

CT 120

THE
EFFICACY OF PRAYER.

A LETTER TO THOMAS SCOTT.

BY
A FOREIGN CHAPLAIN.



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THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER.

DEAR FRIEND,

I COMPLY with your request, by attempting a letter on the "Efficacy of Prayer," without however being conscious of much originality or even "heterodoxy," to recommend what I may find to say on so transcendent a topic. As to the heterodoxy, I am pretty well persuaded that our Biblical and Liturgical doctrines on the subject will, in their highest and broadest acceptation, admit a very close approach to the conclusions of nearly every earnest, sober, and unbiassed thinker, aspiring, irrespective of time and circumstance, to worship God in Understanding and in Spirit.

You remember of old that our divergence of religious views generally arose from my demanding ampler recognition of the aspirational or emotional claims of our complex nature, than you, from your more realistic entrenchments, were inclined to concede. It was in fact the time-honoured well-worn controversy between Realism and Idealism, or, as some would say, Prose and Poetry, in which I maintained, as I still do, that within the realm of Religion, the aspirations of our Spirit, with their vague yearnings, prophetic forecastings, silent ponderings, and instinctive impulses, possess a deeper power of insight into transcendental truths than can, in this murky earthly medium, be assigned to any mere scientific dexterity of demonstration. No doubt the two

moieties of our mental constitution are destined to control and regulate each other, avoiding the perilous extreme of effervescent enthusiasm on the one side, or that of hard material positivism on the other. We may be sure that creating Providence would not have equipped us with two such orders of endowment, had not the development of *both* been essential to our equilibrium. A man listening exclusively to his ideal ponderings and imaginative promptings, will soon, like the engine without its regulator, get out of gear by undue violence of moving power; but what the engine is with lack of steam, *that*, I apprehend, is our semi-divine nature without some latent-heat of mysticism within it. If our nature be *not* semi-divine,—be not, that is, animated and illumined by smouldering light and fire of Godhead,—then, of course, Religion, with its ancillary “Prayer,” is mere morbid delusion: we are but a higher development of animal, as animal of vegetable, and vegetable of mineral, mere circulating dust and curious chemical digesters, liable to be disturbed in our real business of “assimilation” by morbid fancies of futurity and divinity, which practical sense of duty should studiously suppress. This, however, was never your position. We both acknowledged Religion as the birth-right of Man, not to be sold or bartered for cold and feckless philosophic pottage; but you looked for it more in the head, I in the “heart,” maintaining with King David, that *there* is its true temple or tabernacle. I believed then, as I do still, that the ablest among us, taking counsel of his brain only, is likely enough to land in Atheism, finding infinite Creation as easy to conceive as an infinite Creator. But let him look into his “heart,” and he is a “fool” to refuse its evidence and say, “there is no God!”

The drift, then, of all that I have to say will be towards conciliating the “Realism” that would, in its extreme logical result, shut us out from every hope

of help but that of putting our own shoulder to the wheel, whose only Litany is "Orare Laborare;" and the Idealism which, when fairly indignant at the ignoring of what it holds to be the more sacred half of our nature, may, by force of re-action, be led to overlook the co-ordinate and no less imperative demands of reasonable sense and soberness. A recent visit to England has shown me that this and kindred questions are now mooted with a boldness and publicity which by no means so characterised public opinion when we used to compare theologic notes, as with bated breath, years ago, under your genial roof on the Foreland coast. Large print and leading articles are now at the free and full service of speculations which, a quarter of a century since, were under a Social, no less than Ecclesiastical, Ban; then even the most reverential enquirer found his head against a stream too strong for individual stemming. Now, if he be timid as well as reverential, he may chance to be frightened at the ebb-tide of National Orthodoxy sweeping away more landmarks than he likes to lose, and alarming his nervous senses as with a roar of Niagara in the distance. Without figure of speech, I was startled at the general exoteric currency of controversies that used to seek esoteric conclave; and this remark absolves me from any further scruple as to the expression of opinions, no longer as formerly, of a kind to shock stereotype conclusions resting content on traditional authority, rather than seeking to give an answer for the hope that is in them. You, I know, have made yourself the centre of a circle of active and fearless investigators with whom my conclusions are more likely to sin by their halfness than their boldness; but if you can value them as standing wear and tear, and being consistent, without having aimed at consistency, you are free to give them any "imprimatur" you think proper.

Among other signs of the times that struck me was an agitation as to the "practical" results of prayer, embodied in printed proposals, from no mean quarter, to the effect that such efficacy should be put to positive test within the walls of a hospital, one ward of which should be solemnly commended to faithful and righteous prayer in addition to the usual curative ways and means within reach of them all. This, it was argued on the Realistic side, would be a fair and searching trial of the true value of spiritual supplication. Nothing, it was urged, being holier in its purpose than prayer for recovery of the sick—should no propitious reply be vouchsafed to such petitions, as evinced by increased per-centage of recovery, then should we have little or no right to expect it for any other orisons we might offer. This strange project, betraying views, as it seemed to me, of a crude and coarse kind, I had opportunities of hearing referred to, even in pulpits of the Established Church, where, as may be supposed, it would meet with no great favour or respect. Yet I could not help thinking that such a subject, once publicly propounded, was worthy of more precision in the way of dealing with it than it happened to be my lot to listen to. There is at least a superficial look of fair play and common sense about such an abrupt challenge that naturally attracts the wistful attention of "practical" people, whose minds might easily be unsettled by uncertain sounds in the trumpet replying to it. That such sounds, as far as I heard them, *were* uncertain, or at least wanting in the force and fullness to be wished, was, and still is, my impression; and having risked an opinion that may smack of presumption, I will now make it my purpose herewith to subject my own kindred lucubrations to the probability of similar criticism. Such an exordium will no doubt prepare you for something more like a sermon than a letter, but having proposed such a

solemn theme, you must of course tolerate a solemn tone. I promise you, however, as little of a homily, or at any rate as plain a one, as I can put together, knowing of old that the "drum ecclesiastic" is not the music you best love to listen to.

What I have to substantiate is the assertion that the *highest* interpretation of our Biblical and Liturgical didactics would place the efficacy of prayer, not in its influence on external circumstance, but in its inward and *reflexive* working on the soul of the petitioner. I will try to show that neither the Bible nor the Book of Common Prayer, in the loftiest spirit of their teaching, ever encourage us to suppose that our supplications can affect the ordinary course of outward events, as regulated by that Will and Way of God, which manifest themselves in what we call "Laws of Nature." Many on religious grounds have, I know, an objection to this term, "Laws of Nature," and one is only too happy in these times to bow low to any scruple of a reverential kind. Yet is it an imperative religious duty to refer the laws of Nature to Nature's God, and we have no higher revelation of the divine characteristics than their *immutability*—"Without variableness or shadow of turning." We none of us could contemplate as possible any change in the *moral* laws, as of Truth and Justice, for example. We all know and feel that in moral as in physical laws, "A false balance is, and must be, 'an abomination to the Lord.'" Truth is a reality, or *entity*, and is part of the all-pervading Being that alone *is*, and comprehends every extant modification of subordinate Being. Untruth, or a "false balance," is negative or non-existent, and therefore *Atheistic*, and thus no truth can ever change or become untruth, whether we distinguish it as physical or moral. The Hebrew tetragrammaton יְהוָה (an aoristic form of the substantive verb) expresses this in the most picturesque way, by giving to the "Name" of God the value of the three

tenses, past, present, and future—"The *same* yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Considering in this light the "Laws of Nature" as not external or extrinsic to the Deity, but absolutely intrinsic, co-ordinate, and immanent, they lose that hard aspect of materialism which is apt to alienate feelings and sentiments entitled to the tenderest and most respectful treatment. It would certainly seem, then, that we were authorised to consider physical laws as being no less changeless than moral, seeing that they both alike are expressions of the Will and Way of the same changeless originating Power. Who in fact can conceive as possible any physical change in the law, that a straight line is the shortest between two points, that three angles of a triangle equal two right angles, or that a circle cannot touch another in more points than one? If it be said that a fact be not a "law," it at any rate belongs to a "law," and such a fact as that two contiguous mountains *must* have an intervening valley, may assume the dignity of law with equal right as that claimed by an angle of incidence equalling its angle of reflection. The religious demur to the *invariability* of Physical Laws seems to arise, first, from assuming that they are in existence as external incidents or accidents in the Universe, and that as such it would be derogating from Divine Omnipotence to deny that they could be changed or suspended. Are not, indeed, "*all* things possible with God?" But this dictum, like most others of a transcendent sort, is an example of "extremes meeting," as it would be equally true, and equally reverential, to say, that with God but *one* thing is possible, viz., the thing which *is*. Can Almighty Power be exerted in any way but the *wisest* way? and can there be two ways of doing the same thing in the wisest, or "*most wise*" way? Does not, in fact, the same Scriptural Authority that enounces *all* things as possible with God, elsewhere limit such possibility in terms equally express,

“*Si possibile transeat Calix sed non quod ego volo, sed quod Tu*”—“If it be *possible*, let this cup pass.” We must guard accordingly against narrow and derogatory views on this mysterious Chapter of Omnipotence, united with the *maximum* of Wisdom and Knowledge, *inevitably* limiting Almighty Government (rather pondered in the heart than formalised in the head)—*inevitably* limiting Almighty Government by self-existent statutes totally different from the puerile notions we may attach to the “*bon plaisir*” of an earthly Monarch or imaginary Magician! Yet it may be objected that this doctrine of the invariability of material Laws would involve the negation of *all* “Miracles” as popularly understood! To which I would venture to observe, with the utmost respect in presence of so momentous a topic, that *how* Miracles in general are popularly understood is very difficult to say, but that it is not very rash or heterodox to maintain that they are probably *misunderstood*.

We are now, however, not concerned with the perplexing and, in these times, distressing subject of “Miracles” in general, nor even with the absolute possibility or impossibility of incidental change in “Physical Laws.” The Miracles on which the religious faith of so many millions has hitherto rested are presented to us as strictly exceptional, and limited to exceptional Personages, as divine vouchers for missions involving the welfare of the Human Race. We are not now inquiring whether these be supposed to involve real change or suspension of Laws, or only the interposition of inferior agents, leaving the Laws intact, or whether, lastly, the Miracles be “*subjectively*,” rather than “*objectively*,” to be interpreted. These alternatives are not for the present under consideration. Quite enough that we may assume so much as *excessive* rareness or improbability in such miraculous phenomena, to authorise us to impugn them as awaiting the wish and will of mere ordinary

mortals beseeching before the throne of Omnipotence, that the infinite should adapt itself to the finite, the omniscience of the Creator to the ignorance of the creature. Were, indeed, such privilege of miraculous control or interference within reach of our own individual fervour, miracles would become too numerous and too normal to be "miraculous" or wonderful at all, thus perishing of their own plethora.

But to return: it is indisputable that the highest Biblical doctrine of Prayer is that contained in the answer of our Lord to the inquiry of his disciples *how* to pray. Now in the formula of the "Pater Noster" there is not a single clause but that referring to "daily bread," which in any degree recognises the control of external circumstance as coming within the province of Christian supplication. As regards giving us our daily bread, there can be no doubt that it implies a thankful recognition on our part of the law that we reap tenfold or a hundredfold, according to circumstances, the grain that we sow. It is in fact a *commemorative* and *eucharistic* acknowledgment of our dependence on such Law for our daily maintenance, and it is on such principle of commemorative and eucharistic sacrifice that *alone* are founded, as I believe, all the petitions that we offer in the name or spirit of Christ, touching the outward or material conditions of existence. Nothing can be more exclusively inward and spiritual than all the other clauses of the divine model of Prayer. God's "Name," or Being, is to be held holy in our hearts. His Government and His Will are to be as unquestionable with us on Earth as we conceive them to be with Beings of higher powers of appreciation, inhabiting higher spheres in the hierarchy of the Universe. His Will to be done on Earth as in Heaven, but by no means in *Heaven* as on *Earth*. We are to discipline ourselves to forgive our earthly Brother as sole condition of being ourselves forgiven of our Heavenly Father,

and we implore that we may be strengthened in hours of temptation and delivered from spiritual evil (*του πονηρου*).

That our Liturgical Services recognise Christ's teaching on the doctrine of Prayer, as being of authority beyond appeal, belongs of course to the nature of the case; but if it needed any argument, we have it at once in the frequent reference, or "harking back," as it were, to the divine standard of our one High Spiritual Priest. That we also pray for protection against all the various physical, as well as moral, evils by which we are beset, is, as already said, to be set down to commemorative exercise of devotion, reminding us when gathered together of all the manifold manifestations of Power and Wisdom by which, whether collectively or individually, we live and have our Being. When we pray against Plague and Pestilence, does any one suppose that such Prayer militates with our bounden duty, Godward and Manward, to "wash and be clean?" Is it not rather to strengthen and stimulate our faith in the fulfilment of God's Laws of health that we put up such petition? When we pray for "the kindly fruits of the earth, that in due time we may enjoy them," do we risk the inculcation of sloth and negligence in the business of Agriculture? Is not the whole tone and tenor of such orisons in the direction of "up and be doing," strengthening our faith, and cheering our hope in working out our own welfare with the sufficiency, and according to the means given us of God? Would any of us neglect the electric conductor because he had prayed against lightning and tempest? Would such Prayer be less blessed in its working because of the conductor, or that of the conductor because of the Prayer? It would be a dim and narrow view that did not perceive how they supplement each other. Does any Subject or Citizen of our United Kingdom find it

derogate from his political rights and duties to pray that our earthly Sovereign may have affiance in our Heavenly King of Kings? Are the bonds of our Social fellowship in Church and State so strongly knit, or in danger of being so relaxed by congregational idealism, that we should refrain from praying that our clergy may set forth God's Word by their preaching and living—that our Magistrates (Judges) may execute justice and maintain truth—that our Nobles may be endued with grace, wisdom, and understanding? Would Socrates or Plato, or any other of the Human-Catholic Church, demur to join any Nation under Heaven in thus reverencing God, honouring the King, and loving the Brotherhood? In fact, when the Service winds up, as it always does, with the Saving Clause of St. Chrysostom, that our Prayers should be granted *only* in so far as "expedient" for us, we have Christian and highest Ethnic Piety joining hands in common confession to that "Fountain of all Wisdom, who knows our necessities before we ask, and our *ignorance* in asking." If you tolerate a scrap of Greek, let me quote Socrates in epigram on "Efficacy of Prayer," and see whether he did not hold much the same doctrine as taught by our Liturgy :

Ζεῦ Βασιλεῦ, τὰ μὲν εἰσθλὰ καὶ εὐχομένοις καὶ ἀνέυκτοις
 Ἄμμι δίδου ἴταδε λυγρὰ καὶ εὐχομένων ἀπερύκοις,

freely but faithfully translated

Put away from us, O Lord, such things as be hurtful,
 And grant us such things as be profitable,
 Whatever our ignorance in asking them.

If any one would convince himself that the spirit of our Liturgy is that of the "Lord's Prayer," namely of inward not outward tendency, let him only turn to the "Collects," the oldest and most concentrated of all our formularies, and he will note consecutive petitions that "we may so pass through things temporal

as not to lose the things that are eternal;” that Goodness and true Religion may increase within us; that hurtful things may be put away from us, and things profitable given us; that we may have the spirit to think and do such things as be rightful; that in order to obtain our petitions we may ask such things as it may please God to give us; and that we may have grace *to run the way of God’s Laws*, in order to gain His promises and partake His treasures! I have merely taken a word or two out of consecutive Collects after Trinity, and could add to them indefinitely to the same effect. Could any tone of prayer be desired or imagined of larger and loftier scope, of more “Socratic” or transcendent import, or in which greater stress were laid on our adapting our human Will to the divine, rather than vainly attempting the converse process?

Could any language more expressly limit our gaining what is good for us to the condition of “running the way of God’s commandments”? One cannot imagine any point of view from which such spirit of prayer could be otherwise than welcome and edifying to every mind recognising a divine sentient Godhead as pervading the Universe, and esteeming aspirations towards that God as the characterising and distinguishing prerogative of our human nature. The quotations cited go far, moreover, towards establishing the position from which I ventured to set out, namely, that our Biblical and Liturgical doctrines on prayer and its efficacy will admit, in their highest interpretation, of conclusions identical with those of nearly all earnest and sober thinkers, yearning to worship God with their spirit in unison with their understanding.

You will perhaps think I am now dwelling less on the efficacy of prayer than of the “Prayer Book,” yet is our Anglican—Parliamentary—Liturgy so

saturated with the spirit and letter of the Bible, that it might almost claim the recognition of Universal Christendom as a fair exponent of *Scriptural* teaching on the subject. Then again, independently of different Communions within the limits of the United Kingdom, it seems to possess quite a special interest to every British Subject and Citizen as being hitherto, at least, the most effective extant instrument of "National Education" among us. One can scarcely help thinking its value even under-rated in this respect, and that, had it not been for this Parliamentary boon to the Empire, our English character would hardly have stood so high among Nations as it in general has done for the last three centuries. If we value the language Shakspeare spake, the morals Milton held, and hold that education is rather the inculcation of good principles and good manners, than of mere intellectual accomplishments, then you will agree with me that our "Morning and Evening Services," known by heart, as they have been by successive millions of our Countrymen, almost from the cradle to the coffin, are entitled to some prominence in the consideration of Prayer at the hands of every dweller in these Islands. I for one, at any rate, believe that the spirit to do our work and fight our battles has been in no small measure imbibed from the rhythmical beauty and deep earnestness of the teaching so dear and familiar to most of us, from the "Lawful and Right" of the Prophet Ezekiel to the triune benediction of the Apostle Paul. So if I say too much about the "Book" for the efficacy of Human Prayer in general, let it pass for something to the purpose as to that of *British* Prayer in particular.

You will have seen at once what I mean when bargaining for the "highest and broadest" interpretation of our Christian Oracles, to the effect of

excluding low and narrow notions that might easily be propped up with single "texts," giving no fairer idea of the general scope of Christianity than would single stones of the architecture of the Temple. You are not the man to meet me with the argument of "Elias holding back the rain for three years and six months," even though an Apostolic text can be quoted in its favour. You will allow that if we would know what horizon the Christian Temple commands we must go to the *top* of it, and that top is the Cross of the Spiritual Gospel, showing us that our God is a Universal Spirit, seeking worship only in universal spiritual truth. If St James himself believed in the efficacy of Elias's prayer to such coarse material purpose, his belief can to us have only "subjective" worth, as the critics call it, that is, only establishing his own individual persuasion, but by no means substantiating such notions as an "objective" or palpable fact. He may indeed have only availed himself of such "subjectivity," or popular persuasion, on the part of his countrymen; it afforded him an illustration and he employed it. *They* were not likely to question traditional noble works heard with their ears and declared by their Fathers, as done in their days, and in old time before them. But *we* measure God's "noble works" by another standard, and know that mortal prayer, in its fitful waywardness, can never avail to change the Law that sends sunshine and rain alike upon the just and the unjust. The same reply is ready to the hand of every Christian, when "beggarly elements" and "old wives' fables" are rudely thrust upon him by devotees of the "letter" that kills, rather than of the spirit that quickens. Did a Jew of that time and place believe it? then we respect his belief then and there. "Sed credat tunc temporis Judæus, non ego!"

One feels, however, that the real paramount diffi-

culty of the whole subject is the deeply-rooted reluctance of human nature to acknowledge its own apparent insignificance in presence of changeless and unchangeable physical or material laws. The weight of evidence to such effect seems indeed crushing, yet it has not sufficed, and will not easily suffice, to crush human faith and hope in doctrine of a less dreary and desolate aspect. We instinctively cling to any principle, or any persuasion, that re-establishes us in our own eyes, as of more importance than to be made the sport of earthly elements—drowned by water, burnt by fire, starved by cold, with as little elemental remorse as were the existence but of mice, rather than men, at stake on the issue!

The facts, it must be confessed, are fearfully blunt in their testimony against our higher pretensions. That Biscayan billow rolls into the Tagus, and sweeps away 30,000 men, women, and children, as if the inhabitants of a European capital were no more than the denizens of an ant-hill! Yet how Priests and People petition Heaven's grace for dear life, as they crowd down to that fatal quay to escape the shock that has levelled their proud city. How would it have been had some Priest of Nature warned them with his *Kύριε ἐλέησον* to flee *up hill* from the reactionary volcanic surge of that mass of pitiless brine! Look again into yon grand Catholic Church far away beyond the South Atlantic, under the shadow of the sunny Andes. See how the lights shine, the banners wave, and clouds of incense rise with pealing organs and anthems to the glory of God, according to the worship of the forefathers of those two thousand women and children that are praying for health and wealth, after their knowledge! Yet a gentle fresher zephyr from without blandly waves that long muslin streamer into the tall torch lazily lambent on its silver sconce, and, gracious Heaven! by *Law* of fire and fuel,

it flashes from beam to beam, leaps from rafter to rafter, and the frantic, shrieking crowd rush headlong upon those great gates that open *inwards* on their hinges! Let who will read the newspapers of no distant date for the how and how long lasted the agony of that holocaust of charred bones, but even now a multitude of mostly young, beautiful, festively-adorned, and God-adoring humanity! But why cross the Atlantic for illustrations; cannot even middle-aged men recall the Irish famine, when the potato-sick soil refused longer health and strength to the single root to which millions of human beings, contrary to the laws of God, looked for their sole sustenance; and did not a million or more of the subjects of the richest empire in the world pay with their lives for the rotten scab of that poor vegetable bulb. Had we prayed with the *plough* for the "daily bread" of Ireland, would that million of our countrymen have been sacrificed to the leprosy of "lumpers?" Look again, if we like to dwell on human humiliation in presence of the divine laws of material creation, look to that proud "iron-clad" Man-of-War, equipped with all that the ways and means of the British Empire could devise, *except* one poor requirement of the law of "central gravitation." Look and see, if we can through our tears, that leviathan reversed, and five hundred of our best and bravest dimly drowned on the dark night off Corunna, by behest of the stern statute that sent them to the bottom with as little compunction as it would have capsized a child's toy in a pond or puddle. Think we prayers were wanting for that ship's company, or that *more* prayers would have given her increased stability? There seems no possibility of reasonably or religiously resisting such evidence as this, and we all know it can be indefinitely extended. Ask medical doctors

what "efficacy" they assign to prayer, and they will at once, and of course, limit it to the soothing effect that Faith and Hope, or cheerfulness and elasticity of mind, may work on the body through the nervous system. But that any amount or any intensity of prayer, by or for the patient, will work materially to set a broken, or renew a lost limb, is a proposition to which they will not listen, and cannot reply. Could such interposition prevail, how gladly would they call it in to temper that inexorable statute that visits with consumption, insanity, and the rest, the third and fourth generation of those, that with guilt or innocence, have transgressed a *Law*.

Ask commercial calculators in companies of insurance against fire and hail, securing, through accurate reckoning, profit to themselves, while saving individuals from ruin, by spreading loss over larger surface—do they recognise the existence of an unknown, impalpable, inappreciable, influence, that would set their tables and tariffs at nought? To seek ampler illustration would be useless and tedious. Established facts are sacred revelations, and there can scarcely be a better established fact than the utter disrespect to human persons displayed by the executive powers that preside over the physical phenomena of the world we live in. We have only honestly and humbly to acknowledge the truth, and seek consolation for its seeming harshness in our reverential faith that whatever *is* is ultimately right, and that, in the language of devotion, we are in the hands of an Almighty Power, declaring itself most chiefly in mercy and pity.

What that sphere of "most chief" mercy is, we need not go far to inquire. The most chief lesson of our religion is *not* to fear the powers that may indeed kill the body, but have no might or right to meddle with the "soul," that alone constitutes the divine

and abiding life of man. The physical laws that govern fire and water, the laws of gravitation, of chemistry, and of electricity, do indeed evince no respect for the corporeal life that, designedly or undesignedly, trenches on their domain. Whether it be the life of thousands, or the life of units, the life of saints, or the life of sinners, we have no shadow of reason for believing that such laws manifest the slightest respect or recognition of our persons. No man in his senses will maintain that an eruption of Etna will respect the city of Catania on its flanks, and Catania is no mean city. And, were it the city of London and Westminster to boot, a stream of lava miles wide and deep as the height of a church-tower, would make short work of it. But let us take courage and be of good cheer, when we remember that all the lava of all the volcanos in the Planetary System could not suffice to suffocate a single human "soul," and that the soul's life is the only life whose Salvation Religion recognises as worth the saving. Our bodies come and go, circulating through mineral, animal, and vegetable—great Cæsar's dust, or dust that stops a bung-hole. It is for the spirit alone, which for a while dwells in such dust, that Religion will condescend to pray, or that God, who is a Spirit, (with reverence be it spoken), will condescend to hear. We have eaten so much of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, that we become terror-stricken at the incomprehensible ineffable Deity we have discovered; the higher our Godhead soars viewless into the Heaven of Heavens, the deeper the relative "Fall of Man" in his consciousness of his nakedness and his nothingness. We grope round on every side for mediating connecting links between the finite and the infinite. Guardian Angels—Patron Saints—and all the mythological machinery of Greek and Goth have had their day—but every Prospero in his turn, as we grow older

and wiser, abjures his "rough magic," buries his wand, and plunges his book deeper than plummet's sound; all Prosperos but the divine SON, that still bridges the gaping chasm that separates Man from his God, teaching us to serve Him with a "Reasonable Service" of all the mind no less than of all the heart. This is the only Service and the only Religion we cannot outgrow, for it is of us and *within* us, growing with our growth, strengthening with our strength, endured with powers of expansion to adapt itself, by higher and broader interpretation, to all the changes and chances of life's mystery. It is the only true and "Catholic" Religion, because it is the only one that sanctifies and ennobles *Sorrow*, and to sorrow we are born as the sparks fly upward. We begin with wailing and we end with groaning, and it were no desirable privilege to be exempt from educational wailing and groaning as we go along; for sweet are the uses of adversity, and at times better is the house of mourning than that of gladness. Against bodily rack and ruin we have no Guardian-Angel but our own Prudence, learning the laws of health and strength, and *living* them; for the Body's fleeting claims, "Nullum Numen si sit Prudentia"—but for the Soul's eternal health and wealth Angels in Heaven do continually regard the light of God's Face in our behalf (a Christian Article of Faith that might be made more of than it is), and by them, ascending and descending the patriarchal ladder, are borne the availing prayers of such as pray in righteous prayer and spirit. People ask why and how Christ's Religion has so spread and struck root; surely because it is the religion that best knows what we are, and what we need, that best strengthens our faith in the midst of mystery, best consoles us in sorrow and cheers us in resignation; a religion preached and practised by the divine Man whose religion teaches us that the only efficacious

prayer is "Fiat Voluntas," not our will but "Our FATHER'S IN HEAVEN" be done.

To sum up ;—Prayer efficacious only mentally and *reflexively* ;—powerless *circumstantially*, till translated into Action, and then valid only in direction of, and conformity with, *changeless* Laws ;—though *intense* Prayer must needs be silent individual concentration, yet does the *conventional* language of Public-Service greatly strengthen us, in the sense of commemorative and eucharistic devotion, forming the best and steadiest basis of "National Education."

If I have written you more of a sermon than a letter, put it down, as far as you can, to the solemnity of the subject proposed ; and if my "idealism" does not always meet your sympathy, remember, at any rate, that I am *real* when signing myself,

Yours faithfully,

FOREIGN CHAPLAIN.

THOMAS SCOTT, Esq.

