

Essential
mystic
Prayers



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BREWSTER, MASSACHUSETTS

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Introduction

For the purposes of this little book, let us agree that the meaning of mysticism cannot be understood apart from the thoughts and voices and prayers of real people. And this book, as you will see, is filled with the mystical prayers of people who have been transformed by the Christian tradition. Throughout the history of Christianity (and, for that matter, through the history of most faiths), there have been women and men whose intense, direct experience of God has inspired them to share it in some way with others. They have spoken, sung, written, and sometimes even painted their experiences of God's presence, even when (*especially* when) that presence defied the ability of any kind of language to describe it. Whether we doubt, wonder about, fully accept, and or even aspire to such experiences, we can agree that these people came to know something about God that was unknowable any other way. And because they found a way to express it, we know something more about God as well.

These prayers give voice to those deep and enduring desires to know God that stir within hearts of faith. There are no "professional" mystics. These authors are poets, pastors, social workers, caretakers of the poor and the sick, husbands, wives, monks, nuns, theologians, scientists, teachers, pot scrubbers, and philosophers. In other words, they all had other work to do besides pray. And even if the authors may not be strictly identified with the mystical tradition, their prayers still reflect those qualities of longing for a sense of presence, of love for, and even union with God, that has been passed down through generations of those whom we have called "Christian mystics."

1

The prayer preceding all prayers is:

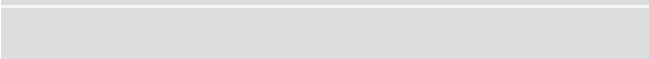
May it be the real I who speaks.

May it be the real Thou that I speak to.

—*C.S. Lewis*



Praise & Trust



2

O burning Mountain,
O chosen Sun,
O perfect Moon,
O fathomless Well,
O unattainable Height,
O Clearness beyond measure,
O Wisdom without end,
O Mercy without limit,
O Strength beyond resistance,
O Crown beyond all majesty:
the humblest thing you created sings your praise.

—*Mechthild of Magdeburg*

3

We were created for you by yourself,
and towards you our face is set.
We acknowledge you,
our maker and creator;
we adore your wisdom and pray
that it may order all our life.
We adore your goodness and mercy, and
beg them ever to sustain and help us.

—*William of St-Thierry*

4

My God and my all!

—*Francis of Assisi*

*All
to God*



16

In you, Father all-mighty, we have our preservation and our bliss.

In you, Christ, we have our restoring and our saving.

You are our mother, brother, and savior.

In you, our Lord the Holy Spirit, is marvelous and plenteous grace.

You are our clothing; for love you wrap us and embrace us.

You are our maker, our lover, our keeper.

Teach us to believe that by your grace all shall be well,
and all shall be well,

and all manner of things shall be well. Amen.

—*Julian of Norwich*

17

Grant me, O Lord my God,
a mind to know you,
a heart to seek you,
wisdom to find you,
conduct pleasing to you,
faithful perseverance in waiting for you,
and a hope of finally embracing you.
Amen.

—*Thomas Aquinas*



Wisdom & Guidance



38

Thank you, Jesus, for bringing me this far.
In your light, I see the light of my life.
Your teaching is brief and to the point;
you persuade us to trust in God;
you command us to love one another.
You promise everything to those who obey your teaching;
you ask nothing too hard for a believer,
nothing a lover can refuse.
Your promises to your disciples are true, nothing but the
truth.
Even more, you promise us yourself,
the perfection of all that can be made perfect.

—*Nicholas of Cusa*

39

I am not attempting, O Lord, to penetrate your loftiness,
for I cannot begin to match my understanding with it,
but I desire in some measure to understand your truth,
which my heart believes and loves.

For I do not seek to understand in order that I may believe,
but I believe in order to understand.

For this too I believe,
that “unless I believe, I shall not understand.” (Isaiah 7:9)

—*Anselm of Canterbury*