

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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PRAYING FOR RAIN

A severe drought in the southern United States a few years ago revealed the fact that a marked difference of opinion exists among devout Christians as to the propriety of praying for rain. Opposition to this practice on the part of Christians is not, however, altogether new. Dr. Moorhouse, who was bishop of Melbourne, Australia, from 1876 to 1886, was once asked to order public prayers for rain during a severe drought.

"The bishop refused," says Dr. Andrew D. White, "advising the petitioners for the future to take better care of their water supply, virtually telling them, 'Heaven helps those who help themselves.' But most noteworthy in this matter was it that the English government, not long after, scanning the horizon to find some man to take up the good work laid down by the lamented Bishop Frazer, of Manchester, chose Dr. Moorhouse; and his utterance upon meteorology, which a few generations since would have been regarded by the whole Church as blasphemy, was universally alluded to as an example of strong good sense, proving him especially fit for one of the most important bishoprics in England."

A contemporary English meteorologist, C.J.P. Cave, writes:

"Both the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church have forms of prayer for rain and for fine weather, but it is very much to be doubted whether those who use them have any idea of what it is they are asking for. It would be less a miracle to remove a mountain by prayer than by the same means to bring rain in a dry spell, or dry weather in a rainy one. To achieve such ends, vast masses of air would have to be moved against the natural forces that were acting at the moment. If we could see the air, and so have some idea of the mechanical problem involved, everyone would, I think, agree that such things were outside the province of prayer, and that it would be bordering on impiety to ask for them."

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