

PRAYER AND THE PRAYER-CURE

by

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A complete treatise on the subject of prayer would necessarily include three special subdivisions: (1) Prayer considered as a fact and an efficient agency in relation to God, to his eternal plans and to the laws of the universe; (2) prayer considered as a Christian grace; (3) the manner in which prayer is to be practiced and expressed, both as a private and as a public exercise. In this lecture we are, of course, confined by the limited time and by the nature of the occasion to the first subdivision; that is, to the consideration of prayer and its answer as a fact, and as an efficient agency in relation to God and to his eternal plans and to the laws and natural forces of the universe.

All religion presupposes the personality of God, and springs from the personal relations subsisting between man and God. God can and does act upon men from within and below consciousness, turning the hearts of men even as rivers of water are turned. But he also acts upon us through our conscious acts of perception and feeling, called into exercise by his external intercourse with us as a Person speaking to persons. He is always face to face with us, our constant companion and guide and friend. From our creation he is constantly standing to us in the relation of our Father and of our moral Governor. And in these relations we have been sustaining intercourse with him ceaselessly all our lives. Sin consists in man's want of sympathy with God, his moral character, purposes and mode of action in these relations. When we are born again by the Holy Ghost we are brought into sympathy with him in all these respects, and thus intercourse with him becomes consciously active on our part, more and more intimate and tender, and a source of joy to us continually. To this conscious intercourse we assign the name "prayer" in the wide sense of that word, whether it is breathed in disconnected ejaculations or said or sung in connected sequences of thought or emotion. Prayer in this wider sense includes all the exercises proper to the relation our souls, as sinful yet redeemed and reconciled, sustain to God--*e.g.* adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication for ourselves and others.

The great design of God in this relation is to effect our education and government as rational and spiritual beings. He accomplishes these ends by revealing to us his perfections, by training our intellects to follow the great lines of thought developed in his plans and revealed in his works, and by training us to action in the exercise of all our faculties as co-workers with each other and with him in the execution of his plans.

In order to accomplish both these ends at once, the education of our thought and the training of our faculty by active exercise, God has established a comprehensive and

unchangeable system of laws, of second causes working uniformly, of fixed sequences and established methods, by which he works and by which he can train us to understand his working and to work with him.

This careful adherence to the use of means, to the slow and circuitous operation of second causes and established laws, is surely not for God's sake. It cannot be necessary to him. It is ordained and rigidly adhered to only for our sake. And for us it is absolutely necessary. If means were not necessary to the attainment of ends; if God did not carefully confine his powers to the lines of established and known laws; if we lived in a world in which miracle, instead of being the infinite exception, was the rule, and God was constantly breaking forth with the exercise of supernatural power in unexpected places, and like the wild lightning eluding the most rapid thought as it dashes zigzag across the sky,--we should find all thought and intelligent action impossible. We could not understand God, because we could not trace the relation of means to ends in his action. If we could not understand him, we could not appreciate his wisdom, his righteousness or his benevolence. We could not work with him, for we could not depend upon the operation of any means, we could not hope to effect any results. The universe would be a chaos and the community of men a bedlam. In order to accomplish the necessary understanding between God and man, and in order to afford a secure basis for the exercise of human faculties in the education of man and the molding of human character, the established fixed relations between cause and effect, uniform sequences of natural law, must be universal, continuous, perpetual and absolutely uninterrupted, without any exception except for good and well-understood reasons. If there be miracles at all, they must explain themselves as divine signs by their connection with a new direct message from the heavenly Father to his children on the earth. In that case, and in that case only, the miracle brings God nearer to his children and makes his way more plain to them. In every other case a miracle is only a bewilderment and an offense, which darkens the face of God and effaces the evidence of his being and the traces of his wisdom and love.

Observe how patiently through the ages of ages God confines himself to the slow processes of natural law, and never impatiently cuts across the heavens to accomplish suddenly by miracle the results for which he works. Follow the long, long cycle of the geologic ages in which God, by slow natural processes, by the law of means adapted to ends, is preparing the world to be the fit habitation of man and the adjusted theater of human history. Trace with your eyes the long, long cycle of human history preceding the advent of our Redeemer, while God is patiently governing his rebellious subjects, and by natural causes and historical methods evolving the plan of salvation and preparing the world for Christ, who never came until all things were ready and the fullness of the time was come. Look along the tedious course of the history of the Christian Church since the advent of Christ, and learn the lesson of God's methods by his use of second causes, by his slow following of the lines of natural law in the development of his kingdom, and his preparation for the second coming of our Lord. Each and all of these results God could have accomplished by miracle. But in that case his wisdom would have remained hidden in his own being, and his people would have failed utterly of education--neither knowing God or his way, nor trained to exercise all their faculties of head and heart and will as workers together with him.

There are two extreme and equally false views as to this framework of second causes and natural law in its relation to the action of God and to our intercourse with him through faith and prayer. The one view, that of deists and rationalists and agnostics, makes this framework of second causes and natural law, which men call Nature, an iron, impenetrable barrier, which utterly separates God and man, which makes prayer an empty form and divine help and sympathy a delusion. The opposite view, just as false and pernicious, regards this framework of second causes and natural law as simply a stage, with natural scenery as a background, on which to exhibit startling and bewildering miracles, without system or meaning of evidential value. The true view of this framework of second causes and natural law is that (1) it reveals God and his perfections to man in a form he can understand and appreciate; (2) it affords a practicable basis on which human faculties can be educated and men trained as intelligent co-workers with God; (3) it presents an invariable course of action that we must follow; nevertheless it is infinitely flexible, so that men everywhere are able, by the rational use of means, to accomplish their purposes. Thus, men following and using natural law plant and sow and raise crops, navigate the air with balloons and the sea with ships, tunnel mountains, erect buildings, and girdle the earth with the electric currents of thought and purpose. (4) This great permanent framework of second causes and natural laws is, of course, incomparably more flexible in the hands of God than it can be in the hands of man. We know these laws partially and imperfectly: God knows them perfectly. We act upon these second causes externally: God acts upon them internally. We act upon them only at a few isolated points: God acts upon every point of the infinite system at the same time. Surely, therefore, while God can act through nature in a supernatural manner, he can also, like us, only infinitely more perfectly, act through nature and in accordance with natural law in accomplishing his purposes. He can answer prayer, send rain or sunshine, turn into new channels rivers of water or currents of air, just as he turns the hearts of men, without violating natural laws.

Using the word "prayer" in this discussion in the specific sense of "petition," "supplication for desired benefits, spiritual and material," we will proceed to discuss the following points:

- I. What are the true conditions of acceptable prayer?
- II. In what sense and under what limits are we to expect to have our prayers answered?
- III. Answer objection drawn from the previous certainty of events determined by God's eternal purpose.
- IV. Answer objection drawn from fixity of the laws of nature.
- V. Show that the faith of the Christian Church in the efficacy of prayer is confirmed by uniform Christian experience.
- VI. Apply these principles to the question of the modern "faith-cure."

I. What are the true conditions of acceptable prayer?

1. The person offering the prayer must be in a state of reconciliation to God through

Christ. This does not mean that God never answers the prayers of unregenerate persons; but the promise can be claimed only by those who have accepted the conditions of salvation and are loyal to their Christian engagements.

2. The prayer must be sincere, must express a real desire of the heart, and it must be offered and the answer sought only through the merits and intercession of Jesus Christ.

3. The prayer must be offered in absolute submission to the higher, broader knowledge, wisdom and righteousness of God. It must follow our Savior's "not as I will, but as thou wilt." The only objects for which we have any warrant to press unconditional petitions are: (1) our own sanctification; (2) the bringing on of the triumph of Christ's kingdom, because God has positively revealed both of these to be his "will." The unconditioned, unsubmitive demand for any other benefit, in relation to which the will of God is as yet unrevealed, is obviously a presumptuous sin, a ground of offense, and not an acceptable prayer.

4. In order that the prayer shall be acceptable, the person praying must in every case intelligently and diligently use the means provided by God himself in the great framework of second causes and natural laws for the attainment of the end desired. If a man who prays for a crop neglects to sow the seed; or if a man who prays for learning neglects to study; or if a man who prays for the cure of disease neglects to take the appointed remedies; or if a man who prays for sanctification neglects to use the means of grace; or if a man who prays for the conversion of sinners neglects to work for it as far as his power or opportunity goes,--then, in every case, he disobeys and insults God: his prayer is a mockery and an offense, and it can be answered only by rebuke and chastisement.

Means in relation to ends and ends in dependence upon means are as much an ordinance of God and as obligatory on us as prayer itself. If God shuts us up in a situation where no means are possible, we have a right to pray for what we want in the absence of all means, and God is perfectly able to give it to us without means, if it seem wisest and best to himself. But in every case in which means are available to us their use is commanded, and the poor fanatic who neglects them and petulantly cries for what he wants dishonors God, grieves rational Christians and gives occasion to the devil and to his friends to triumph.

5. We must believe in the efficacy of prayer itself as a divinely-appointed means of attaining blessings. We must believe that we do and will obtain blessings by means of prayer which we would not attain without it.

II. In what sense and under what limits are we to expect to have our prayers answered?

Agnostic and naturalistic critics of the Christian faith have admitted that prayer might be a power in the spiritual sphere, and that in every case its subjective effects upon the person praying, upon his state of mind and character, would be beneficial, but that it is absurd to admit that prayer could have any effect upon the mind or purpose or act of God,

or any influence upon the course of events in the material world.

It is true that prayer is a power in the spiritual world, that it does secure spiritual blessings, and that it does produce valuable subjective effects upon the state of mind and character of the person praying. But Christ commands us to ask for our daily bread, which includes all desired temporal and material benefits. If we are to pray honestly for daily bread or for any other desired material good, it must be because we are assured that if we pray we may really and truly influence the mind of God to give it to us. To ask God for an objective material good when we believe that the only possible effect of the asking is an internal and spiritual modification of our own feelings, is false and hypocritical, unworthy of either God or man, and sure to be of no effect.

The Scriptures assure us, and all Christians believe, that prayer for material as well as for spiritual good is as real a means of effecting the end sought as is sowing seed a means of getting a crop, or as is studying a means of getting learning, or as are praying and reading the Bible means of sanctification. But it is a moral, not a physical, cause. Its efficiency consists in its power of affecting the mind of God and disposing him to do for us what he would not do if we did not pray.

But it is plain that in order to be effectual in any given case the prayer must have all the conditions or elements of true Christian prayer stated under the former head. The person praying must be in favor with God: he must be sincere, must present his prayer only through Christ and trust only in Christ's mediation. He must desire the thing sought, and ask for it only in complete submission to the wise and righteous will of God. There is nothing more contemptible than the presumptuous claim that God has subjected the government of the universe to our dictation. Every really holy soul must prefer a million times that God should reign absolutely and do with him and his as seems best in his sight. What child of an earthly father can judge in any case what upon the whole and in the long run is best for itself? How much more should we insist upon leaving every decision at the disposal of our heavenly Father! And lastly, the person praying must be diligent in using all the appointed means which are available to him to secure the end.

When all the conditions are fulfilled God will with absolute certainty be moved to answer our prayer--to do for us what he would not have done if we had not prayed. He will, if he sees it best, give us precisely what we ask for, at the precise time, in the precise manner. Or he may give it substantially in a different time and manner. Or he may give us something better, something which we ourselves would desire more if only we had the eyes to see as God sees. How do you treat your little ones when they cry for unwholesome sweets? God never will give us a stone when we ask for bread, or a serpent when we ask for an egg; but he often does give us bread when we ignorantly ask for a stone, and an egg when we perversely desire a serpent.

III. But it is objected that the doctrine of prayer is absurd, because God has already from eternity determined whatsoever comes to pass; every event is already fixed in his eternal purpose; and this purpose is absolutely immutable and cannot be changed. What, then, is

the use of asking him to do what we wish done? If it is already decreed, there is no need to ask for it; if it is not already decreed, there is no use to ask for it.

We answer: 1. This is a theoretical objection hard to answer, simply because the human mind cannot comprehend the relations of time to eternity. But for practical purposes the objection is absolutely senseless. If God has eternally decreed that you should live, what is the use of your breathing? If God has eternally decreed that you should talk, what is the use of your opening your mouth? If God has eternally decreed that you should reap a crop, what is the use of your sowing the seed? If God has eternally decreed that your stomach should contain food, what is the use of your eating? Prayer is only one means appointed by God for attaining our ends. In order to educate us he demands that we should use the means or go without the ends which depend upon them. There are plenty of fools who make the transcendental nature of eternity and of the relation of the eternal life of God to the time-life of man an excuse for neglecting prayer. But of all the many fools in the United States, there is not one absurd enough to make the same eternal decree an excuse for not chewing his food or for not voluntarily inflating his lungs.

2. The common difficulties men feel about the eternal and unchangeable decrees of God all arise from the absurd mistake of conceiving of God as determining the certain occurrence of a part separate from the whole, of an event separate from the causes and conditions upon which it depends. God's single decree determined the whole universe in all its successive ages as one whole. It has determined the cause and condition as well as the event. If a man will not believe, he shall not be saved; if he will not sow, he shall not reap. But if it is decreed that he shall reap, it is just as much decreed that he shall sow. If it be decreed that you shall have what you desire, it is decreed no less that you shall pray for it, and it is certain that you will not get if it you do not pray for it.

IV. But it is objected that the order of nature, the uniformities of natural laws, are fixed, and God will not violate them in order to make the whole course of nature turn out of its way, in order to make way for a poor praying sinner like you or me.

We answer: 1. The whole order of material nature has been framed from the beginning for the very purpose of providing for the mutual intercourse of the praying children and of the prayer-hearing Father. It is a matter of universal experience that earthly fathers find the order of nature, when intelligently followed, no barrier, but the most effective of conceivable instruments, in providing for the wants and in answering the petitions of their children. How can the order of nature be a greater barrier to our heavenly Father?

2. But it is answered that we can see our earthly parents use the order of nature so as to make it answer our petitions and provide for our wants, but we never see our heavenly Father so using nature. Our earthly parents leave their footprints while using means in our behalf, and in working for us always make chips which prove their work. But our heavenly Father never makes footprints, never leaves chips, so we have no visible evidence that he responds to our petitions or acts through the order of nature in our behalf.

We answer: The sculptor cuts the statue out of the block of marble, piece by piece, from without, and so makes chips. So earthly fathers work upon material nature from without. But when the vital principle of a tree gathers nourishment from soil and air and builds it up from within, it leaves no footprints and makes no chips. Thus our heavenly Father acts not on spots of matter from without, but upon the whole frame of material nature from within, and the whole is as obedient to his touch as are the nerves of the human body to the human spirit which inhabits it.

All nature with its mechanical causes and fixed laws, and all human souls with their instincts, struggles and articulate cries, form part of one eternally-designed system. Every prayer and every answer, every cause and every effect, every volition and every result, has been provided for from the first. But the relation between causes and effects is never disturbed. The effect immediately depends on the cause, the answer immediately depends on the prayer. If we do not work we cannot eat, if we do not eat we cannot live. If we do not pray we will not gain what we desire.

V. What is the testimony of human experience as to the actual fact of God's answering prayer for temporal and material good?

1. We appeal to the universal instinct of prayer inherent in men of all races and centuries. We claim the consent of all false religions with the true, and the involuntary testimony of dying infidels.

2. From the nature of the case the testimony of mankind in general on such a subject is incompetent. Any scientific "prayer-test," as that proposed by Professor Tyndall, is most incongruous to the case, and therefore unphilosophical. Prayer is not a physical cause; it is a moral cause. It acts upon our heavenly Father, disposing him to attend to our wants in the exercise of infinite wisdom and love, and to use his loving and wise discretion in complying with or refusing our imperfect desires. Who can enter into this region of intimate personal relations between the praying child and the prayer-hearing Father except themselves? More than a million Christians prayed for the life of President Garfield. The world laughed, and said our Father did not hear us. We know that he did hear and answer us in the best way possible: we are completely satisfied. Millions and millions of spiritual children of God have been ceaselessly trusting him, praying to him and proving him, from Adam to Moses, from Moses to Christ, from Christ to the present. Our Father knows our hearts: we know and he knows the real meaning of our prayers. We know our Father's heart: we know that when we were "in distress we called upon him, and he answered us and set us in a large place." The Christian is satisfied with what he knows as to the confidential relations between his prayer-hearing Father and himself. He can well afford to smile with pity when the stranger to the household criticizes his Father's faithfulness and tries to convince the child against the witness of his own consciousness that his Father does not hear and answer his prayers. What can the stranger know about it? He has never truly prayed, and therefore he has never experienced any answer to prayer. Would it not be more scientific if these agnostic critics should confine their remarks to the sphere of their own experience?

VI. Let us apply these principles to the subject of the modern doctrine of "prayer-cure."

It appears to me that we have settled this subject pretty clearly already.

1. All Christians must agree with our friends of the "prayer-cure" that it is our privilege and duty to pray for the healing of our bodies and the maintenance of our bodily health, just as it is for us to pray for any other material and temporal blessing. If we pray aright the true prayer of *faith* (which includes submission as well as confidence, for confidence without submission is presumption and not faith), if we pray the true prayer of faith, God will certainly answer, and either give us the very healing we ask when and as we ask it; or if it be wiser and kinder will give us the same health at a different time and in a different manner; or, if he sees it to be kinder and wiser, he will give us something far better, something we would ourselves much prefer if we had the eyes to see as God sees.

But in order that our prayer be indeed the true prayer of faith, we who pray must be reconciled to God, we must seek only through the merit and mediation of Christ, we must pray for and desire health only subject to the infinitely wiser and juster will of God, and, finally, we must meantime seek for and use diligently all the means which Providence makes available to us in our actual circumstances. No believing Christian will use means without praying for God's guidance in their selection and for blessing on their use. If he does he will not be really blessed. Just so, no sensible Christian will pray for the cure of his diseases without using all the means available. If he does, he mocks God, and God will mock him as sure as he lives.

2. But our "faith-cure" friends differ from us in the following points, in which they are dangerously wrong.

(1) They hold that all sickness is the immediate punishment of some particular sinful act or state of some of the persons directly or indirectly concerned. We admit that, in general, sickness is a consequence of sin. If there had been no sin there had been no sickness. But we deny utterly that in the case of Christians, whose sins are pardoned for Christ's sake, sickness is any part of the punishment of sin. It is always, in the Christian's experience, a fatherly chastisement--a proof of love for our good, not a mark of anger or displeasure for sin. "Whom the Father loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives." Some of the holiest saints have been the greatest sufferers and for the longest time. No true Christian would be impatient; he would rather kiss the rod; he would rather take up his cross daily and follow Christ. Nor would any true Christian change his cross if he could. I would infinitely rather suffer the worst sickness my heavenly Father sends than be cured at once by the help of those who regard sickness as a proof of want of faith or as evidence of God's displeasure.

(2) These brethren appear to demand the cure of the disease in every case unconditionally. They say if the disease is not removed it proves that the sick man lacked faith. But continued disease is not a sign of the divine displeasure on account of sin; and faith, as we

have shown, submits to God's will as well as trusts his grace. It always says, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." Confidence without submission is the most offensive form of unbelief that disgraces man or offends God.

(3) These "faith-cure" friends err in praying while refusing to use properly God's appointed means to secure the health they desire. We have shown this to be always and everywhere unwarranted. It is the very spirit of restless disobedience. It is a refusal to submit to God's method. It springs from a spiritual pride which aspires to subdue the infinite God to their service and make him and his infinite power the poor instruments of their own will. The specific difference of a miracle is that it is wrought without means. The specific difference of a providential answer to prayer is that it is wrought as a blessing upon means religiously employed. The working of miracles, not as evidence of a divine commission, but for private good, is unwarranted and is a temptation to evil. When Christ, having fasted forty days, was hungry, the tempter came to him and said, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Christ of course refused.

(4) Our brethren of the "faith-cure" differ from us in maintaining not merely that God may work miracles now if he pleases--which, of course, none of us deny--but that God may as reasonably be expected to work miracles upon our call now as in the days of the apostles.

Answer: A. We have shown that a frequent and promiscuous occurrence of miracle would (a) defeat the purpose for which the frame of nature has been erected by God and confuse all our relations to him, and (b) would destroy the evidential force of miracles themselves, obscure the manifestation of God and lead to utter confusion of thought and of faith. Miracles are not to be rationally desired except in connection with the promulgation of a new religion. The reason of the prevalent infidelity in the present day is not the deficiency of the evidence, nor would it be removed by more evidence. The ground of unbelief is the evil heart, the moral alienation of man from God. It can be removed only by the demonstration of the Holy Ghost. This was Christ's opinion. He makes Abraham say to Dives concerning his wicked brethren, "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. . . . If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:29-31). The overwhelming preponderance of opinion among the intelligent Protestant churches affirms that miracles, as a matter of fact, ceased with the initial struggles for life of the early Church, about the close of the apostolic Church.

B. The modern faith-cure miracles all belong to the same class with the Roman Catholic miracles of the medieval Church. There is just as much testimony, borne by as many persons--and persons every whit as intelligent, disinterested and pious--to those medieval as to any or all of these modern miracles. And yet these have all been rejected by the unanimous voice of intelligent Protestantism on grounds which, in every particular, apply with equal force to the case of the modern miracles of the so-called "faith-cure." These are--(a) that they were not wrought to establish a new religion or to authenticate prophets sent immediately from God, and were therefore inconsequent and purposeless; (b) they were associated with a mass of unscriptural assumptions and superstitions; (c) they were wrought by men who lacked prophetic dignity and character, and were witnessed only by

unbalanced enthusiasts; (d) the works themselves lacked the simplicity and dignity which are the common character of divine acts.

(5) Our "faith-cure" friends base their doctrine upon the facts (a) that in the Scriptures sin is symbolically represented by disease, and so Christ is represented as having vicariously borne for us our "sicknesses." *Answer:* So he tasted *death* for every man. To be consistent they should provide by faith that no man should die. (b) They base their doctrine on the fact that miracles of healing were undoubtedly wrought during the entire first, and perhaps the second, generation of the apostolic Church, and that the apostle James (James 5:14) instructed the elders of the Church to anoint the sick and pray for his healing, with the expectation of his consequent recovery. *Answer:* In reply to this we have only to say that they have no right to separate one part of the supernatural life of the early Church from the rest. The *charismata* of the apostolic period were an associated and inseparable system of supernatural gifts, designed to authenticate the truth of the new religion and to confirm its grasp on the heathen communities. These included gifts of supernatural knowledge, of healing, of government, of tongues and of interpretation, etc. They prophesied, they spoke with tongues, they interpreted, they worked divers miracles, they reigned over the Church of Christ in his name. By the unanimous consent of the educated and evangelical Church these *charismata* have ceased for almost eighteen hundred years. The anointing of the sick by the elders, recommended by James, survives in the sacrament of extreme unction of the Catholic Church. This proves that the ancient and medieval as well as the modern Church ceased to expect that this anointing and prayer would effect the miraculous healing of the sick. If after so long an interval the *charismata* of the early Church are to be received, all reason and consistency require that the entire system should be revived in its integrity. This Edward Irving honestly did in London (*circum* 1834) when he founded the "Catholic Apostolic Church." He had apostles, prophets and evangelists. They spoke with tongues, prophesied, interpreted, wrought miracles, appointed "angels" in all the churches. Since that date they have been silent again. If our "faith-cure" friends desire Bible students to recognize their modern doctrine as standing upon a biblical basis of precedent, they should erect the whole platform and restore the era of miracles intact. When they do this we will promise a reinvestigation of their claims.

(6) Our faith- or prayer-cure friends differ from us widely in the value they put upon the testimony establishing the facts they cite in confirmation of their principle. The precise point in debate between us should be constantly kept distinctly before our minds. We believe with all our hearts that God answers the prayer of faith in behalf of sick and suffering Christians, and that he brings relief (a) by directing them in the wise and profitable use of appointed means, and (b) in giving efficiency to the means used. But we deny that God authorized us to expect him to heal our disease miraculously; that is, in open neglect of available means. They cite a vast and ever-accumulating number of cases in which they claim that God has in answer to prayer permanently healed real and persistent diseases without the use of any means. We heartily acknowledge their honesty and the sincerity of their convictions, but we do not have an atom of confidence in the validity of their conclusions.

The Rev. J. M. Buckley, D.D., in his admirable article on "Faith-Healing and Kindred Phenomena," (*The Century Magazine*, June, 1886), shows that this question of evidence falls under two heads: (a) What are the real facts? and (b) What is the true explanation of these facts?

(a) The evidence with regard to the facts is unsifted, uncritical and utterly unsatisfactory. There have been, indeed, many cases of sick people who have become apparently, and some really, well without the use of any medicine and in connection with the prayers of these advocates of the "faith-cure" principle. But many diseases are self-limiting and tend to cure naturally. The reported cures in a great many cases have turned out to be temporary, and have been followed by relapse. In all cases of *internal* disease, where the mischief is out of sight, the diagnosis even of the most learned and skillful doctors is notoriously uncertain, and the non-professional judgment as to the nature of the disease on which this evidence is taken is utterly unworthy of respect. The diseases cured never have been proved to be other than nervous, and in most cases they are easily recognized as such. In many cases other means have been previously if not secretly used, while only the fact of the prayer is mentioned. Besides, these brethren report only what they believe to be their successful cases. They say nothing of their failures, which are known to be far more numerous. It is necessary in order to maintain the logic of their position that there should be no failures, because they pledge God--nothing is impossible to God. But their failures are innumerable.

All this amounts to no more than can be validly claimed by any one of hundreds of advertised patent medicines; the history of which patent medicines as a class has justly put them all under the ban of both science and religion, meddling in which is unworthy alike of the gentleman and the Christian.

(b) Dr. Buckley demonstrates that all the alleged facts in relation to the faith-cure which remain after an intelligent sifting can be accounted for easily in connection with myriad kindred facts illustrating the power of the mind over the body; that when the attention is concentrated upon any part of the body, and when faith is exercised and strong expectation excited, with or without any religious reference, the most wonderful effects may be produced; that this is not a proof of specific answer to prayer, but of the far more general fact of the power of mind over body.

In the case of the miracles of our Lord and his apostles there were no failures. The dead were raised and men born blind were made to see. Let the advocates of these modern miracles conform to the same conditions. Let them cure in every case. Let them take cases in which there can be no question as to the previous state of the subject; *i.e.* let him be dead four days in hot weather, or be totally blind from birth to middle age, or let them restore lost arms or legs or teeth. When they show any disposition to submit to the ordinary common-sense tests of truth that all men apply to similar cases in worldly business, their fellow-Christians will be ready to discuss the evidence with them upon equal terms.

These our brethren are to be loved insofar as they trust and strive to exalt Christ, but the

contagion of their spirit and example is to be spurned as fraught with much danger. Inflated self-consciousness accompanies all religious enthusiasms which are not grounded on Scripture and controlled by sanctified common sense. The invariable history of all such epidemics of unwarranted faith is that the reaction which necessarily follows ultimate disillusionment issues in malignant unbelief.