

ON PRAYER

By Rt. Rev. Alex. Macdonald, D.D., Bishop of Victoria, B.C.

Prayer is the communion of the soul with God. We can commune only with the known. God is known by the light of reason, as well as by the higher light of revelation. It is this higher light that we are to consider our subject. The prayer that "availeth much," the prayer that saves (Jas. 5: 15, 16) rests on divine faith as its foundation. But it has two supports in nature itself. One is the witness of reason to the being of a God; the other is the witness of history to the fact of a divine revelation. If either of these should fail, faith would be put in jeopardy, and prayer would be vain. If there were no God, where would be the use of speaking boldly into the void? If God cared so little for man as to hold Himself aloof in His high Heaven, where would be the sense of trying to commune with Him? It is needful, therefore, to look to these supports of prayer in the order of nature, and to establish them firmly.

The existence of God is borne in upon the mind by a four-fold consideration: the witness of the human race in all lands and in all ages, the evidences of design in the world around us; the need of a first cause to account for the origin of things; the need of a Sovereign Lawgiver to account for the existence of the moral law of which conscience is the herald. I will state briefly these four proofs.

First, there is the testimony of mankind. The poet voices it when he sings:—

Father of all! in every age,
In every clime adored,
By saint, by savage, and by sage,
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord.

Never was there a race of men on this earth but held, in some form, belief in a Supreme Being. This belief is a rational conviction. It is rooted in the reason of man. It is only reason that could beget it, for none of the senses can perceive the being of a God. This belief, too, bears about it all the tokens of truth. It is universal. Not only the untutored and the un-