

thy crown. If thou hast ever been ashamed to be a Quaker, be no more.

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THOUGHTS ON PRAYER.

An adequate definition of the character and purpose of Prayer cannot be attempted in the short article which comes within the limits of our space. Our desire in alluding to the subject is rather to call attention to some aspects of this Christian privilege which strikes us as important. It has been said most truly that "Prayer is not an empty utterance, or a repetition of sacred formulas, but the movement of the soul putting itself into personal relation and contact with the Unseen Power, whose presence it feels before it is able to give it a name."

Popular ideas connected with prayer have often been very anthropomorphic. Men have been too ready to think of the Invisible Being whom they address in prayer as One needing to be reminded of His duty, or aroused to regard and supply the needs of His creatures; as One, who, being without a fixed purpose, may be swayed to and fro according to the pressure brought to bear on Him by importunate request. Not unfrequently, indeed, prayer has been used as men use a lever to move a dead weight, or overcome a resisting force. In like manner it has assumed an attitude which aims at moving an unwilling Donor to bestow his gifts, to distribute his favors, or to accommodate his providence to meet some special personal requirements which He had overlooked, or even to alter the course of nature for some desired object.

We do not mean to imply that the heart should never go out in desire for personal well being, or the good of others; on the contrary, it belongs to the very essence of our human nature to express its conscious longings to a Power who is believed to be able both

to understand and to answer our prayer. But the attitude of our mind will be largely characterized by the thoughts we entertain of the Being to whom we make our requests. Hence, the importance of right thoughts about God. Our highest ideal is presented in the Gospel of Jesus. The vision of God given to men in Christ is the centre of the loftiest conception men possess of God, which is his Fatherhood; and the witness of the enlightened conscience is ever progressing in harmony with the divine ideal He presented. To possess a devout consciousness of relationship with God as "Our Father" is the first and most important step in the Christian grasp of prayer. To understand, as Jesus taught, that God's fatherhood is not restricted to a favored section of the human race called believers, and withheld from all others, is to recognize the universal grace of God. Believers grasp it, and have the witness in themselves, whilst men who live apart from God, alas, do *not* grasp it; yet absence of belief cannot alter the fact. A man's blindness does not extinguish the sun, though he does not see it; a successful operation gives him sight, and he is filled with joy by the sunlight. Jesus taught the multitude that God spreads his beneficence over the just and the unjust makes His sun to shine on the good and on the evil, and is kind to the thankful and the unthankful. His tender compassions are over all His works. To believe that, being Father, and having a perfect, all-wise, and all-loving nature, a true Father-heart, God must by that nature be ever seeking to evolve the highest and truest well-being of His children, is at once to grasp the secret of prayer, and to transfer a mere blind and often ignorant importunity into a communion or converse with God, as One who watches with an infinite or ceaseless sympathy the condition and environment of His creatures.

This belief has been held by many