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THE  
COLLECTED WORKS  
OF  
THEODORE PARKER,

MINISTER OF THE TWENTY-EIGHTH CONGREGATIONAL  
SOCIETY AT BOSTON, U.S.

CONTAINING HIS  
THEOLOGICAL, POLEMICAL, AND CRITICAL WRITINGS,  
SERMONS, SPEECHES, AND ADDRESSES,  
AND LITERARY MISCELLANIES.

EDITED BY  
FRANCES POWER COBBE.

VOL. II.  
SERMONS.—PRAYERS.

LONDON:  
TRÜBNER & CO., LUDGATE HILL.  
1879.

TEN

SERMONS

OF RELIGION.

BY

THEODORE PARKER,

MINISTER OF THE TWENTY-EIGHTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN BOSTON.

LONDON:  
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1879.

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TO  
RALPH WALDO EMERSON,

WITH ADMIRATION FOR HIS GENIUS,  
AND WITH KINDLY AFFECTION FOR WHAT IN HIM IS FAR  
NOBLER THAN GENIUS,

THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED

BY HIS FRIEND,  
THEODORE PARKER.

pervades the thoughts of other theologians. There is no need to bid us *here* believe that "Religion is not a gloomy thing," and that in spite of the sorrowful looks and dark forebodings of the teacher his faith is indeed a Gospel of good tidings! We *feel* that Theodore Parker's religion was joy and light, and that his soul dwelt therein, like an eagle amid the fields of the upper air.

Regarding the Prayers now printed, one observation may seem desirable. It was Parker's habit continually to use in his addresses to God a phrase which has been found to startle many religious minds. He frequently called Him "Thou, who art our Father and our Mother both," the "Father and Mother of the world."

In the Preface to the preceding volume the Editor called attention to this characteristic of Theism, that it teaches us to see in God not only a Father full of care for His children's welfare, but a Mother full also of tenderness and pity. Too long, we believe, has the Catholic Church separated off this mother-side of Deity into another object of worship; and more fatal still has been the error of the Reformed Churches, which in rejecting the Madonna have rejected all that she imaged forth of that Divine tenderness, which the prophet of old had recognized when he declared that "although a woman should forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb," yet would the Lord never forget or cease to pity His creatures. To such as would object to the use of such expressions as those of Parker we would ask in all seriousness: Is not a mother then the holiest thing on earth? her love the purest? her memory the dearest? We call God "our Father in Heaven," and bless the Christ who taught us to do so. But is there any irreverence in adding the name of one parent to that of the other? and can we think that a mother's sacred title is unworthy to be joined with that of father? Surely ideas like these are the legacy of miserable ages of asceticism, wherein womanhood and motherhood were deemed unholy things, and God's great order

of the world was rejected as unclean. "In the beginning," saith the author of the earliest fragments of the Bible, "God made man in his own image—male and female created He them." In the female nature we must look for one portion of that Divine Image, even as for another in the male. Hitherto we have grievously failed in this respect, and have lost in consequence a view of God's character, the most suited of all to touch our hearts. For what is it in truth in human life which affects us most closely? Is it great and bounteous gifts, or even unwavering care for our welfare? For these things we return gratitude. But that which melts us and reaches our inmost hearts are the tokens of personal tenderness, often trifling in value and of momentary duration, but proving that *love* which is the peculiar attribute of a mother. Thus if we desire to dwell on those characteristics of our Maker which shall most deeply touch men's natures, we must never forget that He is just as truly our Mother as our Father in Heaven. And if we need to reclaim the erring, to soften the hardened and brutalized, then, again judging by all human experience, we must fall back on *this* side of the great truth; and just as the most savage criminals have constantly been found accessible through the memory of a mother's kindness, when every other influence fell powerless, so shall we reclaim the sinful by recalling the faith that God is the ever-loving, long-suffering Mother, who watches over us with unwearied patience, who punishes us only for our good, who hates our sins even as our mothers hated them in the fulness of their love for our better selves, and who will fold us all, blest and forgiven at last, upon the bosom of Eternal Love.

*February, 1863.*

## PREFACE.

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I HAVE often been asked by personal friends to publish a little volume of Sermons of Religion, which might come home to their business and bosoms in the joys and sorrows of their daily life. And nothing loth to do so without prompting, I have selected these which were originally part of a much longer course, and send them out, wishing that they may be serviceable in promoting the religious welfare of mankind on both sides of the ocean. They are not Occasional Sermons, like most of those I have lately published, which heavy emergencies pressed out of me; but they have all, perhaps, caught a tinge from the events of the day when they were preached at first. For as a country girl makes her festal wreath of such blossoms as the fields offer at the time,—of violets and wind-flowers in the spring, of roses and water-lilies in summer, and in autumn of the fringed gentian and the aster,—so must it be with the sermons which a minister gathers up under serene or stormy skies. This local colouring from time and circumstances I am not desirous to wipe off; so the sad or joyous aspect of the day will be found still tinging these printed Sermons, as indeed it coloured the faces and tinged the prayers of such as heard them first.



Sometimes the reader will find the ~~same fundamental~~ idea reappearing under various forms, in several places of this book ; and may perhaps also see the reason thereof in the fact, that it is the primeval Rock on which the whole thing rests, and of necessity touches the heavens in the highest mountains, and, receiving thence, gives water to the deepest wells which bottom thereon.

I believe there are great Truths in this book,—both those of a purely intellectual character, and those, much more important, which belong to other faculties nobler than the mere intellect ; truths, also, which men need, and, as I think, at this time greatly need. But I fear that I have not the artistic skill so to present these needful truths that a large body of men shall speedily welcome them ; perhaps not the attractive voice which can win its way through the commercial, political, and ecclesiastical noises of the time, and reach the ears of any multitude.

Errors there must be also in this book. I wish they might be flailed out and blown away ; and shall not complain if it be done even by a rough wind, so that the precious Truths be left unbroke and clean after this winnowing, as bread-stuff for to-day, or as seed-corn for seasons yet to come.

*August 24th 1852.*

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