

**COMMON PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN
WORSHIP: IN TEN SERVICES FOR
MORNING AND EVENING, WITH
SPECIAL COLLECTS, PRAYERS, AND
OCCASIONAL SERVICES**

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Common Prayer for Christian Worship: In Ten Services for Morning and Evening, with Special Collects, Prayers, and Occasional Services by James Martineau

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JAMES MARTINEAU

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COMMON PRAYER

FOR

Christian Worship:

IX

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James Martineau

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P R E F A C E.

To any one who watches the signs of the times, it must be obvious that an increasing number of persons, even in Churches of the freest ritual, are coming to the conclusion that it is an advantage in public worship to have a Book of Common Prayer. Doubtless the extempore outpouring of the minister will still be preferred by many, partly from the force of long custom, and partly from a conviction that words fresh from the heart are better adapted, both to call forth and to express genuine fervour, than prayers read from a book : but others will care more for the fitness than the newness of the language ; and, instead of becoming weary of the familiar phrase, will find endearing associations cluster round it, and will feel a warmer glow of devotion from the thought, that they are uniting,

not only with their fellow-worshippers immediately around them, but with many Christian assemblies far and near. Nor will forms of expression which evidently belong to a bygone time, be without a peculiar sacredness, if we think of them as having served to clothe the homage and desires of devout men who have long passed from this world.

The Reformation, as an insurrection of individual faith and the inward spirit against ecclesiastical method and tradition, favoured the habit of "free prayer," and made it almost co-extensive with Protestantism. In this country, however, the grand exception presented by the National Church was not without effect upon the taste and feeling of the less extreme Puritans themselves; especially of those among them who hoped, by some enlargement of her latitude, to be reinstated within her pale. Baxter and Calamy, it is well known, stood near enough to the Church to be drawn into negotiations with her for the admission of their people; and, had reasonable concessions been made to them with regard to particular parts of the Book of Common Prayer, their nonconformity would have ceased. They pressed no scruple against a stated form of worship; and, had not the exclusive clerical party defeated all proposals for a "comprehen-

sion," were ready to exchange the usages of the conventicle for those of the parish church. From that time, the use of free prayer among the English Presbyterians is due to the necessity of external position rather than of internal conviction. Shut out from the National Communion, they fell back upon the modes of worship most congenial to their scattered, unorganised, and (as they still hoped) merely provisional life. But from time to time local experiments were made of Liturgical Forms, betraying the old tendency to qualify individual fervour by regulated order. It is quite in harmony therefore with the history of the English Presbyterians, that a body of London Ministers, inheriting their traditions and their name, their protest against creeds which divide Christians, their longing for a worship which unites, should have conceived the design of a new Liturgical compilation, to be gathered, in a catholic spirit, from the devotional writings of every Christian age. To one of their members they accordingly gave the commission,—with promises of help which have been more than fulfilled,—to revise the Services in use in the Church of England, and to make additions from other sources, after having carried out more fully a course of reading which has always been

his delight. The first design was to introduce nothing new. To abide by this limitation however was found impracticable, from the necessity of adapting parts to the whole, and also from the requirements of theological honesty. It was moreover strongly felt by some, that only in combination with a new element could the old have its greatest worth, and provide for the several varieties of need. For, notwithstanding the uniformity of our spiritual nature, and the fixity of Christian truth, insensible changes are always taking place in the atmosphere and colouring of piety, as Christendom passes from season to season of its experience. The life of to-day, while drawing its nutriment from the whole past, grows into something different, and has a character and feeling of its own; which, not less than the elder moods of our humanity, has its confession to make and its consecration to seek. Every age, in taking up the chorus of ancient devotion, throws in some quality of tone not heard before: the hymn is the same, but the voice is different. As in literature and art, so in religion, thought and affection need something more than self-repetition: they demand some freshness of movement: they are as running waters, which, however mighty and noble the re-

ceptacles they have already filled, still overflow, and cannot stay. It is therefore no irreverence toward the past,—rather is it a testimony to its vivifying power,—to feel a want beyond its resources of devotional expression; nor is any generation of the Christian Church true to its inheritance, which pretends to live upon it, yet has nothing to add to it. With a view to reach more effectually some chords of modern feeling, certain of the forms now published were entrusted for re-construction to another hand. The result was not a re-arrangement, as was at first contemplated, but the preparation of two new Services, the Ninth and Tenth; which left no doubt in the minds of those who have taken the most active part in this attempt, of the desirability of combining treasures new and old. It is right to add that the author of these two Services has not confined his help to the part from his own pen, but has extended it to the last revision of the whole.

As to its theology, the work will speak for itself. All its prayers, as prayers of Christ's disciples, are addressed to Him whom Christ himself addressed, the "Father" who "heard him always." None of the three creeds, nor any substitute, will be found in its pages: because it is prepared for a

body of Christians who, while owning the importance both of definite individual conviction, and of broad average concurrence among the members of the same church, yet object upon principle to making definitions of belief part of the act of worship, and would, as far as possible, prevent the scruples of opinion from intersecting and breaking the voice of common prayer.

The number of Services may be thought too great ; but it appeared better that those who think this should set their own limit in use, than that a part of what had been accepted as having real worth should be discarded. The length of these Services is not half that of the Morning Service in use in the Church of England, and will afford the minister, in his prayer before sermon, an opportunity of speaking out of the fulness of his heart, if he should be moved to exceed the length of an ordinary collect.

The general Order of the Book of Common Prayer has been preserved in the two Services from that source ; but, as that order evidently bears the impress of a time when not Confession only but Absolution was held to be a condition precedent of all acceptable prayer, and a stress no longer possible to us was laid on the mere *opus*