knowing this that law is not made for a righteousness man." Gal. 3-22, "but before the faith came we were under the law." Rom. 6-14, "ye are not under law, but under grace." "What then shall we sin, because we are not under law but under grace? God forbid." Gal. 5-18, "for if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under law."

All these quotations refer to statutory or commanded law, and to that kind of law only. It is that "law" that John 1-17 says "came by Moses," and that Christ says "Moses gave you the law," John 7-19. That I may not be misunderstood, I will say that ungodly men, and "transgressors" required just such statutory and commanded law, as "Moses gave," and as "the powers that be" also give; for all such law is only "for the punishment of evil doers." But I am now speaking of the weakness and impotency of all such laws, as a rule of action for godly men or Christians. As a law or rule of action I affirm without fear of intelligent or scriptural contradictions; and understanding just what I say, that godly, righteous or Christian men are not under statutory or commanded laws. The real power and purifying virtue of all such "law" is just the same, whether it is enacted by God, or by some man, or by a body of three men, who are capable of imparting it.

There was just as much murder, and just as much theft, and just as much covetousness under Moses law; as there was in the other nations with the same morals, and with equal laws and equal penalties. Whatever power enacts it, it is still "weak and beggarly" and whoever lives by it, and works by it, can never attain unto "the righteousness of God" by it. Whoever teaches it, or enforces it "in the house of God" needs "that one should teach them again of God." Some practical illustrations of its "weakness" and failure, will be in order.

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"A thought that is not heart-baptized never can mark results in spiritual things. Glitter without warmth in preaching or living is the most helpless thing."

"The grandest and strongest natures are ever the calmest. A fiery restlessness is the symbol of frailties not yet outgrown. The repose of power is its richest phase and its clearest testimony."