

What I Owe to My Father

By Jane Addams, Roger W. Babson, Alice Stone Blackwell, Samuel A. Eliot, Edward A. Filene, Henry Emerson Fosdick, John Haynes Holmes, Nicholas Vachel Lindsay, Paul Dwight Moody, William Pickens, Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., Oswald Garrison Villard, Stephen S. Wise, Mary E. Woolley

Edited by Sydney Strong

Published by Henry Holt & Company, New York, 1931

<http://babsc.iii.com/record=b1091812~S0>

This book comprises thirteen tributes to fathers who were in some way “pioneers” in American history. Written by their famous sons and daughters, the passages reveal as much about the writers as of the parent of which each speaks. Roger Babson writes “My father believed that as people learn that all the chemistry, electricity and wealth in the world cannot make people happy, these masterminds will turn their laboratories over to a study of the spiritual and intangible. ... My father always felt that a greater interest should be aroused in collecting and studying data on religious experiences” (pp. 25-26).

Evidently, Babson’s father shared many of his son’s sentiments about faith and religion, perhaps inspiring Roger to participate in church reform movements. The ideas, however, seem to evolve in the twentieth century rather than an earlier age, so it is possible that the writer could be using this book as an opportunity to print his personal beliefs while giving credit to his father for their origin.

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5”x 7 ½”, blue cloth cover with blue paper jacket, 184 pp.**

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