

Such a view of prayer as we have now advanced in regard to external law is in keeping with every dictate of reason and doctrine of revelation.

Schleiermacher's doctrine that prayer brings about its own answer by operating in an unknown way, in the realms of mind and matter as a new cause among causes, is, to say the least, too mystical and misleading to help us in solving the difficulties our subject suggests. The same thing may be said of the speculations of Chalmers when he says "that there may be a subtle tie of connection between the prayer and its answer in the domain of second causes." Such views destroy the true nature of prayer by reducing it to a mere mechanical agency or mystical force, operating in accordance with mere mechanical law.

And how very silly and suicidal is that theory which declares that the only benefit of prayer is that which is realized in its reaction upon the soul that prays. Certainly there is a reflex benefit in prayer, which has to be included in an exhaustive inventory of its benefits, but this surely is not all that prayer means to us. Those who advocate this theory as one which includes all that prayer is intended to do for us, very often work into it elements which do not properly belong thereto. They tell us that every good desire cherished may become the prophecy of its own fulfilment. Man in the moral sphere may become whatever he desires. Thus prayer by its own inherent property involves its answer.

Now, we believe that God is so immanent in human nature—that man is so permeated and environed with Divine influences that morally he may become whatever he desires to be. In fact, he is for the time being whatever his supreme desire makes him.

"The thing we long for that we are,  
For one transcendent moment,  
Before the Present, poor and bare,  
Can make its sneering comment."

Yet this is true only so far as this desire is born of God and opens the soul to the Divine influence and action. Hence the poet from whom we have quoted goes on to finish his thought thus: