

# *Prayer*

Without free will, we are analogous to puppets in a puppet show. This is to be distinguished from robots, as rather than being mechanical creatures, the reality is that we are animated in the present moment by the living God. So when we offer up prayers to God, He is in control of our prayers.

Considering prayer in this context leads us to see prayer in a slightly different way than if we truly were free creatures. This is because both our prayers, and the answers to those prayers, are under God's control. We have to see occasions of prayer as being willed and directed by God as part of the grand game of existence that He is manifesting.

Does this perspective belittle the importance of prayer? Well, if all things exist for the glory of God, and prayer

is part of the way He animates human beings, then this does nothing to belittle its importance. Prayer is the way in which He has chosen for some human beings to communicate with Him. It's true that God gives us certain 'modes of mind' where we feel as though we are free creatures, making decisions to act in certain ways, and the fact that God is truly in control of our decisions and actions doesn't make them any less part of who we are.

The illusion of human freedom allows for God to have a personal relationship with His human creatures, so that we can have a conversation with God, for instance. During such a conversation, both our speech to Him and His response to us are fully under His control, but this doesn't make the experience any less real for us.

Having a personal, prayerful relationship with God is a wonderful thing for a human being to experience, regardless of the lack of true creaturely freedom in this experience. Prayer is part of the religious person's identity; it allows them to participate in the unfolding of God's plans and of His will.

## REFLECTIONS

Prayer does change things, but only in the sense that God is working in us through our prayers and in the way He responds to them. The gift of prayer brings us into an intimate personal relationship with our Creator, but in the absence of free will it's important to acknowledge that we will only ever pray what it is His will for us to pray.