

"Candid Examination of Theism"—"There are several methods by which it is amply apparent, even to our limited faculties, that the Almighty may answer prayer, without in any way violating the course of natural law?" Again, "The question at issue is not this, Can the existence and the action of a special providence be experimentally proved? But, supposing the existence of such Providence, can its action be rationally supposed capable of eluding the scrutiny of science?"—"One quotation, however, should be laid to heart as proceeding from the father of these methods, to which science owes all her victories in the past and all her hopes for the future—'I believe that God doth (as Bacon says in his "Confession of Faith") accomplish and fulfil His divine will in all things, great and small; singular and general, as fully and exactly by Providence as He could by miracle.'" To which we may well add Professor Lodge's remark that "sobriety and sanity consist in recognizing all the operative causes, spiritual, mental, and material."

There is room, however, for another suggestion. Those who pray may well turn the tables on objectors, in affirming that if what is wanted is a really irrational and unscientific conception in this whole matter, we have it to hand when we are asked to assume or to concede that God, who is God, in His dealing with men should necessarily be limited to our conceptions, either of His nature, or of what we are pleased to call "natural law." For at the utmost—and I speak as a lover of science all my life—at the utmost, what is our knowledge of science, and of natural law, but the poor blind groping of tiny earthworms in contact for a very little time with

a mere fragment of a boundless universe? Who are we to say that this and the other is impossible to the will of the Infinite and Eternal Father? I submit, therefore, and must here leave this portion of my subject, that the balance of science, as well as the best of human nature, is on the side of those who pray.

Is Prayer Unworthy of Us?

But, further, it is suggested that, after all, prayer is not worthy of us. I must turn for this to the summary with which we are here dealing, as having been so carefully printed and so widely flung abroad throughout the kingdom. The writer previously quoted goes on to say, "And as to praise, I cannot imagine the Creator of the Universe wanting men's praise? Does the wise man prize the praise of fools? Does the strong man prize the praise of the weak? Does any man of wisdom and power care for the praise of his inferiors? We make God into a puny man, a man full of vanity and love of approbation, when we confer upon Him the impertinence of our prayers and our adoration and our praise."

Is that so? I am sorry to say, not unkindly, but plainly, that the real "impertinence" here is in the misrepresentation of the terms "praise and prayer." These two words are turned into one as though they meant mere "applause." Thus we are given to understand that to "praise" God is to applaud God. Is that so? Every sincere man should know, as any Sunday scholar does know, whether this is true. For what does the Bible always mean by "prayer and praise"? Adoration and thanksgiving. That is, never anything else than reverent love and gratitude. Where is the un-