

good they are to derive is that they shall be brought to resignation and peace? They will not make requests at all unless they have faith that their petitions shall be answered. They cannot make believe to ask things which at the very time they are asking they know they will not receive. They cannot seek for moral blessings at the expense of their intelligence and common sense. They may mock others, but they do not usually make fools of themselves. It follows, therefore, that the very continuance of prayer among men is a witness to the constancy of the belief that God does send objective answers to prayer.

But what if in so believing men are believing error? Is it possible for prayer to be thus answered? The question is put by those who have given themselves the investigation of the material universe and who announce their discovery that law is everywhere. They affirm that effects, or as they call them consequences, are bound to their antecedents by fixed and unalterable laws with which it would require a miracle to interfere; and that, therefore, requests for such blessings as daily bread or bountiful harvests or the like are the merest superstitions, since these things will come only when the necessary conditions and antecedents are present.

Now, men cannot deny the constancy of the operations of nature, for that is not only an irrefutable inference from the observation of the facts of the universe, but also an indispensable pre-requisite to man's own moral training. Without a reliable universe no moral character can grow. A fickle world admits only of a lawless race; no obedience could be required from those who are planted among shifting conditions, to whom foresight is denied, and whose wisdom is as likely to go astray as their folly. All human habits are formed by mutual understanding between man and nature. Who could be temperate, if the food which simply nourishes to-day were to intoxicate to-morrow? Who would put away sloth to be in his field betimes, but in faith that the sun would not forget to rise? It would be absolutely impossible to train a character in a state of things where there was no certainty and where the result of action was