
PRAYER

Prayer is the earnest upward reaching of the soul, the surrender of all other thoughts and desires, and the concentration of all longing into one petition. Only the sincere and contrite heart can pray. A man must be honest with himself, and in attune with his Maker and the universe, in order to pray.

“O God, be merciful unto me a sinner,” has come down to us through thousands of years as one of the greatest prayers ever uttered, because it came from an earnest soul. The follower of Christ was told to go to his closet and pray in secret. He was told that his prayer was a mockery if it was not sincere; but if it was the honest expression of a penitent heart, his Father who heard in secret would reward him openly.

Taking the Scriptural requirements for the efficacy of prayer, and assuming that there is a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God,

The Cost of Something for Nothing

it is manifest that the mere mumbling of words, the ostentatious appeal to Heaven while the mind is occupied with the things of this world, the bowing and kneeling and sanctimonious expression, are the acts of a Pharisee, and blasphemous in character.

Every repetition of such an exercise would debase the petitioner, and tend to make him a hypocrite, and in time would destroy everything noble in his nature.

On the other hand, assuming that there is no personal God to hear or answer prayer, and that all creation is governed by immutable laws that cannot be changed or arrested by any number of prayers, it is still true that the genuine, earnest prayer, the concentration of thought upon that which is God-like, and the bending of all desires into one fervent petition and bringing one's nature into harmony with that petition, has an uplifting and inspiring effect upon him who prays.

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Nature is honest with those who are honest with her. As physical exercise strengthens and upbuilds the body, so this psychic exercise elevates and ennobles the soul.