

would a man think if his children knelt and begged for his love, or for their daily bread? He would think his children showed a very low conception of their father's sense of duty and affection." Those are the words in which the sceptical objections to prayer are stated. I reply at once, and plainly, that here this is a double fallacy. For this statement is both a misrepresentation of prayer and a misrepresentation of God. The misrepresentation of prayer is in putting the seventh part for the whole; the misrepresentation of God is in suggesting that His Fatherhood is no more than stoical isolation.

The Nature of Prayer.

What is prayer? I ask. Is it what this writer says, "kneeling and begging"? It is no more merely begging than one colour of the spectrum is the whole of light. For every Christian as well as every non-Christian should always remember that there are seven distinct elements in real prayer, even as there are in this light. In what we call "white" light, there are seven prismatic colours always blended. They are the red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. You cannot get rid of them; they are always there, and in that order. Even so true prayer includes these seven elements, and always in their true order.

First, adoration. For no man can truly pray, unless in some degree he realizes that he is praying to God, and God who is God must needs be adored. After adoration there comes, or should come, thanksgiving. For the apprehension of the greatness of God must be immediately followed in thought by the recognition of His goodness. Then comes, alas! our only too clear recollection that as mortal men we have but ill requited that goodness, or,

to put it one word, the conviction of sin. Thus the need for penitence follows upon the recognition of the goodness of God. But after penitence, necessarily and always, resolution; for penitence without resolution is vain and false.* That which real repentance dreads most of all is the repetition of the sin.

Then, and only then, is the time or place in true prayer for what our friend calls begging—though we may prefer to call it petition or request. It is only after adoration- and thanksgiving, confession, and self-consecration, that there is any place for petition in prayer. There is no more misleading conception of prayer than that which one too often meets with—as though it simply meant that God was flooding this world of ours with indiscriminate blank cheques for every one to fill in according to their fancy. That may be a pious imagination, but it is not Christ's doctrine of prayer, nor is it even the truth as to that element of "petition" concerning which the apostle says that "if we ask anything according to His will He heareth us." The will of God herein is made plain as the light of day. If, in reality, we would approach Him, it must be in His own appointed way. And the final authority as to that way is neither theological invention nor religious custom, but the clear teaching of the Bible itself.

Even after petition there are two other parts in prayer. For intercession, wherein we plead for others, is as valid and as necessary in all true prayer as any sincerity or earnestness on our own behalf. And yet there is another element, and that is submission. For this means the final recognition that after all our entreaty, and assuming all possible sincerity, seeing that we plead

* "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."—Ps. lxxvi. 18.