

sense, and indulged with a complacency in the thought that he knows them. But, would it not be absurd to indulge them, if it be absurd to express them? And worse than absurd, for what are they less (according to the objection) than impulses to control the divine determinations and conduct? For these desires will absolutely ascend toward Him. But we all know that these desires are good, that they are vital and essential to religion, inasmuch that the degree in which they prevail in the soul, is the degree in which religion prevails there. But if these feelings be the essential spirit of religion, is it consistent that they be carried into a direct act of religion, namely prayer.

Again, it is the grand object to augment these desires. Well then, here too, is evidence in favour of prayer. For it must operate to make them more strong, more vivid, more solemn, more prolonged, and more definite as to their objects. Forming them into expressions to God will concentrate the soul on them, and upon these objects. Soliciting to them, by an express act, the immediate attention of the Almighty Intelligence, must combine them with the feeling regarding Him; it must partly have the same effect as if we were expecting to be soon placed in his presence by death.

Again, as to the objection that we cannot alter the divine determinations, and, that if the things desired are proper to be given to us, he will give them, and if not so, he will not;—it may well be supposed, that it is according to the divine determination that good things shall not be given to those that will not petition for them; that there shall be this expression of dependence, and acknowledgement of the divine supremacy; that they (those that will not petition) are, by this proof, in no proper state of mind to receive the good gifts; that he has made it an indispensable circumstance, a condition, that they shall pray for them, in order to obtain them. On general grounds of reason this may well be supposed to be the case; but, the moment we turn to revelation we find that it actually is so. "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." And doubtless experience and fact would bring a full testimony to the same effect. Suppose two men to pass through life, both acknowledging that all good must come from God. But the one acts on the sort of philosophic principle that disowns prayer; the other habitually and fervently petitions the Almighty, in the name of Jesus Christ. We may refer it to any man to judge of the comparative account of what these two respectively will have obtained by the time they come to the end of life. We might also refer it to any man, which of the situations he would prefer to be in, in looking forward to that period.

But we need not have enlarged on such a matter as the assertion of the propriety of

prayer! (Paley, Price, &c.) It may be presumed we are under the full and irresistible conviction that men ought to implore the mercies of "the God of heaven;" that this is an homage absolutely due to Him; and that for ourselves it is indispensable, and infinitely beneficial. If we could go deep enough in thought, it would strike us as an amazing and inexpressibly delightful circumstance, in the economy of the Almighty Being, that there is a permission and appointed duty, to such creatures as we are, to speak directly to him, at any time, on any subject. Men speak to one another; some of them may not speak to some others of them; but the least, the humblest, the meanest, may speak to Him that made and commands all things!

Now then for the manner in which men avail themselves of this most sublime circumstance in their condition. Let us for one moment suppose that we could be quite uninformed of the actual state of our race, in this particular respect; knowing only just the general facts that they are rational, accountable, immortal, wholly dependent on the Almighty, and every moment experiencing his beneficence; and knowing also that they have the grand privilege we have described. What might we expect in conformity to this their condition?—now, what? Evidently, an universal prevalence of a devotional spirit; a grateful, habitual recourse to their most glorious privilege? Now then let us, by all means, deny the doctrine, and the fact, of the radical depravity of human nature, when we come to contemplate the actual state and practice of mankind in respect to the matter in question;—I repeat, let us boldly and firmly deny it, if we *can*, in front of the facts of the case; (the facts being as follows:)

Hundreds of Millions are paying homage to insensible substances, phantasms, or devils. Many millions are literally making to themselves an amusement and a sport of shows and vain ceremonies of a religion pretended to be in homage to the true God. But come to what is accounted the most privileged, instructed, and Christianized portion of mankind (our own nation). There are millions of them that practise no worship, no prayer, at all, in any manner; they are entirely "without God in the world." Assemble them in imagination, and look upon them! To say to but one of these, in the full and entire sense, "Thou restrainest prayer!" is pronouncing upon him an awful charge, is predicting an awful doom. But then consider, that, to pronounce deliberately but this one short sentence upon each one in our land to whom it is applicable, would take many years! But then reflect what it is that you would be pronouncing in each single instance. Think what it includes when said of a being standing in such relations as he does to God; and with death, judgment, and eternity before him. You are pronouncing that,—he habit-