

### PRAYER AND THE WEATHER.

Our correspondents upon this subject seem to forget the true meaning or purpose of prayer. It is not, *primarily* at least in our idea, the requesting for a temporal blessing, without which request such blessing would not accrue unto us; but it is an effort, and also the means, to bring our own free wills into conformity with the will of the Almighty. Christ did not receive the fulfilment of His petition in the garden of Gethsemane when He prayed that the cup might pass from Him; yet His prayer was successful in its object of bringing His will into submission to the will of His Father, and so men may ask for any result of natural laws, as a wet or dry day, so long as they pray, not that God may do *their* will to please *them*, but that He may so change their own stubborn hearts that they may recognize and conform to the superiority of God's will. Thus, although prayer can have no effect upon the weather, yet it has an effect upon our reception of whatever weather may come, the change caused by prayer is from within not from without. Prayer should be an expression of filial trust and obedience, thus when we pray "give us this day our daily bread," we express our trust in God's temporal mercies, and our obedience to His will in disposing of such mercies: no sane man thinks that any number of such prayers will affect our supply of bread without some physical efforts in that direction. Let us clearly understand then that "Thy will not mine" must pervade all prayer; "according to His will He heareth us." But all things whatsoever we may ask in the name of Christ will be granted unto us? Certainly when we understand that the name of Christ means His character. And what is that character? "But to do the will of Him that sent me," or in other words to bring his free will into perfect harmony with God's will." Our wills can only come into harmony with God's will by (1) a radical change in one of them to make it as the other, or (2) a change in both to meet at a fixed point. Now the second method is impossible, since God cannot change, and the same reason leaves only one way in the first method, viz., our wills must be changed to meet God's will. Then let us pray *that it be so*, and not ask God to deny His character by a change in His own nature.

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We have received from the Rev. John Fletcher, an able letter refuting, by arguments derived from the quotation of various passages from the Bible, the opinions advanced by an article which appeared in our last number, under the above heading; and we regret that its length prevents our insertion of it in this issue. After expostulating with us on its unorthodox sentiments, the reverend gentleman proceeds to show how at various times the Creator has directly promised to grant the requests of His worshippers (as suitable to their true interests) and further, that in the

matter particularly under discussion He has made immediate changes of weather in answer to the prayers of His servants, a fact which is most marked in the case of Elijah on Mt. Carmel. Our correspondent finally sums up by taking a position diametrically opposite to that of the writer of the article, namely, that God still answers the prayers of His people as is best for their true welfare, and that therefore prayer is not without effect on the weather.

The opinions advanced by the article, however, can be confuted from a scientific standpoint, as well from a religious one. And as it is on this ground that the writer of the article with much complacency takes his stand, it would be as well to argue the question on this side.

To the question can prayer affect the state of the weather, the writer says: "To this question, considered from a scientific standpoint, there can be but one answer. No." He further claims that in cases where prayer for change of weather has been followed by the desired result, that it simply amounts to this, "that somewhere or other in the chain of causation on which weather changes depend, there is a place where the laws of nature do not operate in a definite way, but might act in one or another of several different ways." From this he argues that bad weather would not necessarily continue, even if its removal were not prayed for. Let us consider therefore the character of the laws and forces of nature.

In the above statement that there is a point in their action where the laws of nature do not operate in a definite way, but may choose one of several ways, the writer is clearly unscientific; for science holds that in all their relations to each other the laws of nature are perfect. Is there a law perfect, which at some point in its working leaves anything to chance? No. There must be some occult reason, some hidden force which would cause it to choose one course of action in preference to another.

In nature nothing stands alone, and all its infinite variety of forces have a tendency to balance each other. Each force, if left to itself, would cause the destruction of the universe; were it not for the force of gravitation, the centrifugal force would fling the planets into space; were it not for these centrifugal forces, the force of gravitation would dash them against the sun. The orbits, therefore, of the planets with all that depends on them, are determined by the perfect balance of the acting forces. Again, the revolution of the seasons depends on a multitude of other laws—laws of light, heat, fluids, solids, gases, &c.

Each of these laws is invariable in itself but would cause confusion if allowed to operate alone, unbalanced by others. Thus we see that every phenomenon of nature, even the smallest, is the result of the harmony of these myriads of laws. If one of these laws were altered in its relation to the rest, the whole world would be altered with it.

It is therefore presumption and folly to suppose that our prayers can change or cause the violation of these