

**THE EFFICACY OF  
PRAYER, BEING THE  
DONNELLAN LECTURES,  
FOR THE YEAR 1877**

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The efficacy of prayer, being the Donnellan lectures, for the year 1877 by John H. Jellett

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**JOHN H. JELLETT**

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*THE DONNELLAN LECTURES*

FOR THE YEAR 1877.

BY

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TO  
THE REV. HUMPHREY LLOYD, D.D.,  
PROVOST OF TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN,

*This Volume*

IS, BY PERMISSION, RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY

HIS SINCERE FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR,

## P R E F A C E .

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THERE is, I suppose, no question in Theology the decision of which more deeply affects man's practical life than this—Has Prayer any effect beyond the mind of the person who prays? If this question be answered in the negative—if we arrive at the conclusion that Prayer has no external efficacy, it is plain that its internal efficacy must speedily disappear. No man's mind can be beneficially affected by the constant repetition of that which he believes to be a mere idle form. Indeed with such a belief he would soon discontinue the practice; and it is far better that he should.

My object in the following Lectures is to examine the evidence on both sides of this important question. Previously to entering upon this examination, I have offered some remarks upon the principle which has been commonly

allowed to guide such discussions. The disputant who maintains the truth of any Christian doctrine is usually expected to assume the character of an apologist—one whose duty is to *defend* the position which he has taken up; while his opponent is allowed to assume the more advantageous character of an assailant—one who has *no* position to defend, and whose sole duty is to point out any weakness which may exist in the position which he attacks. I have endeavoured to show that in practical questions, where *some* decision is inevitable, this mode of conducting the discussion is inconsistent with the principles of fair argument; giving to the advocate on the negative side of the question an advantage to which he has no just right. I have endeavoured to show, further, that this practical character attaches to the present discussion; which must therefore be conducted, not between an apologist and a critic, but between the advocates of two systems of the world, one of which includes prayer among the causes which produce or modify phenomena, while the other system excludes it.

There is another error in the discussion of questions like the present—an error which is common to the advocates on both sides of the