

**ALONE TO THE ALONE:
PRAYERS FOR THEISTS. BY
SEVERAL CONTRIBUTORS**

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Alone to the Alone: Prayers for Theists. By Several Contributors by Frances Power Cobbe

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EDITED, WITH A PREFACE,

BY

FRANCES POWER COBBE.



"Let us invoke God himself, not in mere form of words, but by elevating our souls to Him by prayer. And the only way truly to pray is to approach alone the One who is Alone. To contemplate that One, we must withdraw into the inner soul, as into a temple, and be still."

Plotinus, 5th Ennead, Lib. i.

"This is the life of the blessed,....to seek, alone, Him who is Alone."

Ibid., 6th Ennead, Lib. ix.

WILLIAMS AND NORGATE,

14, HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN, LONDON;
AND 20, SOUTH FREDERICK STREET, EDINBURGH.

1871.

138. f. 119.

PREFACE.

THIS book is designed for the use of those who desire to cultivate the feelings which culminate in Prayer, but who find the rich and beautiful collections of the Churches of Christendom no longer available, either because of the doctrines whose acceptance they imply, or of the nature of the requests to which they give utterance. Adequately to replace in a generation such books, through which the piety of ages has been poured, is wholly beyond hope. The ambition to achieve such an enterprize would but betray ignorance of the laws by which these precious drops are distilled slowly, year after year, and century after century, from the great incense-tree of humanity. But if as yet, and for a long time to come, the literature of Theism must be comparatively poor and unmellowed, it does not follow that we ought not to commence, as best we may, the task of producing its earlier fruits; trusting reverently in the Power which, we

believe, is guiding the souls of men to a holier and happier faith than the world has yet known, to give to us by degrees all the treasures of noble thought and sacred inspiration. If our religion be genuine, it must needs happen that, at its proper stage of growth, it put forth bud of prayer and flower of praise, not in artificial imitation of those which have grown on another stem, but fresh from its own heart, and "bearing seed after its kind." With the conviction that such blossoming is even now taking place in hundreds of souls from east to west of the globe, I have endeavoured to gather from the friends best known to me such prayers as they were willing to lend; especially such as they might have written at any time under the influence of those more vivid feelings which we all desire to perpetuate. The result of a compilation so formed is, of course, in every sense, imperfect and fragmentary. Little effort has been made to fill up obvious deficiencies; and none at all to modify either in favour of more conventional phraseology, or of the editor's personal opinions, the expressions which each writer has spontaneously chosen. In no degree are the Prayers offered as models of what such compositions *ought* to be, but only as what *are* the aspirations of living souls. Perhaps in the great solitude wherein most of us dwell for the larger part of our lives, as regards all our deeper emotions, it may be more helpful to know that other human hearts are feeling as

we feel, and thinking as we think, rather than to read far nobler words, which come to us only as echoes of the Past. That a strong likeness of sentiment runs through the various pieces in this volume, has seemed to me, as I received them one after another, to shew in a remarkable way the essential identity of Theism, whether embraced by old or young, men or women, Europeans or Asiatics; by minds trained in the schools of Christianity or of Heathenism, of the Roman Church, or the Anglican, of the Calvinist or the Unitarian. The bonds of authority once broken, and the soul set at liberty to find its God, it would appear (if the search be one of the heart and life, as well as of the intellect) that the conclusions arrived at by the seekers do not very essentially differ, no matter from how remote a point of the theological compass they originally started.*

Perhaps it will be asked, "Why make formal manuals of Prayer? Do Theists need such aids to lift up their hearts; and cannot they dispense with helps which better become the puerile than the manly stages of the religious life?" I answer, that I can believe there

* Perhaps it may be as well once for all to state that fifteen persons have contributed to this book. With the exception of two Prayers taken from the excellent little Manual of M. Leblais of Strasbourg, they are all now published for the first time. It is earnestly requested that the reader will not endeavour to identify their respective authorships.

may be happy souls who have transcended any such need, and for whom other men's prayers would be superfluous and intrusive. But I have not yet known in actual life one who can always soar into the upper air of thought, and feel no flagging wing, no need to be sustained and strengthened at intervals by the aid of his brother. It is true that the man who never addresses his Father in heaven, save in words dictated to him by his priest, has not yet learned to pray at all. But, on the other hand, the man who feels no kindling of his heart as he joins in the worship of his fellows, seems to me to have either ascended far above, or fallen below, the average of human sentiment. Because we have found a religion which satisfies alike our hearts and intellects, we have not, therefore, altered the conditions of our moral constitution, or passed outside the realm of those beneficent laws of sympathy which knit together the sons of men in mutual help and mutual dependence. It is subjecting our faith to an unnatural strain, a strain which only the fulness of intellectual and spiritual assurance can enable us to bear, to forego all the ordinary aids of piety; and I, for one, cannot but regret that we, of all men who believe in God, most rarely meet together to worship Him; that our reserve in such matters keeps us so far apart, that we lack all brotherly help and sympathy in the struggles of life; and, finally, that we have no books in whose perusal we can wholly

thrust aside that necessity for criticism which is our burden and our bane.

Again, is it asked, Why not use the grand, time-sanctified collects and litanies of Christendom, merely omitting from them any words we cannot conscientiously follow, and substituting here and there a new phrase for an old? I reply, that such maimed and mutilated prayers are very far from fulfilling my idea of a genuine religious utterance. The familiar and venerable words, rudely docked in one place and corrected and modernized in another, are to me painful both to ear and heart, like a dear old tune whose cadence is destroyed. Nor is this all. Though all true piety has the same essential character, and we can joyfully sympathize with it, breathing alike in the words of Hebrew prophet, Roman sage and Christian saint, yet each great faith must have a language which is peculiarly its own, and in that tongue alone can its full meaning be expressed. Were Theism merely the popular creed of Europe with its most unsightly excrescences cut away, were it simply the old creed trimmed by closer logic, then indeed it would well become us to make our worship also the curtailed and amended repetition of the old forms. But the real state of the case is the reverse of all this. Theism is not "Christianity *minus* Christ," nor Judaism *minus* the miraculous legation of Moses, nor any other creed whatsoever merely stripped of its super-

natural element. It is before all things the positive affirmation of the Absolute Goodness of God; and if it be in antagonism to other creeds, it is principally because of, and in proportion to, their failure to assert that goodness in its infinite and all-embracing completeness. This being so, it is impossible that the liturgies of other religions can afford suitable expressions of Theistic faith and love, or that it can suffice to abbreviate or alter them to make them fit our needs. They are indeed beautiful and venerable beyond any words I need use to praise them. In numberless instances they breathe a simple directness of faith, a fervour of penitence and devotion, at which our cold hearts must stand rebuked. As it has been the Theism in Judaism, in Christianity, and in every other great religion of the world, which has been its inner life and principle of vitality, so with joy we recognize the true Theistic spirit of filial love and loyalty continually bursting out through all their formularies. Spontaneously our highest feelings for ever find expression in the words which have fallen from Jewish or Christian lips during three thousand years of prayer; and never can we conceive of a time arriving when some of the Hebrew Psalms, and some of the English Collects, will be surpassed and left aside. But because we rejoice in these relics of ancient piety, and delight to use them as often as they suggest themselves as the genuine