

borne in upon my mind with a conviction as irresistible as the conviction of my own existence. That this subject of the efficacy of prayer is in many respects painfully perplexing, I readily admit. But I venture to think that the Christian solution is, at least, as satisfactory as that of the philosopher who, like the ancient sophist, insists upon making man the measure of all things, and metes out with the iron measuring-rod of statistics and averages the influences of that Spirit which "bloweth where it listeth."—I am, Sir, &c.,

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A. BABINGTON.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—I have read with high interest the correspondence on this subject, though the view adopted by Mr. Galton and those who think with him is by no means novel. Thus, in times comparatively recent, Priestley, with what may almost be called the "scientific" instinct, set himself to lower our notions about prayer, which he seemed to regard as an amiable delusion, having, however, a distinctly beneficial effect on the person praying. Gilbert Wakefield denied the efficacy of prayer altogether. Allow me to express my opinion that if prayer is an affair of the heart, a communion between man and his Maker, none but God, who alone is the Searcher of Hearts, could possibly be competent to supply the statistics of prayer. Prayer is without the province of statistics.

But the efficacy of prayer has been attended by the constant experience of thousands of persons, whose testimony as to physical or external matters no one would presume to doubt. Why doubt it as to the efficacy of prayer? The efficacy of prayer is as truly a matter of experience—*necessarily* of inner experience—as that fire burns is a matter of sensational experience. In either case it is experience, only the experience must needs be of a different sort. It should seem, moreover, that of the physical phenomena alone is it possible to collect statistics of any worth? I should submit that the efficacy of prayer as just stated belongs to experience, and to the testimony supplied by experience. But (this being a minor matter) is not prayer in some sort an instinct common to mankind? One of the sublimest prayers on record was composed by Socrates. But I especially desired to call attention to the argument derived from experience.—I am, Sir, &c., T. H. GIBSON.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—If the desire to pray is, as Mr. Galton asserts, "not intuitive" to humanity, but "is an artificial creation of theologians," what made the theologians pray? Out of nothing nothing can come is as true of mind as of matter. If a future missionary should ever find a tribe of savages who have no belief in invisible power and no feeling of worship, he will find it a hard if not a hopeless task to create such a feeling. The records of Christian missions clearly prove that the missionary has not to create the inclination to pray, but merely to direct the existing worship of the unseen to a worthier object. Indeed, Mr. Galton, in admitting fetish-worship among the "class of feelings which are intuitive," virtually concedes his first strategic point, for it is the instinct or intuition of worship, not its perfection, that the theologian claims to be common to humanity. If we believe in the existence of a personal Deity, the Father of all men, it is surely not too much to suppose that He condescends to every aspiration, however feeble and imperfect, of the lowest of his children. When men could find no better mode of judging than the result of a trial by ordeal or duel, I believe that God, even through such imperfect means, did often "defend the right." If He had invariably done so, the process of mental and spiritual growth would have been arrested. If it is true generally, as Mr. Galton believes, that the theologians of the present English Church do not believe in the divine origin of dreams, miraculous cures, demoniacal possessions, and exorcisms, so much the worse for that Church, since its leaders have ceased to believe in the faith of their Master.

Mr. Galton's second point is, to use his own expression, easily disposed of. Worship of the invisible is intuitive, if by intuition is meant that it exists and has existed in every age and nation; and it has what Mr. Galton considers the superior cogency prompted by the observation of facts. Christians need have no fear of the result of statistical inquiries as to the efficacy of prayer, provided that the inquirers are men thoroughly qualified to deal with the subject.—I am, Sir, &c., J. W. F.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—The continued interest manifested in this discussion is a very satisfactory indication of moral earnestness pervading a great number of liberal thinkers. Will you accept the following crude contribution to it, *quantum valeat*?

How are we to reconcile the reasonableness of prayer with the existence of a Divine Being, who from the first planned everything in perfect wisdom, and who, as we must suppose, from the first foresaw the whole infinite series of causes and effects that would be evolved from his creation? Can the divine purposes be changed? Can they become different in the result from what they were in the original intention? We can scarcely suppose it. How, then, can prayer under any circumstances be effectual? Perhaps some indication of the answer may be found in the following considerations.

We conceive all events to have their source in the Will of the Divine Mind, and that the "laws of nature" are merely the expression of that Will. Although the Divine Mind be endowed with perfect foreknowledge, we must still conceive it to be conscious of a *succession* of impressions, *i.e.*, of a past, a present, and a future distinct from each other; the two first only being *certain* as having existed, the last being still contingent upon the Divine Will. It is only from His knowledge of what that Will *will* be that even God can be certain as to the future. We must also conceive the Divine Mind to be susceptible of satisfaction (if we may use the expression) in the evolution and working-out of His plans, and in so far of being influenced and acted upon by what we may term external causes.

Now why may not prayer in itself be one of these causes? May not the perception of the earnest desire of the creature be a cause acting upon the Divine Mind (we need scarcely say that it is only the thoroughly earnest and sincere prayer which is entitled to the name)? And may we not go a step further, and say that every prayer becomes one of the endless series of events, and so *must* have an effect,—what, or in what way, is beyond us to know? That the Creator foresaw that such cause would arise need not diminish its influence when it actually arises. It seems only reasonable further to conceive that according as prayer emanates from a mind more or less in harmony with the Divine Mind, so we may anticipate that the effect will correspond.—I am, Sir, &c., W. Y.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—Mr. Galton's "concise and pointed" representation of his case against prayer admits of a very brief and simple reply. Because prayer is *taught* by missionaries and mothers, and by the clergy on "solemn occasions," the feelings that prompt it are not, he maintains, intuitive. But why is it so taught, and why is the teaching accepted? If men were not at certain times, and particularly on "solemn occasions," conscious of their individual isolation, dependence, and therefore weakness, no amount of external teaching and preaching would lead them to act as if they were,—which they do in prayer. The institutions and influences relied upon by Mr. Galton as the cause of the tendency prompting to prayer are thus themselves the products of the feelings of individuals, without which we cannot suppose they would embody themselves in act. Whether the feelings be intuitive or not is apt to become a controversy about words and definitions of terms, but their strength and tenacity can be proved to demonstration by the usual inductive process. And the more the individual tries to interpret his own individual experiences, the more he is forced to admit their existence. Mr. Galton's second point is still more easily disposed of. It rests on the assumption that miracles, actually observable in the sphere of outward experience, are needed to prove prayer efficacious. Because "the theologians" have abandoned the belief in the "miracles," which their predecessors believed in, therefore "they are beaten along the whole line," and ought to abandon what they hold to be in perfect harmony with the constitution of the world as it actually exists! For the action of a higher intelligence on the order of nature is not in itself a whit more mysterious and inexplicable than the action of human intelligence. Mr. Galton seems unable to see that "statistical grounds" are out of place when we are dealing with what is presumably outside the circle of cause and effect, what operates on it *from* the outside, and yet conformably with its laws.—I am, Sir, &c., H.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—Mr. Galton's letter revives the question, "Is the desire to pray the result of intuition or instruction?" and judging from the ideal picture he has drawn of the first lesson in prayer, he appears satisfied that the universality of prayer, for all testimony establishes that, in all ages and among all nations, is the result of instruction. To some extent this is a question of fact, to be proved by accurate personal observation, as well as of argument.

Having observed children in the school and in the family, to myself the conviction was at least confirmed, if not actually