

Fundamentals of the Christian Religion

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✓ *By*
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TO THE MEMORY OF MY
Father and Mother,
WHO LIVED AND DIED IN THE FAITH
OF THE GOSPEL
OF CHRIST,
I Dedicate this Book.

PREFACE.

THIS volume makes no attempt to deal with the Christian religion in its entirety or as a system, but seeks to exhibit its most characteristic teachings. Its purpose is to call attention to the fundamental truths of Christianity and to present them in such a way as to establish faith in the saving and renewing power of the gospel. It moreover aims to show that the content of the Christian revelation contains God's best message to mankind, and as such can never be superseded. The language used and the method employed will, we trust, appeal to those of the workshop and office as well as to the student and specialist.

That the following pages may quicken spiritual faith and make religious love ardent is the prayer of the writer.

SAMUEL F. HALFYARD.

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“The Christian religion is something simple and sublime ; it means one thing and one thing only—Eternal life in the midst of time, by the strength and under the eyes of God.”—ADOLPH HARNACK.

“I make no secret that true Christianity, I mean the religion of Christ, seems to me to become more and more exalted the more we appreciate the treasures of truth hidden in the despised religions of the world.”

—MAX MÜLLER.

“The Christian revelation is essentially a revelation of God. It teaches us what God is, and what He means. It is, primarily and fundamentally, a revelation of the righteousness and grace of God. It tells us how God feels toward us ; what He has made us for ; what He has done and is doing for us ; how we are to think of life and its meaning, of death and destiny, of our mutual human relations also, and the spirit in which we are to live.”

—BORDEN P. BOWNE.

CHAPTER I.

CHRISTIANITY AND OTHER RELIGIONS.

No adequate appreciation of the Christian religion can be obtained unless it is studied in connection with the non-Christian religions which have flourished at various times in the history of the world. No just appraisement of its character can be entered into until its place in the history of the spiritual life of man be first determined and its relation to the religious faiths that have preceded it defined. No true estimate of its greatness can be made until it is compared with the rest of the religious beliefs, aspirations, and hopes of the human race. Its measureless superiority can become manifest only as it is put in comparison with the various ethnic systems that have sought the allegiance of mankind.

To justly appreciate the Christian revelation it will not be necessary, however, to degrade the numerous other faiths that have for many centuries molded the lives and shaped the destinies of innumerable millions.

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It is wholly unnecessary to depreciate the non-Christian religions of the world in order that Christianity may be rightly exalted. But this truth has not always been kept in mind. Certain writers, in their eagerness to show the perfection and finality of the Christian religion, have, we think, been unduly severe in their condemnation of all other systems. Jonathan Edwards asserted that "the bigger part of men who have died heretofore have gone to hell; the whole heathen world is hopelessly doomed; against the non-elect the wrath of God is burning, the furnace hot, the flames rage and glow, the devils are awaiting for their coming like lions restrained and greedy for their prey." Again, he wrote that "from time to time the generations in darkened lands, without temple, without Bible, without religious teacher, are swept into the future as the housewife lifts the lids from the glowing coals and sweeps flies into the flames." Another writer held that the ethnic religions were "in their source, the work of fraud; in their essence, corrupt superstitions; in their doctrines, wholly false; in their moral tendency, absolutely injurious; and in their result, degenerating more and more into greater evil."¹

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While this conception of the non-Christian systems contains much truth, it also contains no little error. No religious faith, however degraded and base, has been entirely false and wholly devoid of ennobling qualities. No nation, however corrupt and cruel, has been without its "elect spirits who have been guides and inspirations to their fellows in their quest for the Lord and Deliverer and Comrade of their souls." While the Christian religion contains the sole self-revelation of God to man, we nevertheless believe that a measure of spiritual light has been shed upon the pathway of all peoples. Indeed, the Christian revelation teaches that there is a Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. All those religious systems which have gained wide acceptance and held powerful sway over the heart and conscience of the nations must have had in them some elements of truth. Hoary with age and expressing in their creeds and worship the deepest instincts of the human heart, they have been a source of inspiration to not a few sincere and devout souls. Indeed, were they wholly the result of ignorance and superstition and altogether degrading, they would long ere this in the evolution of the race have

disappeared from the face of the earth. "Cherishing the light which God has given us and eager to send this light everywhither, we do not believe that God, the Eternal Spirit, has left Himself without witness in non-Christian nations. There is a divine light enlightening every man." We believe that men everywhere who have been true to reason and conscience have received light to show them the way to God. "In every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him." Gleams of light from heaven have shone upon all nations. As the sun in glorious splendor shines upon every land, bringing light and life to all, so the sunrise from on high hath visited all people to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. "The sun which shone over Bethlehem and Calvary has cast some celestial illumination and called forth some devout and holy aspirations by the Nile and the Ganges, in the deserts of Arabia and by the waves of the Yellow Sea." Plato's idea of the good as the highest of all concepts, the teaching of Buddha concerning sympathy and self-denial, the ethical precepts of Confucius, the lofty maxims of Marcus Aurelius, the proclamation of the divine unity and sover-

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eignty by the prophet of Mecca have all been radiated from the one Celestial source. The altars on the Euphrates and the Tigris, the temples of China and Greece, the ritual of Egypt and India all testify that God has ever been in the world creating in the hearts of His children a desire for the things that are highest and best.

When, however, the ethnic religions are studied in their fundamental ideas and in the civilization which they have produced it will at once be seen that they fall far short of what a religion should accomplish for mankind. And the worth of every religious system must be estimated not by "scattered moral maxims and stray gleams of religious insight," but by its teaching concerning the character of God, the dignity of man, and the meaning of human life. It is in these respects that the non-Christian religions have been weighed and found wanting. While they contain many lofty maxims and noble precepts their conception of God and His purpose in the earth has been so hideous as to bring about a revolt against them. While they contain many gleams of truth divinely sent, their idea of the Creator, of life, and of human destiny is so grotesque as to utterly

incapacitate them from becoming universal and final systems. One writer says that "the truth that is in them is wrapped up with so much that is puerile, stupid, and revolting, that they are doomed to perish." The fact of the matter is that those religions have outlived their usefulness and are no longer fitted to serve the spiritual interests of mankind. Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism have all been arrested and are unable to meet the intellectual and moral needs of a developing humanity. Some one has compared them to great vessels in the stream along which the current of time flows past. Each year they are farther behind the spirit of the age and less in harmony with its demands. Though not the inventions of priestly fraud, nor wholly false and corrupt, the sentence of death has nevertheless been passed upon them. With vitality depleted and strength exhausted they must ultimately give way to a higher and purer faith. Lacking in moral vigor and dying at the core they are doomed to perish and give place to the revelation which God has made in Christ.

That the hour of the non-Christian religions has come is evident from the fact that they have utterly failed to accomplish what

they ought to have done for those whose allegiance they have claimed. Indeed, the life of the nations that they have nourished has either become stagnant or turned aside into foul and corrupt channels. The most profound students of the civilization of Eastern nations affirm that physical, mental, and spiritual inertia is the deepest vice of those peoples. And this sluggishness is due to no small extent to their religious systems which, themselves incapable of change, render all efforts at reform impossible. And it is clear that no progress can be made until those religions are swept away and their places taken by a nobler faith.

Confucianism has given to the world the celestial empire, a nation which can scarcely be said to have taken a step forward for thousands of years. The educational institutions of that land which have grown up "under a system which makes submission to authority its chief virtue" have sapped the energies of the people and crushed the present under the dead hand of the past. A spiritual apathy has fallen upon the nation from whose blightful influence there are but few signs of recovery. "Walk in the trodden paths" is the injunction which sums up the ethical instruc-

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tion and which renders futile all attempts to break away from the noble past. While the religion of Confucius possesses many merits and in various ways exerts a beneficial effect upon its followers, the absence of expectation and hope is accompanied by a fearful ennui. A religious faith which lacks all sense of a personal God as the Creator and Father of men, which fails to teach human responsibility, which inspires no high and lofty ideals, and which entertains no worthy conception of a future life, is fitted neither to produce a high civilization nor become a universal religion.

The present status of Buddhism is not of such an order as to inspire confidence in its future. Students of Buddhism tell us that it should be called "The Night of Asia" rather than "The Light of Asia." Light to be sure it has shed upon the pathway of millions, but darkness and not light has characterized it for many centuries wherever its power has been felt. Those who have come in contact with it in the East tell us "the further we penetrate in this system the more we are convinced of the rottenness and deadness of the whole structure." During the early stages of its history it inspired the

hearts of multitudes with a new hope, enabling them to meet bravely misfortune and ill and furnishing them with new incentives to life, but with the passing of the centuries it has lost its freshness and vigor and degenerated into a philosophy of despair. In the days of its youth it was imbued with a high missionary zeal and went forth as a glad evangel proclaiming liberty to the nations, but with the gathering years its missionary spirit has waned and its energy become well-nigh exhausted. The followers of Buddha are no longer inspired by his lofty maxims, but are content to lie embraced in the arms of a system that spells despair and death. Indeed, Buddhism is virtually a philosophical atheism rather than a religious faith.

Tradition informs us that about the beginning of the sixth century of the present era Buddhism crossed the seas in a ship of fire and kindled the sacred light of Buddha on the altars of Japan. "It soon captured the Samurai, entered the palace, ascended the throne, and swayed the scepter of the Mikados." But Buddhism has failed in Japan as it has in the land of its birth to produce any high development of thought and life. The marvelous energy that characterizes Japan

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to-day and that is flowing out into all the channels of its activities, giving birth to new institutions and great men, has been produced not by the teachings of Gautama, but by the wave of a new civilization that has reached its shores from the West. The influence of Christianity, and not that of Buddhism, is the true cause of the awakening of the latent genius and long dormant energies of the island kingdom.

The same may be said of Hinduism. The Hindus, though by nature an intellectual people, have given birth to no ideas that have enriched the human race. Little or no advancement has been made in India in education, science, or art. Industrial and social progress is at a low ebb. The political institutions are utterly unable to minister to the needs of the land. The elaborate systems of philosophy which have been developed have produced no worthy conceptions of the world or human life, but have been as disordered and barren as dreams. The Hindu mind has not advanced beyond a pantheistic conception of the universe. Such a world view inevitably breeding pessimism, fatalism, and despair has debased and demoralized the higher aspirations of the nation. The caste system,

moreover—those impassable gulfs which divide society and which are a curse to the land—has been sanctioned by the Hindu religion. One writer says, “If the Hindu mind could be swept clean of all its religious conceptions and their place taken by the ideas of the Lord’s Prayer and the Sermon on the Mount, it would be for India a blessing great beyond all comparison.”

And what shall we say of Mohammedanism? Islamism is a yoke on the neck of mankind which is too grievous to be borne. Its conquest of men was not by moral means, but by brute force. And it has neither created anything durable among savage races nor met the demands of the peoples of higher culture. Arabia, Turkey, North and Central Africa are witnesses to the intellectual and moral weakness of Islamism. Its morality is but a stage beyond that of idolatry, while the institutions and customs it has perpetuated stamp it as an inferior religion. While fitted to discipline the life of mankind in a low stage of development it is wholly incapable of satisfying the deeper needs of the race. Renan says of this religion: “Islamism, following as it did on ground that was none of the best, has, on the whole, done as much

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harm as good to the human race. It has stifled everything by its dry and desolating simplicity." Another writer exclaims: "Altogether, in spite of its redeeming features, as a communication of spiritual truth to the world, a message respecting God, or respecting man, respecting the divine government, or respecting human destinies, it does not admit of being compared with Christianity."

But while the extra-Christian religions are in a state of decadence, Christianity still "carries the dew of her youth." While they are stationary and dying at the root, Christianity is progressive and blossoming forth into vigorous life. While they have exhausted their vitality, the Christian religion shows no sign of weakness nor diminution of power. While they are one-sided and defective, the Christian faith possesses full-orbed and in balanced harmony all the ideals and spiritual aspirations of humanity. While all other religions are but partial systems, Christianity includes all that is beautiful and true, useful and lovely, of all that man has ever thought or dreamed. Romanes in his "Thoughts on Religion" says: "This whole system of religion is so immeasurably in advance of all others, that it may fairly be said,

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if it had not been for the Jews, the human race would not have had any religion worth our serious attention as such."

But what, it might be asked, is Christianity? What are its distinctive features? What is it that constitutes its true character? Wherein does it differ from other religions? What right has it to the affections of mankind? What credentials does it present to support its claim to a universal religion?

"Christianity is a simple thing, very simple. It is absolute, pure morality; absolute, pure religion—the love of man; the love of God acting without let or hindrance. The only creed it lays down is the great truth which springs up spontaneous in the holy heart—there is a God. Its watchword is, Be perfect as your Father in heaven. The only form it demands is a divine life—doing the best thing in the best way, from the highest motives; perfect obedience to the great law of God."²

The Christian religion involves new beliefs. From a comparative study of the great religions of the world Max Müller tells us that Christianity involves a complete change in the spiritual condition of mankind and marks the great turning point in the history

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of the world. As to God we learn that He is presented both as the Creator of men and the Father of our spirits. He is set forth as our divine Helper and Friend. He is not indifferent to human needs, but is deeply solicitous in all that concerns His children. He is the greatest of burden bearers. None have sacrificed for humanity as has God. And that He might show us His love and teach us how to love He has wondrously revealed Himself in His Son Jesus Christ. His Spirit is ever present in the hearts of men, illuminating their thoughts, energizing their wills, and regulating their emotions. As to man Christianity has brought a new ideal of him into the world, and has shown that he is a being of infinite dignity and worth. "Man is seen, appreciated, understood, inspired, and served only in the luminous atmosphere of Christian truth and love." He is discovered and valued in the gospel of Christ as nowhere else. He is a child of God, has an infinite value, and is an heir of eternal life. He has not been made for a day, but carries within him an endless life. His high honor is to know God and to grow like Him. His end is to be one with God. The relation of man to man is summed up in a spirit of mutual helpfulness

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and burden-bearing. The spirit of Christ is fulfilled when the individual loves his neighbor as himself and when the strong bear the burdens of the weak.

As to sin the Christian religion teaches that it has its roots not in creaturely limitations nor in man's sensuous nature, but in free moral agency which is alien to God. It is not negation or lack of goodness; it springs from the self-centered will whose choice is averse to the law of divine love. Sin is selfishness; it is perverse self-assertion. And sin is predicable of inward motives and desires as well as of the external conduct. It is in the inner world of thought and feeling which is forever hidden from mortal eyes that sin arises. Sin consists "in states and dispositions of the heart." The evil purpose, the impure motive, the unclean thought, the unkind judgment are the hidden germs from which moral evil springs. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." As to salvation Christianity affirms that the Divine entered into humanity to reveal to man God's gracious love and to show him the way to his Father's house from which he had strayed. It asserts that the supreme

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aim of the gospel is to save mankind from sin, to turn their faces toward God, and to make them glorious citizens of the Kingdom of heaven. The Divine Head of the Christian Church declared that He came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. Thus the religion instituted by Christ "was a source of new moral forces, introduced higher and nobler ideals, created a finer sense of obligations toward God, and a more sensitive conscience as regards man."

Christianity has been called a religion of redemption. The message of the Christian revelation is redemption from sin; this may be said to be its inner essence. "The gospel is no mere proclamation of 'eternal truths,' but the discovery of a saving purpose of God for mankind, executed in time." It is a plan, "not of moral teaching, but first of all, of redemption and reconciliation; birth before life and life before work." Its fundamental purpose is to uproot evil, reform character, give men power over temptation, impart new incentives for living, and fill the soul with sweetness and light. Its highborn aim is to purify society of greed and lust, eradicate from the social body the evils that consume it, and establish feelings of good will between

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man and man. It seeks to recover men from the dominion of sin and estrangement to God and to bestow upon them a secret power whereby they might live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. "All of its history and its teachings must be studied in the light of that dominating purpose."

The redemptive nature of the Christian religion appears from the personality and life of its Divine Head. The Central figure of Christianity is Jesus Christ, who is its inspiration and life. The center of the Christian faith is no theological system, no dogmatic creed, no ethical rules of conduct, but a living Christ. It is an embodiment of His teaching and spirit. "The longer I live," says Gladstone, "the more I feel that Christianity does not consist in any particular system of Church government or in any credal statement, but that Christianity is Christ." His gracious work of redeeming love is disclosed in the announcement of the angel concerning His advent, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." He came to seek and to save the lost. His mission was to establish on earth a divine rule, a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men. His aim was to beget in

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the human soul a new-born hope which would enable it to rise above the sordidness of earth into the spiritual altitudes of the divine life and favor. There floated before the mind of the Son of God the vision of humanity cleansed of its sin, purged of its dross, and filled with the tides of the divine love. And "Christ is a great Savior, as He redeems or sets free the mind, cleansing it from evil, breathing into it the love of virtue, calling forth its noblest faculties and affections, enduing it with moral power, restoring it to order, health, and liberty."

In the year 1893 in the great "city by the unsalted sea" was held the Parliament of Religions, the most notable gathering of its kind in the history of the world. To that Parliament representatives of all nations came to present the claims of their respective religions. Wise men from the East, from China, Japan, India, clad in gorgeous robes, "mingled with the sober-clad representatives of the West." These representatives of every land and clime assembled to exhibit the greatness and grandeur of their religious faiths. The loftiest and purest teaching of each religion was skillfully set forth by eloquent and learned men. Such themes as the character

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of God, His relation to man, and the divine purpose in the earth were treated with depth of spiritual insight. Feelings of deepest reverence were expressed for the messengers divinely sent to show mankind the way to God and to teach them His truth. But wherein did the message of the Christian religion differ from that of the extra-Christian religions? Wherein lay the distinction between the faith of the West and those of the East? Christianity alone presented as its Head a Savior who has power to regenerate the human heart and fill it with a life divine. The Christian religion alone claimed to be able to recover the individual from the guilt of sin and restore to him the free and full use of his noblest powers. No other religious faith disclosed a God who was incarnated in humanity, seeking by His love to woo men and to build up the kingdom that is within. The Christian revelation alone proclaimed that religion is the life of God in the soul of men, giving vigor to the understanding, constancy to the will, and enlargement to the affections. It was the sole religion which offered to the world "a new gospel, that of the Kingdom of God; a new ideal, that of the character of Jesus; and a new power, that of

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the Divine Spirit realizing the Kingdom of God by transforming men into the image of Christ.”

Christianity has, moreover, been characterized as a religion of love. The foundation stone on which the entire structure of the Christian religion has been reared is the principle of love. Christianity is primarily, as already asserted, not a code of ethics, not a system of doctrine, not an ecclesiastical organization, but a great life-giving principle which is fulfilled in one word—love. All that the Christian religion has been, is, and hopes to be, is summed up in the two great commands which set forth “love to God” and “love to man” as the fulfilling of the whole law. And no religion has appealed so strongly to this noblest and most powerful sentiment of the heart as has Christianity. Other religions have appealed to the intellect, to the æsthetic nature, and to sensual desire, but Christianity makes its appeal to the deepest and most natural emotion of the human soul. The Christian religion draws men, not by force, nor by fear, but by the cords of love. And the Christian revelation as “a religion of love finds the way, as no other can, to make man free, to unseal his energies, and

to lead him upwards to the best life." It is not too much to say that more have been attracted to the altars of the Christian faith by this great principle than by all her doctrines, her ritual, and her creeds. Indeed, the law of love as embodied in all its richness and beauty in the life of Christ and realized though imperfectly in His followers has won the allegiance of many hearts which would have been repelled by dogma and credal statement. So impressed was Abraham Lincoln with the beauty and sublimity of this law that he exclaimed: "When I find a Church that will be content to write over its doors, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, soul, and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself,' I am ready to join that Church."

The superiority of Christianity may be seen in the results it has produced during the nineteen centuries of its history. The value of the Christian religion, like that of all other institutions, must be estimated by the service it has rendered mankind. The tree must be judged by its fruits, and not by its roots. Emerson somewhere observes that the truest test of civilization is not the census, nor the size of cities, nor the crops, but the kind of man the country turns out. So the real test

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of the Christian faith is not its doctrine nor its ritual, but the type of character it produces. Judged by this standard it will be seen that the Christian revelation surpasses all other movements of history, whether religious faiths, systems of philosophy, or social and political organizations. Christianity has done more for the thought, conduct, and progress of the race than any other institution that man has founded. "The characters which it has formed, the institutions to which it has given birth, the actual results achieved by it, are unparalleled in the history of the world."

With the advent of the Christian religion "a new era dawned upon the human mind, and the whole moral and social life of our race." To be sure Christianity did not interfere with existing social conditions; it made no attempt to change the external political and social arrangements it found established. It nevertheless introduced into society a new spirit, a new leaven, that transformed it in all its relations. It did not abolish slavery, but it taught that every man is a child of God endowed with an immortal spirit, and thus prepared the way for the overthrow of the accursed institution. It raised woman from

the degraded place in which it found her to a position of honor and usefulness by teaching that she is not man's slave, but his companion and helpmeet. As a result of the value it placed upon childhood by declaring that of such is the Kingdom of heaven, it put an end to the cruel practice of the destruction of children which was so common throughout the Roman Empire. It ministered to the needs of the poor and the sick, and dispensed blessings to the criminal and the outcast. In contrast with the selfishness and inhumanity of the pagans who avoided their friends that were stricken with the plague and cast the half-dead into the streets, the Christians took the diseased to their homes and by their exceeding great love attended to their wants without fear and without cessation.

And as Christianity was "a power of social purification and reform" during the early centuries of its history, it has been in modern times "the inspiration of the great moral and philanthropic movements." In whatever direction you look you will find it associated with superiority and power. It is revolutionizing the social and moral ideas of men and transforming the face of the earth. It lies at the basis of the institutions

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of our modern civilization, schools, philanthropies, literature, government, and law. It has elevated jurisprudence, made governments humane, given liberty to slaves, and brought about the education of the masses. It has implanted in human hearts the spirit of humanity and has done much toward purifying the political, social, and intellectual life of the nations. It has fostered science, philosophy, and art, and has intertwined itself with the best and highest culture of the age. "Christianity, the spirit of faith, hope, and love, is the deep fountain of modern civilization. Its inventions are for the many, not for the few. Its science is not hoarded, but diffused. It elevates the masses, who everywhere else have been trampled down. The friend of the people, it tends to free schools, a free press, a free government, the abolition of slavery, war, vice, and the amelioration of society."³

Christianity is the crown and goal of all religions. The dreams of the prophets and sages of all ages have been more than realized in the Kingdom of grace founded by Christ. Whatever other faiths hoped to be and strove for has become a glorious realization in the abundance of life and fullness of power of the

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Christian revelation. Beginning with beliefs that to-day are repulsive and with forms of worship that are grotesque, the religious life of the race has gradually unfolded until in Christianity it has reached a pure and lofty faith. The doctrines and institutions of the Christian religion are the noblest expression of the spiritual experience of mankind; they contain a fullness of truth nowhere else found among the religious faiths of the earth. And Christianity includes all the highest and noblest elements of all other systems. It has taken up in itself all the highest ideals, the noblest truths, and the worthiest aspirations of the race. It has absorbed whatever there is of beauty and worth in the spiritual struggles of man. It has annexed outside elements and built them into its own life. It has appropriated all kinds of wholesome and nutritious food wherever found. Virtues grown on other soil and ideals formed by other thought have been grafted on the Christian tree and become an integral part of its being. The Christian religion has mastered and adopted the great law of evolution which a generation ago was declared to be hostile to it. It has come in contact with the religions of the world, and whatever there is of value

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in them it has claimed as its own. "It became the heir of the thought and aspirations of a hundred empires; all the pious sentiments that flowed together from every quarter of the world helped to enrich its doctrine, and to make it the great reservoir it is of all the tendencies and views, even those most contrary to each other, which are connected with religion." It has incorporated into itself the aspiration of Egypt, the mysticism of Hinduism, the moral earnestness of Judaism, the beauty of Greece, and the freedom of the Teuton. It has assimilated China's ethical precepts, Persia's idea of conflict with evil, India's law of sacrifice, and Rome's ideal of universal empire. This does not mean, however, that Christianity is defective or incomplete and must be repaired by the addition of elements from other faiths. It does not mean that the Christian religion is a mosaic made up by a mechanical arrangement of different bits of truth gathered from the various religious fields of the world. It does not mean that it is an eclectic system which simply contains all the truest and best brought to it by other systems. No! It means merely that whatever is good and admirable in other religions it recognizes and uses. It is no artifi-

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cial fountain containing whatever of truth that has been poured into it from other sources, but a vast reservoir through whose conduits and channels flow in richest abundance streams of divine life and love. The Christian religion "is not an amalgamation of other religions, but it has in it all that is best and truest in other religions. It is the white light that contains all the colored rays. While other religions have a relative excellence, Christianity is the absolute religion that contains all excellencies."

The question may here be raised as to the permanency of Christianity. Will the Christian faith, like the extra-Christian systems, outlive its usefulness and be supplanted by a higher faith? Like the various ethnic religions which are being gradually superseded, will it, too, be finally outgrown and laid aside? Is it but a passing phase of the development of the religious life of the race, or will it exist as long as the world lasts? Will it grow dim with age and sink in years, or will it continue to renew its youth? Is it fit to be man's guide through all the centuries to come? Has it power to unite all mankind in one glorious brotherhood? Certain writers regard Christianity as but one of the great religious faiths

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of the world, which will, like all other religions, ultimately pass away and become historic. While it has been a potent factor in the unfolding of the religious consciousness of mankind, it will with the attainment of the intellectual maturity of the race be left behind as a relic of a bygone age. Voltaire in his day predicted that within a few decades Jesus Christ would fall from the throne of His dominion over the minds of men. Matthew Arnold also wrote that Christianity, like every other religion, would have its day and cease. We do not believe, however, that the Christian religion will finally exhaust itself and perish, but that it is destined to be the final religion of mankind. It embodies elements that are indestructible; it carries within itself the power of an endless life. Though nations grow old and civilizations become effete, Christianity will become more vigorous, and with every passing century continue to prove itself worthy of a permanent place in the life of the race. It will never be surpassed nor cease from the earth.

Those who have studied the genius of the Christian religion affirm that it is the most perfect system of which the mind can con-

ceive and beyond which humanity can not go. Goethe says: "Let intellectual and spiritual culture progress, and the human mind expand, as much as it will; beyond the grandeur and moral elevation of Christianity, as it sparkles and shines in the Gospels, the human mind will not advance." Fairbairn exclaims: "Religion is the highest creation of spirit, Christianity the highest religion, and Jesus the supreme genius of the world, who never has been, nor can be, either in mind or degree surpassed." Menzies writes: "The appearance of such a religion forms the most momentous epoch of human history. He who brought it forward must occupy a unique position in the estimation of mankind. It can never be superseded." And George A. Gordon asserts that "beyond the teaching of Jesus thought can not go. A God better than the Father of Christ is for man inconceivable. A diviner interpretation of human existence than that of Christ is unimaginable. The great ideas of Christ—the Kingdom of God, eternal life, the universe as essentially moral, truth as ultimately personal in man, in Christ Himself, and in God—represent not only the highest reach of spiritual intelligence, but

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also the height that has no beyond. Anything better than the gospel is simply inconceivable.”⁴

The history of Christianity from the beginning has been of such a character as to prove that it is destined to become the religion of humanity. A child of the East, Christianity has conquered the West and will in turn conquer the races of the Orient. Its conquest of the Western nations demonstrates its ability to lay all peoples under tribute. And the victories it has won have not been obtained by physical force, but by moral means. The weapons it has used to bring whole nations under its sway and to carry its standards to the ends of the earth have been those of moral suasion. And to-day its vitality is not less than when in the first centuries of its career it overthrew the pagan religion of the Roman Empire and subjugated the peoples of Europe. The same essential qualities which in its early history caused it to triumph over its rivals it still possesses. Its power to reform the individual and heal the distempers of society has not in the least abated. It still is able to check the ravages of licentiousness, intemperance, lawlessness, and vice of every form. It curbs passion, subdues pride, chas-

tens fierceness, and purifies the life as when in the vigor of its youth it transformed the lives of innumerable multitudes. As in its early days it met the intellectual and moral demands of the age and brought satisfaction to the spiritual aspirations of men, so it still possesses the ability to nourish the springs of life and satisfy the needs of the soul. And as in the past it triumphed over other religious faiths because it presented an interpretation of life that satisfied both the reason and the conscience, so in the future it will compel the assent of the intellect and the allegiance of the heart. The Christian Church sees in Christianity the rising sun which will ultimately flood the world with light and life. It beholds in the Christian revelation a new tidal wave of divine love which will one day wash the shores of every continent and isle, bringing health and peace to all.

The story is told of an artist who kept in his studio a canvas which was the triumph of his deepest thought and greatest skill. When it was finished he carefully examined it and exclaimed: "There, I can not put another touch to it. So far as my ability goes, it is perfect. That is my last word to the world."

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God's revelation of Himself in Christ was the best word that He could speak to the heart of humanity. It was His last and greatest gift to man. All that God could do for the world He has done in Jesus. Christ was God's supreme achievement for the race. Closer to us He could not come. As the painter, the musician, the poet produces his noblest work, so God has given to mankind in His Son the highest expression of His love. While He has in all ages spoken through His prophets, the revelation that shone forth in the face of Jesus surpasses all other revelations. It was the utmost effort of His self-manifestation. "Nothing richer, nothing higher, or better was possible even to the Divine Giver." "Christ is the express image of His person and the brightness of His glory."

“God is a Spirit.”—JOHN 4:24.

“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.”
—DEUTERONOMY 6:4.

“God is the Personal Spirit, perfectly good, who in holy love creates, sustains, and orders all.”

—WILLIAM NEWTON CLARKE.

CHAPTER II.

THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF GOD.

EVERY religion must be tested by its idea of God. The beliefs and worship of every religious faith must be studied in the light of the view it entertains of the Being for whom it claims the allegiance of men. Its doctrine of God is the center from which all other doctrines radiate and to which they return. Whether a religion is pure or corrupt, ennobling or degrading, spiritual or material, depends to a large extent upon its notion of the Deity. As certain axioms or self-evident truths lie at the basis of mathematics, so one's view of the Divine Being lies at the root of his entire theology. As the powers latent in the seed determine the quality, form, and color of the plant, so the idea which one entertains of the Infinite determines his religious worship and practice. From his doctrine of God may be deduced his doctrine of man, sin, salvation, and destiny. Indeed, it is not too much to say that the progress of

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human society and the growth of intellectual and moral culture among men are inseparably bound up with their conception of the Supreme Being. The idea which men possess of God is the most potent influence that is at work in the world. Has one a low and unworthy notion of God? then he has a low view of human existence and the soul of man. Dr. Horatius Bonar says, "All wrong thoughts of God, whether of the Father, Son, or Spirit, must cast a shadow over the soul that entertains them." Has one an exalted view of the Infinite? then he has a corresponding high appreciation of human life and final destiny. One writer exclaims: "When men have thought of Deity as capricious, they have been superstitious; when they have thought of Him as inflexible, they have been fatalists; when they have thought of Him solely as Supreme Ruler, they have become servile; only when they recognize in Him that balance of love and law which together make up the idea of Father, have they stood upright and loyal in the spirit and power of conscious Sonship."

It will be necessary to note at the outset the sources from which the Christian doctrine of God is derived. The principal sources

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from which the Christian conception of the Deity is obtained are two, namely, the Old Testament or the teachings of the Hebrew prophets, and the New Testament or the teachings of Jesus Christ and His apostles. These are the streams that unite to give rise to the fullest and richest conception of the Divine Being that humanity has ever had. These are the currents of thought that come together to produce our noblest idea of the Infinite. Would we therefore obtain an adequate appreciation of the Deity we must discover the impression which both the Old and New Testaments give of His nature and character.

The Hebrew Scriptures in a lofty and worthy manner sets forth the character and nature of God and His relation to the world and human life. Indeed, so worthy is the view which the Old Testament gives of Him that it has become a permanent possession of the spiritual experience of mankind. It represents Him as a personal, omnipotent, and all-wise Being, the Maker of the universe and the Creator of man. It reveals Him as One who is infinite in power, unchangeable in purpose, perfect in knowledge, and ineffable in holiness. According to the Hebrew

prophet the two dominant qualities of God are His unity and holiness—the former conserving His absoluteness, independence, and supremacy, the latter His righteousness, justice, and truth.

Professor Flint in his “Agnosticism” says that in the Old Testament “the God of Israel is represented as the only true God, the Maker and Ruler of heaven and earth; as no mere essence or substance, or force or law, but a self, a person; as possessing all the characteristics of personality, namely, life, knowledge, affection, will, yet as possessing them without the limits or defects peculiar to created and infinite beings. There, while to God is ascribed in common with man *intelligence or knowledge*, there are also ascribed to Him in contradistinction to man omniscience and perfect wisdom. There, while to God is ascribed in common with man *affection*, there is also ascribed to Him in contradistinction to man pure and perfect goodness. There, while to God is ascribed in common with man *will*, there are also ascribed to Him in contradistinction to man omnipotence, immutability, entire truthfulness, perfect and immutable rectitude, absolute moral purity.”

The New Testament doctrine of the Deity

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“rests upon and carries forward to its completion” the Old Testament conception of Him. The God of the Jewish religion is essentially the God of the Christian religion. “The Christian conception of God was, of course, the legitimate and lineal descendant of the Hebrew: it took up, that is, the religious tradition of humanity, in the purest form that it had attained.” We have already seen that the Jews when Christ appeared among them were in possession of lofty theistic ideas; God had revealed Himself to them as He had to no other people. And the views that were prevalent among the Jews respecting the Divine Being are approved of and adopted by Christ. He does not supplant the ancient doctrine of God by any new conception, nor does He ascribe to Him attributes other than those ascribed to Him in the Hebrew Scriptures. While by the proclamation of a larger truth He sets aside much which those of old time had taught, He accepts the idea of the Infinite which He had inherited from the ancient religion. Indeed, so fully does Christ accept the view of the Deity which He found current among His people and so completely does He incorporate it into His own teaching, that Christianity has been

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defined as "the blossom and fruit of the true worship of God in Israel."

To be sure Jesus gives to the idea of God a fuller meaning than it ever before possessed. He puts an end to the limitations with which it was hedged about by Jewish exclusiveness. As every age enriches by its own thought and life the ideas which it inherits from the past, so Christ enriches by His own inner experience the doctrine of God which He inherited from Jewish prophet and sage. "He uses the terms about God found in the sacred writings of His people, coins no novel ones, but gives to the ancient words all the force of a new truth which He had worked out for Himself, and tested and tried by His own heart's experience." With His deeper moral insight into the divine nature He brings to man a larger and richer conception of the Divine Being than had ever been possessed by the prophets of the old covenant. On the lips of Jesus the doctrine of God receives a rich spiritual content, while at the same time it becomes associated with the ethical and religious needs of the soul. With the fuller interpretation that Christ gives of the mind of the Infinite we see in the divine face new beauties and catch clearer visions of His

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glory. The Being for whom Christ claims the veneration and love of men is One who meets the ideals of the will, the demands of the conscience, and the cravings of the heart.

It must, however, not be overlooked that the Christian religion nowhere undertakes to demonstrate the existence of God, but assumes it as a thing already believed in and accepted. Christianity offers no proofs for the reality of the Infinite, but seeks to unfold His nature and character. To speculate concerning the nature of God or to present arguments for His existence is a thing wholly foreign to the writers of the Bible. The evidences for the reality of the Divine Being as used by theologians are nowhere to be found in the Sacred Scriptures. One seeks in vain for the "a priori" and "a posteriori" proofs of the Deity which have been so widely used by theistic writers. No trace of the argument based on the world as an effect, the marks of order and intelligence in the universe, the moral nature of man, is here to be discovered. To the Biblical writer no truth is more real than that God exists. It is said of Christ that "He moves in a region of absolute certainty, speaking of God with the confidence of one who possesses the most intimate relations

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with Him.” And what is true of Jesus is true to a lesser degree of prophet and apostle. From the sublime declaration of the opening words of divine revelation, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” to the closing words of prophecy God is presented as the living One who is the sole source and sustainer of all existence and who has entered into personal relations of grace with men.

It will scarcely be necessary to state that we do not here seek to give an exhaustive discussion of the divine nature and character; indeed, such a treatment would far exceed the limits of this brief essay. Our purpose is not to give a complete enumeration of the attributes of the Infinite, but to discuss briefly certain of the more fundamental characteristics of His nature. We purpose to seize upon certain vital elements of the character of the Deity which will serve as typical aspects of His entire being. Our aim, moreover, is not to formulate an all-inclusive definition of God. Indeed, such a definition is absolutely impossible. The ideas concerning God to which the Christian religion stands pledged are too vast to be compressed into a single statement. No effort to gather up into a sin-

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gle thought the essential marks of the conception of the Divine Being which Christ has given us can be wholly successful. It will be enough for us if we think of God as a personal Spirit, who is unchangeable in His being, infinitely powerful, wise, and good, the Creator of the world, and the Father of men.

The Christian idea of God includes the attribute of unity. Christianity affirms that there is but one God, who is the supreme object of adoration and worship, obedience and love. By the unity of God we mean that there is but one infinite and eternal Spirit whose nature is indivisible. This truth first proclaimed on the soil of Israel is the central idea of the Christian religion. The pronounced monotheistic tone of the opening words of the Hebrew Scriptures is with increasing emphasis carried through the entire Bible. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord," is not only the lofty and regnant idea of the entire history of the Jewish people, but one which lies at the very root of the Christian revelation. Confining our thought to the Old Testament we discover that it is so insistent upon the enforcement of the doctrine of the divine unity that an inhibition is placed upon the worship of gods other than

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Jehovah. Sacrifices must be offered and worship rendered to Him alone; He will brook no rivals or competitors. "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me" is the impressive injunction placed at the head of the greatest moral code ever given to the world.

The New Testament equally with the Old proclaims that God is one. The unity of God is a thought which finds constant expression on the lips of Jesus Christ. To be sure the teaching of Jesus concerning the Deity is ethical and religious rather than metaphysical, and centers around the idea of Fatherhood. The attributes of God which Jesus knows are those of goodness, beneficence, and love, while the most fundamental of all His relations to men is that of Father. Nevertheless Christ takes up the idea of the divine unity which He inherited from the past, and which we have seen to be the dominant conception of the Hebrew religion, and incorporates it into His own teaching. Many of His words convey no meaning unless we assume that to Him the universe is the work of one indwelling and Supreme Being. He teaches that there is one God, immortal, invisible, who is the source of all life and love. When addressed as "Good Master," He replies, "There is none good

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but One, that is God." He proclaims that eternal life is conditioned on a knowledge of the one true God. "This is life eternal," He says, "that they might know Thee the only true God."

The unity of God denotes that He is the sole self-existent Being, the originating cause of all reality; no other being shares with Him independent existence. He alone belongs to the rank of the uncreated and eternal, existing prior to and uncaused by all else. This implies that the sum total of all existence, other than God, has its source in Him. He who is one and unoriginated is the cause of the physical universe and the world of finite spirits. The relation of the world to God is a relation of dependence. All things must be traced back to the divine intelligence and will as their sole source.

It must not be supposed that the unity of God excludes distinctions within the divine nature. A plurality of qualities is wholly consistent with oneness of being. Attributes are not separate entities, but phases of divine activity or modes of expression. They are not distinct substances which by fusion constitute God, but denote the mode in which He reveals Himself. They are those qualities of nature

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and character that belong to the Deity as such. They signify no antagonism or conflict within, but disclose the manner in which the Divine Being reveals His inner life.

The Christian doctrine of the unity and absoluteness of God is one which is confirmed by sound reason and science. Philosophy and science are no less emphatic in proclaiming the oneness of the power that underlies the universe than is the Christian revelation. Reason shows that every system of thought must be a monism; a pluralistic philosophy is self-contradictory and impossible. Every philosophic system which assumes two or more principles mutually independent of one another is self-destructive. In the nature of the case there can be but one independent reality; all other realities of whatever kind must be secondary and dependent. Fundamental being must necessarily be one to which all other existences are related as effects or results. Moreover, all realities must exist either in harmony or in conflict with one another. If they exist in harmony this is due to a more fundamental reality through which the harmony is made possible. If they are in conflict, chaos, disorder, and anarchy must be the inevitable result. Of this, however,

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there is not the slightest trace in the physical universe. As far as has been observed order and law everywhere prevail throughout the visible world.

If philosophy proclaims that there can be but one infinite Being, science also announces that the physical world is under the dominion of one basal reality. Everywhere throughout the vast universe with its systems and suns, its motions and laws, we detect the presence of a single fundamental Being. The world carries within itself a structure which proclaims that it is the product of a single cause. "Everywhere the minds of men are opening to the conception that, whatever else the universe is, it is one—one set of laws holds the whole together—one order reigns through all." Indeed, were the universe other than a system of absolute and unchangeable laws science would utterly perish from the face of the earth. Could the laws of nature be diverted or turned aside scientific investigation would immediately come to an end. Physical science can proceed only on the assumption that the universe is not a chaos but a cosmos, a single system in which law and order prevail, a connected order of facts and relations. And what science assumes experience con-

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firms. The more the universe is studied, the clearer does it become evident that it is a system in which harmony dwells, an order of rational and unalterable principles.

Now, it is obvious that a system of interacting members, such as we have seen the world to be, is rendered possible only in and through a single unifying principle. In no other way can such an order be produced and maintained. As mental phenomena are brought together into the unity of a personal life by the one indivisible psychical agent, so physical nature as a system of relations is the work of a single constructive activity. And such a principle must necessarily be not blind and unconscious force as some have held, but a living, self-conscious Spirit. Mr. Green says, "The understanding which presents an order of nature to us is in principle one with an understanding which constitutes that order itself." The sole power capable of establishing such an order or of uniting the many into the one must be an intelligent and all-powerful Mind. This power or basal reality is God. It is by the unity and creative energy of the Divine Being that the world as a system of fixed relations has been produced. God is that unitary Being who is the inde-

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pendent ground of the universe and who has brought all things together in one all-embracing whole. The Christian doctrine of the absoluteness and unity of the Infinite is thus in a remarkable manner confirmed by modern physical science.

Christianity affirms that God is a personal Spirit. This conception of God has ever been held by the Christian religion as one of its most fundamental truths. When we say that God is a Spirit we mean that He is a self-conscious and self-directing Being, one who knows Himself as God and who directs His own acts. God is a mind, an intelligence, One who thinks and feels and wills. "The solid and necessary ground of religion is the assurance that God is a person who thinks and loves." And such a Being stands in contrast with matter. Whatever the essence of matter may be, however it may be defined, God is not the material universe nor is He dependent upon it. The qualities that we associate with the material world are in no way to be identified with the attributes of the Infinite. God is other than material things, for He possesses powers of thought, affection, and will. These are the essential qualities of a spirit, and it is by them we know what God is. "God is

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spirit, for spirit is essential Life, and essential Energy, and essential Love, and essential Thought; in a word, essential Person.”

Since God is defined in terms of spirit He can not be perceived by the senses, as material objects are. A physical proof of Him is out of the question, for He does not come within the range of observation. No man hath seen God at any time. “God is above sensuous perception; in other words, He is not a material being.” It is true that men have searched for Him among physical objects, but such a quest has been as fruitless as it has been absurd. La Place has informed us that he swept the heavens with his telescope but found no God. President Sawyer, in reply, says, “He might just as well have swept his kitchen with a broom.” It would be as reasonable to seek the artist among his pictures or the author among his books as to search for God among material things. God is not an object among objects, but a Spirit whose essence is life, thought, and love.

The spirituality of the power that underlies the world is a necessary postulate of science as well as of religion. It has come to be seen that the phenomena and laws of

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the universe are not material in their nature, but spiritual. The physical world is not composed of dead, inert matter, but is the expression of mind. The universe is an intellectual system which existed prior to the advent of man, and which will continue after he has ceased to be. As printed words are symbols expressing finite thought, so physical phenomena are symbols expressing infinite thought. Indeed, were nature other than a system of thought and incapable of being expressed in terms of human speech, there could be no response between her and the soul of man and she would forever remain unknown. Were she a chaos, an irrational system, irresponsible to the thinking self, she would exist unvalued and unappreciated. Did not the laws and structure of things correspond to the laws and structure of the human mind we could not know them. Thought can interpret only thought; it can grasp only that which is fundamentally like itself. And since the universe is a system of ideas, it must be the product of an intelligent and operative Spirit. Since it is a rational order, capable of being understood by the human soul, it must be the work of a Mind similar to our own. The rationality of the universe is to

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us irrefutable evidence that it has its source in infinite mind and will. Professor Baden Powell writes: "That which requires reason and thought to understand must be itself thought and reason. That which mind alone can investigate or express must be itself mind. And if the highest conception attained is but partial, then the mind and reason studied is greater than the mind and reason of the student. If the more it is studied the more vast and complex is the necessary connection in reason disclosed, then the more evident is the vast extent and compass of the reason thus partially manifested and its reality *as existing in the immutably connected order of objects examined*, independently of the mind of the investigator."

The Christian conception of God embraces the attribute of omnipresence. That God is present in His creation, upholding and controlling it, is an idea which runs through the entire Scriptures. The Christian religion has never failed to emphasize the universal presence of God both in the physical universe and in the life of man. God as a Spirit who pervades and inspires the world which He Himself has made is one of the most fundamental truths of Christianity. No truth has been

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more real to the Christian than that the Infinite is unfailingly near, directing the movements of the physical order and guiding it to its end. Christian faith affirms that God, who is the efficient cause of the material world, inhabits and sustains it in its every ongoing. It teaches that the tangible, visible things of creation are the work of an indwelling, intelligent, and free Spirit.

There are few passages in the Sacred Scriptures which are more sublime than those which affirm the universal nearness or omnipresence of the Almighty. By Biblical writers God is conceived of as everywhere present; there is no place where He is not. It is absolutely impossible to go beyond the bounds of His presence, for it fills heaven and earth. The heaven and the heaven of heavens can not contain Him. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." "Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool." "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? said the Lord." It is "in Him we live, and move, and have our being."

One of the most sublime declarations of

the omnipresence of God is found in Psalm 139. To the psalmist God is one who knows his thoughts, who is acquainted with his ways, and from whose presence he can not flee. "Whither," he says, "shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me." So thoroughly impressed were the writers of the Old Testament with the idea of the divine omnipresence that they everywhere saw manifestations of the divine power. The Hebrew writer conceived of God as the immediate cause of all the laws and movements of physical nature. Both prophet and poet dramatically pictured Him as present in all the on-goings of the material world. He speaks in the thunder, His voice shaketh the wilderness, His chariots move in the tops of the tall mulberry trees, He sitteth upon the circle of the earth, He maketh the clouds His chariot, and He rideth upon the wings of the wind.

Dr. Arthur T. Pierson says: "In the

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Twenty-ninth Psalm, the psalm of nature, all creation is figuratively viewed as God's temple, the vast cathedral where He is throned, and all the forces of the material universe are vocal with His praise. The boom of the great waters sounds the deep diapason, the gentle breezes breathe melodies, and the peal of the thunders rolls its pedal bass, while cyclones and whirlwinds add majesty to the chorus. Lightnings flash like electric lamps, and giant oaks and immortal cedars bow like worshipers. In this psalm of nature it is declared that 'In His temple everything doth shout glory!' ”⁶

It must not be supposed, however, that God is everywhere present and fills all space in the sense in which matter fills space. God is not diffused throughout the universe as is the all-pervading ether. He is not an attenuated essence which is universally present like ethereal substance. As He can not be conceived of as a sensible object—that is, as a bulky or extended substance—the notion of presence which belongs to space-filling objects can not be applied to Him. Did God fill space, His unity would be destroyed and the conception of omnipresence would be reduced to absurdity. To escape the many con-

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traditions and absurdities involved in the idea of the omnipresence of an extended substance, the nature of fundamental being must be defined in terms of activity instead of in terms of bulk. The divine presence then comes to mean the divine activity. And since the measure or extent of the activity of God is unlimited, His presence is universal. When we say that God is everywhere present we mean that He is not subject to spatial limitations, but has power to act upon the whole of creation. As the human soul is present in all its mental states because it is their constant source, so God is present in the world because He is its sole cause. Indeed, the human mind, which in its unity is present in all its thoughts, is the best analogue of the divine omnipresence. God thus does not move from place to place to effect things or execute His will, for since He acts on all alike He is equally present to all. He can not be said to be here or there, far or near; He surrounds us on all sides like the air and the blue of the sky. He is everywhere present, for He is the abiding source and sustaining power of all existence.

The Christian doctrine of the divine omnipresence must not be confounded with Pan-

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theism. The Christian religion teaches that God, the Author and ever-present Life of the universe, is personal and free, while Pantheism holds that God and the world are one. In other words, Christianity affirms both the immanence and the transcendence of God, while Pantheism denies the latter. Pantheistic thought "may recognize a spirit-life at the foundation of all things, but it denies that this principle of the world is conscious or personal." But while God is the immanent power and operative will of the physical realm, He is other and greater than His work. He is not exhausted in the world which He has made, but is its Master, transcending, controlling, and directing it. He is not absorbed in the universe which He has created, but surpasses it and is independent of its limitations. Neither the Christian revelation nor sound philosophy permits any relation of the world to God which identifies the two. An identification of the Infinite with physical nature is as repugnant to sane thought as it is to the Christian faith. The world is the work of the free activity of the Divine Being, and is not the full and necessary expression of His power.

Modern thought, equally with Christian-

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ity, affirms that God is everywhere present in the laws and phenomena of nature, operating from within and carrying forward His purpose. A change has taken place in recent times as to the manner in which the world is governed. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries God was conceived of as external to His work, which was said to be controlled by inherent laws. It was declared that God, having made the world, placed it under immutable law and withdrew, leaving it to administer itself. Such a view of God's relation to the universe has happily passed away, and it is now seen that God inhabits the world and governs it from within. The conception of an absentee God and a self-running nature has been definitely set aside. God who worketh hitherto, still worketh, and shall forever work. "It is not too much to say that this doctrine of the immanence of the transcendent God in nature—no new doctrine, be it observed, to Christianity—has transformed within a lifetime the philosophy of causation in natural science, and has fused it with idealism." We have come to learn that nature is full of the activity of God. The entire universe is the work of the Infinite, the mode of His self-expression. The divers

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traces of wisdom and skill everywhere present in the structure and administration of the world are the manifestation of an indwelling mind. The evolution of the inorganic and organic realms, the continuity of nature, the laws and forces resident in the objective order are the thought and energy of the Infinite. The splendor of the midnight heavens, the glory of the rising and the setting sun, and the grandeur of the snow-capped mountain peak are the outflow of the life of God. His way is in the sea and His path in the great waters. He is in the purple of the violet, the song of the bird, the golden fruitage of autumn, and the smile of a little child. The roar of the ocean, the murmur of the wind, and the laughter of the bubbling stream are His voice. He guides the comet in its orbit, He directs the path of the bird on its homeward way, and He is present in every dewdrop that clings to flower and leaf.

The Christian religion affirms the omnipotence of God. Both the Old and New Testaments exhibit God as One who is infinite in power or as being able to do whatever He wills. By Hebrew writers God is called the Almighty, a name which implies unlimited or infinite ability. "Omnipotence, in the

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Christian doctrine, is adequate ability. It is the sufficiency of God. This brief definition declares that God is equal in power to all possible demands of His universe upon Him." It is the perfect ability of the Infinite to do all that accords with His nature and character. The omnipotence of God appears from the vastness of the universe, which is attributed to Him as His work. Christian thought asserts that God created, sustains, and controls the world. To be sure, we can not strictly infer that the Creator of the universe is infinite in power since the universal itself is a finite system. From the data which the finite and the relative present we can not deduce the omnipotent and the absolute. A finite system does not necessarily imply an all-powerful and infinite cause. So great, however, is the universe and so vast the power necessary for its creation and control, that we think the Christian religion makes no presumptuous claim when it affirms the unlimited power and self-sufficiency of its Author. Though it is impossible to prove the omnipotence of God, yet it is not unreasonable to infer that He who has scattered countless systems, galaxies of

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suns, stars, comets, and planets through the vast abysses of space, and who holds them true to their appointed courses, is in His power without limit or end. How the Almighty has made the world and all things therein is beyond human knowledge. How He directs and controls it is beyond finite comprehension. It is enough for us to know that He is equal to the task. It is the Lord, the everlasting God, who is the Creator of the ends of the earth and who, in the ordering of all that is, fainteth not, neither is weary.

It must, however, be borne in mind that omnipotence does not mean the ability of the Infinite to do that which is a contradiction in itself or contradictory to His nature. The divine power must harmonize with the divine character and reason. Whatever does not accord with the perfection of God lies outside the scope of His ability. There are limits to His power imposed, not from without, but by His own being, which makes it impossible for Him to contradict Himself. God can not lie or make wrong to be right. He can not create a world in which two and two make five, or one in which the whole is less than

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its part. All that the rational thought and perfection of God demand He can perform, but not that which implies an essential contradiction.

Apart from the light which the Christian revelation sheds upon our knowledge of the power of the Infinite, we might well ask, Who but an Omnipotent Being could have made the world? Who but a God of infinite might could have laid the foundations of the earth and established the sun, and moon, and all the stars of light? Who but such a Power stretcheth out the North over the empty spaces and hangeth the earth upon nothing. Who but the Infinite bindeth the cluster of the Pleiades and looseth the bands of Orion? What answer shall we give unless we say, God?

“Motionless torrents! silent cataracts!

Who made you glorious as the gates of heaven
Beneath the keen full moon? Who bade the sun
Clothe you with rainbows? Who, with living flowers
Of loveliest blue, spread garlands at your feet?

‘God!’ let the torrents, like a shout of nations
Answer! and let the ice plains echo, ‘God!’
‘God!’ sing ye meadow streams with gladsome voice;
Ye pine groves with your soft and soul-like sounds;
And they too have a voice, yon piles of snow,
And in their perilous fall shall thunder, ‘God!’

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Ye living flowers that skirt the eternal frost!
Ye wild goats, sporting round the eagle's nest!
Ye eagles, playmates of the mountain storm!
Ye lightnings, the dread arrows of the clouds!
Ye signs and wonders of the elements!
Utter forth 'God!' and fill the hills with praise."

The Christian revelation affirms the divine holiness. Negatively, holiness means the exclusion from the divine character sin, evil, and all moral corruption. It is spotlessness of character, stainless purity, sinlessness. Sin, which has defiled the soul of man and corrupted the springs of his being, is absolutely absent in God. He is the one sinless, pure, and perfect Being. Positively holiness means moral excellence, positive goodness. "Holiness is moral purity, not only in the sense of absence of all moral stain, but of complacency in all moral good." All that is of moral worth in man, all his conceptions of right, all his ideals of goodness, are realized in the character and life of God to their fullest degree. God's holiness thus becomes moral perfection, the union of all the divine qualities in harmonious relation. It is not a separate attribute or trait of character, but the sum of all existing excellencies. It is "the union of all the attributes, as pure, white light is the union of all the colored rays of

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the spectrum." "Holiness is the glorious fullness of the goodness of God, consistently held as the principle of His own action, and the standard for His creatures."

So impressively is the divine holiness taught in the Hebrew Scriptures that certain writers have affirmed that this attribute and not the unity of God is the fundamental idea of the Old Testament religion. At any rate, the moral character of the Divine Being and His ethical relations to men are to the Jewish mind a matter of supreme import. The idea which deeply roots itself in the consciousness of the Hebrew nation is that of the moral purity of Jehovah. Such qualities as justice, holiness, and truth are the dominant attributes of His nature. "God is exhibited as One who seeks to enthrone righteousness of life—right laws, right government, right administration, right conduct, right character." The people of Israel are commanded to purify themselves before they come up to the mount of God. Among the gods there is none like the Lord, "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders." The work of the Lord is perfect, "For all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He." He

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is "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy."

The divine holiness is also traced in the ills that overtake Israel because of wrongdoing, as well as in the blessings bestowed for virtuous conduct. To the Jew national well-being is necessarily bound up with righteousness; national disaster is inseparably connected with evil. God is depicted as hostile to those who disobey His commands and who trample His laws in the dust. And Jehovah has no favorites or partisans; all stand before Him on the same level. The maintenance of righteousness and truth among men and the promotion of justice and mercy are of infinitely greater moment to the Almighty than the welfare of even Israel. He sends a fire upon Judah and visits the transgressions of Israel upon them when they fail to render Him an unswerving obedience. He suffers them to perish from the earth when they neglect to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. The declaration that Jehovah puts into the mouth of His prophet reveals His character: "If ye be willing and obedient ye shall eat the good of the land, but if ye refuse and rebel ye shall be devoured with the sword." The

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blessing and the curse ever set before the people and which was conditioned upon their conduct was a constant reminder of the moral integrity of the Deity. "They verified His character in the disasters that followed national corruption, in the swift recoveries that rewarded national repentance. In the mirror of a cleansed conscience the prophets saw the face of God; they traced His life in the processes of righteousness."

The teaching of the New Testament concerning the holiness of God is scarcely less emphatic than the testimony of the Old Testament to the same attribute of the divine nature. Christ accepts the idea of the purity or moral perfection of the Infinite and enriches it by His own thinking. It is true that the lesson of the moral integrity of the Divine Being is not emphasized by Jesus as are other qualities of the divine character. It does not form the keynote of His message to men as in the case of the ancient prophet. But though the idea of moral purity is not the fundamental one in the revelation that Christ gives of God as it is in the Old Testament religion, yet it is constantly in the thought of Jesus Christ. God to Christ is the one perfect Being, the One

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whose character is absolutely free from moral stain and in whose life all attributes harmoniously blend. This is seen in Christ's own unbending loyalty to truth, His insistence on purity of heart in believers, and in the obligation that He lays on men to become like God, perfect as He is perfect. "Jesus of Nazareth revealed a Being necessarily opposed to all evil and essentially righteous, true, pure, and good. All conceivable and all possible affections dwell in His nature and shine there in unclouded light. This God is Excellence, only Excellence, Excellence Infinite and everlasting. The very idea of such a Being is Divine."

The history of the nations of the earth exhibits, we think, the holiness of God as does the Christian revelation. We have come to see that as there is a rational order in the universe, so there is also a moral order. The universe is morally organized and governed. As God is in the laws and phenomena of the physical world, guiding and controlling them, so He is in the affairs of human life. As He is in the movements and processes of nature, so in a most vital way He is fulfilling His purpose in the doings of humanity. "History reveals a moral purpose,

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a process of disciplining, educating, elevating mankind." Everywhere in the world is God found "ordering its events, overruling the devices of men, and causing even their vain imaginings to declare His glory." And the laws by which the physical world is controlled are not more fixed and absolute than are the laws which underlie the moral world.

The ills which are linked with wrongdoing and the blessings which accompany virtuous action testify that the Power behind the universe is one that makes for righteousness. "Righteous conduct works out good results for the individual and for society; vicious conduct works out bad results." Carlyle says, "God sits in heaven and does nothing." It is not true. To affirm that God does nothing is to misread history. No Being is more active in the affairs of mortals than is God. "The Power which is above all, and through all, and in all things, is not only Intelligence and Wisdom, but also an Ethical Will." That God is just and that righteousness is at the heart of things appear from the fact that the nations who love justice and truth are in the ascendency, while those who surrender themselves to lying and lust are eventually de-

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stroyed. The one profound lesson which all history teaches and which may be read by every serious mind is that righteousness makes for stability and life, while vice ends in disaster and death. Greed and lawlessness have brought about the downfall of powerful nations, the overthrow of great civilizations, and the destruction of myriads of lives. Empires that have been founded on tyranny and violence have eventually crumbled into dust. We have come to see that "on the whole and in the long-run it is not well with the wicked; that slowly but surely, both in the lives of individuals and of nations, good triumphs over evil. And this tendency towards righteousness, by which we find ourselves encompassed, meets with a ready response in our own hearts." Just and true are all Thy ways, Thou King of kings, is the testimony of all mankind.

We have been told, however, that the doctrine of God we have been considering is an anthropomorphic view and is wholly inadequate to express the nature and character of the Divine Being. It has been said that this "likens the creation and control of the world by God to the artificial creation of a talented engineer or mechanic and to

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the administration of a wise ruler. God as Creator, Sustainer, and Ruler of the world is thus represented after a purely human fashion in His thought and work." It was this which led Xenophanes to say: "The lions, if they could have pictured a god, would have pictured him in fashion like a lion; the horses, like a horse; the oxen, like an ox." Such a view of the Deity it is affirmed degrades Him, for it brings Him down to the human level. He is conceived of as a personal Being and is reduced to the category of humankind. Human attributes, such as self-consciousness, spirituality, and moral goodness, are ascribed to Him and He becomes a man of colossal proportions. Now we are forbidden to posit in God the essential qualities of the human mind, since by doing so we dwarf Him. It has been asserted that whatever may be the Power that pervades the inscrutable universe, the cultivated soul shrinks from dwarfing it to the cramped standard of anything that can be stated in terms of human thought.

Though human qualities are attributed to God, we are nevertheless convinced that such a conception of the Divine Being is a worthy one. We think that it is not derogatory to

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the Infinite to conceive of Him as possessing in infinitude the intellectual and moral attributes of man. We do not degrade God when we affirm that He is a Being who is self-conscious, free, and moral. Indeed, it is the only way in which we can think of Him; no other path is left open to the human mind. The Infinite must be interpreted in terms of rational thought if He is to be known at all, for this is man's fundamental endowment. The idea of God itself would be destroyed if we were to eliminate from it every trace of anthropomorphism. "If we are to know the Supreme Reality at all, it can only be through the attribution to Him of qualities analogous to, though infinitely transcending, the qualities which we recognize as highest in man, and consequently in the world as we know it. No other procedure is possible if we are to adhere to the conception of God as the Final Cause of the world, *i. e.*, our world." We hold that to think of God as perfect in knowledge, infinite in power, and glorious in holiness is to entertain the highest possible notion of the Deity.

A correct view of the essential meaning of personality will, we think, help to clarify our thought and dissipate the misconceptions

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with which this subject has become infested. In the case of the finite mind corporeity is associated with personality. The human mind unfolds itself in connection with the human body. The body is the soul's medium of expression, and experience arises under spatial and temporal forms. This of course means finiteness and limitation. And man's knowledge is not only limited in its range, but the processes and methods used in its acquisition are slow and cumbrous. It is by sense experience, inference, and proof, rather than by direct insight, that man obtains a knowledge of things. Now, it is because of the limitations with which finite experience is hedged about that personality is denied to God. Human thought with its restrictions and conditions stands as a barrier against the application of personality to the Infinite. But it is clear that corporeity and limitation have no necessary connection with personality. The Divine Mind is free from all the restrictions that hamper the human soul. Man sees and hears by means of the organs of sight and sound, but the Infinite needs no such senses. Man acquires a knowledge of things by induction and inference, but the Deity knows naught of such methods. His

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thought is free from all our cumbrous processes, from the limitations of space, and from the restrictions of slow-moving time. Indeed, the probability is that God alone possesses complete personality. He is the sole perfect and typical person to whom finite beings approximate. Thus Dr. Bowne writes: "Instead of saying that personality is impossible to the Infinite, we must rather say that it is possible in its fullest sense only to the Infinite. The finite, because of its necessary dependence and subordination, must always have an imperfect and incomplete personality. Complete self-knowledge and self-control are possible only to the absolute and Infinite Being; and of this finite personality can never be more than a faint and feeble image."⁸ When, therefore, the Christian religion affirms the personality of God, it means that all the powers which man knows in his own self-conscious life and which he experiences as imperfect are found in completeness and infinitude in Him. Not only does the Christian doctrine eliminate from the conception of God all notions pertaining to bodily form and likeness, and interprets all language which describes Him as possessing physical parts figuratively, but

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it conceives of Him as one who possesses in infinitude and perfect oneness all the highest elements of personality, such as knowledge, self-consciousness, and self-direction. Knowledge in God is not inadequate and fragmentary, as in man, but embraces all existence. Will is not weak and vacillating, but stable and under full control. Goodness is not mixed with evil, as in human experience, but perfect and full-orbed. His character is the perfect life and light, of which human attributes are but broken rays. All moral qualities, all the noblest, truest, and tenderest that man has ever experienced or imagined exist in Him unhindered and to the full. "All the virtues evoked in all sorts of human beings by the experience of life are lowly reproductions of good that is eternal in God. All ideals of goodness that have ever inspired humanity are 'broken lights' of His full-orbed perfection, and the powers by which men have done their various work have all existed in imperfect likeness to His." God as a Person is not "a bigger specimen of existence, among existences. Rather, we mean that the reality of existence itself is personal: that Power, that Law, that Life, that Thought, that Love are

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ultimately, in their very reality, identified in one Supreme, and that necessarily a personal Existence.”

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever.

“Our Father which art in heaven.”—MATTHEW 6:9.

“He is a true Father; He is a perfect Father, without any of the blemishes or faults, and with all of the excellences that are possible to the relation. Take from the word father all of error, weakness, caprice, with which it may ever be associated; heighten to infinity all in it that is tender, endearing, excellent—that is God.”

—JOHN YOUNG.

CHAPTER III.

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD.

THE treatment we have already given of God does not exhaust our knowledge of the divine nature and character. The idea of the divine Fatherhood still remains to be considered. And this idea of God, the highest to which the human mind has ever attained, is the chief glory of the Christian religion; it is the very heart and center of Christianity. In its doctrine of the Fatherhood of God the Christian revelation has given us a new appreciation of the Infinite. Harnack tells us that the whole of Jesus' message may be reduced to the two heads—God the Father, and the infinite value of the soul. Indeed, it is not too much to say that the "humanity of God" and the "divinity of man" are the essence of the Christian faith. So deep an insight has Christianity given us into the divine character that it may be said to have revolutionized our ideas of the Deity. As the Copernican theory of the heavenly bodies has

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revolutionized astronomy, the Kantian theory of knowledge philosophy, and the Darwinian theory of evolution biology, so in the realm of religion Christianity has profoundly changed our view of God and His relation to mankind. "One effect of the life of Christ upon our race was to provide us, if the phrase may be allowed, with a new criterion of God. Man had learned that love was the one thing needful, and had looked into the depths of love as he had never looked before. And therefore love became the only category under which he could be content to think of God."

It must not be supposed, however, that the conception of the divine Fatherhood was an idea that was wholly new to men in the days of Jesus Christ. The name Father as applied to God was no strange title. It was a word that was often on the lips of the Old Testament prophet. To be sure the chief titles ascribed to God by the Jewish people were those of "Creator," "Ruler," "Judge." In the Hebrew Scriptures the favorite name given to Jehovah was King. But though God was generally conceived of as a ruler, He was also thought of as a Father. This is seen in the many sayings in which

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He is exhibited as the Father of the Hebrew race. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my Son out of Egypt." "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." "Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not; Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; Thy name is from everlasting." "There was no human emotion they did not assign to God; no relationship they did not use as the illustration of His love; no appeal of affection they did not place in His lips; no sorrow of which they did not make Him partaker."

It will be seen, however, that the idea of the divine Fatherhood known to the Jews was one that was limited to the Hebrew people. The Jewish nation failed to rise to the lofty conception that the Fatherhood of God embraced all mankind. To the Jew the idea had no application beyond his own national horizon; it was confined to the interest that Jehovah felt in Israel. God was the Father of His chosen people, but not of the other nations of the earth. Race prejudice and national exclusiveness had obscured their vision and rendered impossible a conception of the universal goodness and gracious purpose of the

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Infinite. Moreover, it was held that collective Israel rather than the individual were the true sharers in the compassion and mercy that they beheld in Jehovah. It was the nation in its corporate capacity and not the individual Hebrew who was called a Son of God. It was the Jewish race and not the solitary soul that was the peculiar object of the divine care. One writer asserts that there is but one prayer in the Old Testament addressed by the individual to God as Father. To be sure, with the passing of the centuries the spiritual horizon of the people was broadened, and there arose gradually the conception of God as Father of the individual as well as of the nation as a whole. One writer says: "The evolution of the idea of Fatherhood in the consciousness of the Hebrew people was exceedingly slow. The first names by which God is designated in the Old Testament do not contain any indication of the idea. Gradually there arises the conception that God is the Father of a tribe or nation, then that He is administering His government with the care and interest of a father. Finally there appears some notion that He is related to individuals as Father. But no feeling of intimate, personal, filial relation

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to God, such as the Christian gospel brings to our hearts, seems to have sprung forth in the souls of men until Christ made His advent to the world.””

But this vision of God seen but in dim outline by the Jewish people became full and luminous in the mind of Jesus Christ. The idea of kingship, the fundamental Old Testament conception of the Divine Being, Jesus displaced by the doctrine of the divine Fatherhood. The truth that Christ came to make known to the world was the gracious purpose and love of God. The conception of God as Father was the very heart of His message to mankind. It was the sole title which fully expressed the divine nature and the most fitting name by which God could be called. To Christ this was the most essential relation of the Deity to the race. This name revealed His character more adequately than any other title ascribed to Him by prophet or sage. In this designation every other name must find its truest and deepest meaning. “With Jesus, God and Father were identical. Fatherhood was not a side of Deity; it was the center. God might be a King and Judge; He was first of all, and last of all, Father. In Fatherhood every other

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relation of God must be harmonized and find its sphere." Moreover, God, who in the Hebrew Scriptures was known as the Father of the Jewish nation only, was conceived of by Christ as the Father of all men. The sublime faith of Jesus, never reached by the ancient teachers, was that God is the Father of every human soul. The divine Fatherhood, He declared, is as extensive as the race of men.

The relationship of Father was one which God sustained to Jesus Christ; Christ was conscious that God was His heavenly Father. This appears from the many sayings of Jesus in which this intimate and filial relation might be traced. The divine love was the sole source of Christ's power and strength. The work that He came to do was not His own, but the work which His Father had given Him. He sought not His own will, but the will of the Father which had sent Him. The truth which He taught He had received from His Father. His Father loved Him because He gave His life to the world. He prayed to His Father to glorify Him. He comforted the hearts of the disciples with the assurance that in His Father's house were many mansions. And as He, having finished His work on earth, died on the cross He gave back His

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soul unto God in the words, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

The ideal of Fatherhood Christ presented to His disciples. As He was the Son of God so they also were the children of the Most High. Christ strove to give His disciples a new vision of the Divine Being and bring them into a more vital union with Him. He labored to teach them that God was their Chief Servant, ever ready to impart unto them good gifts. He reiterated the truth that God was always near, deeply interested in all that pertained to their welfare, and loving them with a Father's love. He instructed them to address God as their Father and to trust in Him as their daily Friend. He warned them against the use of vain repetitions and much speaking in their prayers, on the ground that their Father knew what things they had need of before they asked Him. He counseled them against anxious care concerning food and raiment, assuring them that their Heavenly Father knew that they had need of all these things. He wrote on their hearts the truth that the forgiveness of their trespasses by their Heavenly Father was conditioned on their willingness to forgive men. The perfection of their Father in

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heaven was the moral type to which they must conform. "Jesus toiled for three years to write the truth of the Fatherhood on the minds of the disciples, with at least one result, that it is inwoven with the pattern of the Gospels. He pleaded also with His friends that they should receive it into their hearts till St. John filled his epistles with this word. With minute and affectionate care Jesus described the whole circle of religious thought, and stated it in terms of the Fatherhood."¹⁰

The question may here be raised as to whether or not Jesus taught that God is the Father of all men. We have seen that according to the Old Testament teaching the idea of the divine Fatherhood had but a national application. Jehovah was the God and Father of the Jewish people, but not of the nations of the whole earth. Does Christianity, too, limit the conception to a particular class or nation? Is God the Father of the human race, or of but a part? How extensive is the divine family? How large is the area over which the blessings of Fatherhood extend? Does the idea of Fatherhood apply to the loving and obedient only, or does it include all? Does it embrace the Gentile as well as the Jew, the evil as well as the good?

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Do all men, irrespective of rank and creed, share in the Fatherly care of the Almighty? According to certain theologians the number of God's family has been fixed from eternity and is limited to the elect. Many writers have conceived of God as if He were a partial Father having favorites for whom He makes more ample provision than He does for the rest of mankind. Not a few theologians have taught that multitudes of human souls even before they came into existence were arbitrarily condemned by the sovereign will of God to the fires of hell. "There have been men calling themselves Christians, who have maintained that God created the vast majority of mankind for the express purpose of consigning them to everlasting flames, in order that He might be, as they strangely term it, glorified." Those appointed to everlasting condemnation are orphans or outcasts; they are waifs of creation and are consigned to the slums of the universe.

This view of God's relation to men grossly misrepresents Him and makes Him a Being utterly unworthy of even the respect of mankind. It dwarfs the Infinite until He sinks far below the level of the human parent.

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No human father would appoint his children to everlasting wrath, did he possess the power, without first giving them a chance to seek life and bliss as it has been declared that God has done. God's revelation of Himself in the life of Jesus Christ is a flat contradiction of any such doctrine. His attitude to men as seen in the service rendered them by His Son is an irrefragable proof that every human soul is a sharer in the divine love. The goodness and mercy of the Infinite are as impartial and universal as is the sunshine. The rain which descends on the just and on the unjust is not more free than is the divine bounty which is bestowed on all alike. What God was to Christ that He is to all. His favor is not bought by obedience nor is it forfeited by disobedience. He loves the evil as well as the good. He has no chosen few who are the special objects of His care. His desire is that all men may be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth. His revealed purpose in the gift of Christ is that all should believe in Him and have eternal life. He cherishes all mankind in His heart, caring for their temporal needs and seeking for them the things which pertain to their spiritual good. "The truth is that God loves

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equally all human beings, of all ranks, nations, conditions, and characters; that the Father has no favorites and makes no selections; that in His very being He is impartial and universal love. This is the fundamental truth of the Christian religion, entering into and glorifying all its other truths."

This brings us to the attitude of God, the divine Father, to sin. What effect does sin have upon God's love and good-will? Does it estrange the heart of God? Does it change His attitude to man? Does it give rise to hatred where before was love? We think not. Sin changes man, but not God. "Jesus absolutely reverses the idea that God holds Himself aloof from sinners, and reveals Him as the generous, helpful, forgiving God, who is always seeking to save men from the evil that He hates." If sin shuts the child out of the Father's house and excludes him from the treasures of the parental home it is because he himself has severed the divine tie. If sin makes it impossible for God to treat the sinner as though he were a dutiful son, the fault is his and not God's. No measure of wrongdoing on the part of the prodigal can lessen God's interest in him nor bring about the least change in the divine love. It is not

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the Father who forsakes the child, but the child who forsakes the Father. Sin can never cause God to abandon those whom He has made in His own image and for whom He has prepared the riches of His grace. All men, however far they may live beneath their dignity, are children of the Highest and are wrapt about with a deathless love. His love is an eternal love and can not be dissolved by the ingratitude of the human heart. No act of man can dry up the fountains of His bounty nor quench the fires of His love. The Heavenly Father bears every sinner on His heart as the mother bears her wayward boy. The drunkard, the thief, and the debauchee, though shunned and despised by men, are the constant objects of the divine thought and care. "The publican proscribed by his brother Jew, and the harlot anathematized by all men, are not alien, said Jesus, to God's love and thought." He loves men in their sin, seeks them in their wanderings, and strives by His Spirit to lead them back to the joy and plenty of their Father's house.

The changeless love of God, however, does not prevent the child from rejecting the Father's overtures and forfeiting the divine

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bounty and blessing. Many a child is in the filial relation without the filial spirit. As many a son despises the love of his earthly parent, so many a one despises the gracious kindness of God. And as the human father is unable to discharge normally "his fatherly functions toward children who are unchild-like," so God is hindered by the conduct of His children to realize for them all that His thought has conceived. "While God is the Father of all men, all men are not the children of God; in other words, God always realizes completely the idea of Father to every man; but the majority of men realize only partially the idea of sonship." Many a son has deliberately left his Father's home with all its blessings and joys and has gone into the far country, where he has been doomed to feed swine and live on the husks. Many a child has trampled under foot the goodness and love of God and has played the fool by associating with harlots. And there has come a day when the child, friendless and alone and undone by his own rebellion, has perished in sin and shame. There has come a time when with resources wasted and the soul consumed by passion the son has gone to

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his own place. There has come a moment when destroyed by the fires of evil and condemned and lost the prodigal has been cast into the outer darkness. As the mighty planet by its resistless pull has dragged many a celestial body from its path in the heavens and compassed its destruction, so the forces of evil have lured many a soul from its divinely appointed course and accomplished its ruin. And the most pathetic thing of all is that all this has happened in spite of the great love of God. Though moral disaster has overwhelmed men because of sin, "everything that God has done has been done to avert, not to produce, spiritual ruin. But the act was their own, and as wholly and only in defiance and despite of Him who deserved nothing but obedience and love." The Father's tender love has had in return not gratitude, filial trust, and obedience, but ingratitude and rebellion. And this is what constitutes hell. The rejection of the divine goodness and the forfeiture of the joys of the Father's home constitute the outer darkness. This is the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched. This is the smoke of their torment that ascendeth up for ever and ever. Hell is anywhere outside the

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Father's house. Its zone is where men in rebellion and sin refuse to submit themselves in loving obedience to God.

“One of the brightest and most attractive features of the divine Fatherhood in the teaching of Jesus” is that presented in the parable of the Prodigal Son. This story sets before us such a picture of the love of God as is nowhere else given in the words of Jesus. Some one has observed that as ten thousand sunbeams are condensed in one shining drop named the diamond, so all theological systems may be reduced to this one parable. The Divine Being is here portrayed not as a stern and relentless Judge, but as a loving Friend who seeks to rescue and save. The son as he turns his back on his father's home and sets out for the far country where he squanders his substance in a life of lawlessness is followed by the father's goodwill. To be sure there is a vast difference between the status of the son at home and that of the son in the fields with the swine. As a son under the parental roof-tree he enjoys the rights of sonship and shares the father's bounty, but as a companion of harlots he has broken the ties of filial trust and surrendered the blessings of the father's

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hand and heart. But though he has befouled his soul and sacrificed his manhood on the altars of lust, he does not pass beyond the bounds of the parental love and thought. The father thinks often of his wayward boy, and with the rising and setting of every sun stands at the open door with his eyes turned toward the distant hills waiting for his homecoming. And when the prodigal, contrite of heart, forsakes the haunts of sin and with swift feet returns to his father he is received with victorious love. Indeed, the father anticipates the return, and ere the son's foot crosses the threshold of the parental home the lost blessings of sonship are bestowed upon him. "But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." "Regardless," says Jesus, "of the obloquy brought upon the parental name by the riotous son, he is received with open arms and lavish kisses upon his return to the family roof-tree." For his dishonor and shame he received a kiss, a robe, a ring, a feast, and a song. The central truth of the parable is evident. We see here the pitiful heart of the Infinite, who in loving tenderness receives the returning sinner, par-

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dons the shameful past, and reinstates him into His favor. We learn that the sinner belongs to God, is responsible to Him, and that when he turns away from sin he is granted a joyous welcome and a complete forgiveness.

The highest expression, however, of the divine Fatherhood is found in the life of Jesus Christ. In the life of Jesus we see revealed the divine love for man as we see it revealed nowhere else. Christ's mission to earth was to put an end to the misconceptions which men had entertained of God, to free their minds of false views of His relation to mankind, and to disclose His true character. Men were not fully conscious of their divine parentage; they perceived but dimly that He who was their Creator was also their Father and Friend. Christ came to bring to men's minds a knowledge of their high descent and to assure them that they were the beloved children of the Highest. He came to awaken anew in men a sense of their divine sonship and to create in their souls a longing for their home which they had forsaken. And in the face of Jesus Christ we see reflected the great forgiving heart of the Eternal. Here we study the character of God, His attitude to man, His thought for His children,

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and His love for the sinner. We believe that Christ was a true representation of the divine character and will. While the Christian religion nowhere claims that Christ fully revealed the intellectual nature of God, or completely disclosed His relation to creation, it asserts that in His life we have a true transcript of God's gracious purpose and tender love for humanity. In the sympathy of Jesus with the sorrowing, in His compassion for the weak, and in His tenderness for the erring, we see the heart of the all-loving Father. The infinite patience of Christ for the unbelieving, His deep solicitude for the helpless, and His complete forgiveness for the penitent unveil to us the infinite heart and mind.

“Moving on in His thought, Christ revealed God as the world's burden bearer, full of an exquisite kindness and sympathy; that what He was through three and thirty years, God was through all the ages; that what He was to publican and sinner in Bethlehem, God was for all maimed and wrecked hearts in all worlds; that no human tear falls but God feels it; that no blow smites the suffering heart but that God shrinks and suffers; that with wistful longing He follows the publican and the prodigal, waiting for the hour

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when He may recover the youth to his integrity or lead the man grown gray in sin back to His Father's house."¹¹

The divine love manifested in the life of Jesus Christ reaches its supreme expression in the cross of Calvary. In the suffering of the dying Christ we feel the heartbeat of the Infinite for the erring race of man. Calvary has been spoken of as God's peroration. Here we see the eternal God in the person of His Son laying down His life to put an end forever to sin and to make men glorious citizens of the heavenly kingdom. Calvary must no longer be regarded as a transaction of the forum or market. It must no longer be thought of as a ransom paid the powers of evil, nor as an offering to propitiate an offended Deity. It must not be interpreted as the fulfilment of a bargain made between God and Christ in order that the Divine honor may be saved and the Divine law upheld. Such a conception of the message of Calvary is utterly unworthy of the Deity. If this be the meaning of the cross of Christ, then "the entire operation was carried on in a fashion unpleasantly suggestive of an Almighty Shylock." "Theories 'judicial,' theories 'commercial,' theories that buy God from wrath

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to mercy, theories that weigh divine goodness over against human badness—all these are broken arcs that can not contain this wondrous circle named God's atoning love." The cross is rather the living revelation of the divine benevolence and good-will to the race. It is the device of a Heavenly Father to save the sinner from himself and his sin and to win him to loving service. It is the work of divine love, conceived in love and executed in love. "The highest expression of God to me," writes Charles Wagner, "is the suffering God, for Christ has humanized God as He has divinized humanity. If God had never suffered, man would be greater than God in patience, courage, and faith."

Christ thus brings a new conception of God to man. The sublime vision of the divine Fatherhood which prophet and sage but dimly discerned, is luminous and glorious to the thought of Jesus. All that the idea of Fatherhood involves of tenderness and love is as certain to Christ as is the divine existence. Nor more indubitable is God's being than is the fact of His tender mercy toward mankind and His deep solicitude in whatever concerns His human children. God is no longer conceived of as a ruler who seeks His

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own glory, and whose law and honor must be upheld even though His creatures be destroyed in order that it might be compassed, but as One who is love incarnate and whose chief joy is to serve. Men are no longer taught to fear God, but are invited to seek His favor and to participate in His friendship. The chief attribute of the Infinite is not justice but love, while His most prominent title is not that of Ruler but of Father. God is still a King, but the object of His reign is the material good and the spiritual development of His people. Christ brings to human hearts the undying conviction "that this universe is not so much a huge court-room as our Father's house; and we are not so much jail inmates, haled forth from our cells to the prisoner's dock to stand trial, as members of our Father's family; unworthy, imperfect, undeserving members; but for all that, held in a deathless love."

The Christian doctrine of the divine Fatherhood has thus corrected many of our false and mischievous notions of God. Since the advent of Christ we have had a more adequate conception of the Infinite than ever before. The conception of God as an eastern despot whose treatment of his subjects was

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capricious and arbitrary Christ forever shatters. The idea of God as an Oriental king who had complete power over those whom He ruled, and whose attitude to them was not affected by their personal merit or demerit Jesus displaces by the idea of the Father's considerateness and good-will. "The life of God, as interpreted by Jesus, is not that of some Oriental sovereign who delighted to hear his own glories proclaimed; but a ceaseless giving of Himself, a ceaseless flowing out of the divine energy in the service of all that is created." Heretofore men had thought of the Divine Being as an unbending judge whose law must be enforced; now they regard Him as a loving Friend. Heretofore He was conceived of as a hostile ruler who must be appeased with sacrifice and gift; now He is seen to be the Chief of servants and the Lover of mankind. Heretofore it had been taught that God, like a potter, molded a vessel of honor or dishonor as it pleased Him; now it is seen that His supreme purpose is to transform all men into the likeness of His own divine character.

Nowhere else do we find such a lofty conception of the Deity as is revealed by Christ. Neither in the religious literature nor the

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philosophic speculations of any nation do we discover such an exalted view of the divine character as is given by Jesus. No sage ever caught such a sublime vision of the goodness and love of the Infinite as did Jesus Christ. As the sun in its glorious splendor outshines the multitudes of celestial bodies that spangle the heavens, so the view that Christianity brings us of the Divine Being surpasses in beauty and grandeur all conceptions entertained of Him by prophet and poet. "God, as Jesus thought of Him, is a being of overwhelming beauty. There is no image anywhere for this splendor of the mind of Christ. Nothing in the extant intellectual or spiritual possessions of mankind can match the idea of the God and Father of Jesus Christ. Probably the best of that thought is still beyond the deepest and most sympathetic study. One can only dream of what it would be to entertain Christ's vision of the Infinite."¹²

If the Christian doctrine of God be contrasted with the pagan conception, it will be seen that the latter falls far short of the sublime reach of the former. Pagan thought held that the gods were in no way interested in the doings of mortals nor felt the least

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concern in their affairs. Ennius declared he did not believe the gods thought of human beings, "for if the gods concerned themselves about the human race the good would prosper and the bad suffer." Menander sang, "The gods do not care for men." The Epicureans denied the divine providence and entertained the notion of lazy deities who were absolutely indifferent to humankind. Lucretius affirmed that the gods, with all their needs supplied by nature and unaffected by good or ill, lived a life of perfect felicity in the heavenly regions all heedless of the world. Aristotle asserted that God "as a being of pure contemplation did not love the world." And even Plato wrote, "It is not easy to find the Father and Creator of all existence, and when He is found it is impossible to make Him known to all."

The Christian religion teaches, as we have seen, that God is profoundly interested in humanity. He sympathizes with them in their sorrows, suffers with them in their griefs, and labors with them in moral achievement. God does not sit on a frosty throne coldly beholding the struggles of mankind and unaffected by their weaknesses and temptations; He is sympathy, self-sacrifice,

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and self-giving love incarnate. Fatherhood is the absolute expression of His nature. Christ and not the pagan conception represents the correct attitude of God to the concerns of men when He affirms that the divine providence extends to even the minutest details of human life. "His solicitude in behalf of sinning, striving, suffering humankind is so minute, says Jesus, that He reckons the hairs of our head."

If pagan thought and the extra-Christian religions fail to give any adequate idea of God's gracious love to the world, the revelation given of Him in nature also fails to make known his good-will. The oracles of science may be said to be dumb as to the divine goodness. It will scarcely be necessary to state that no serious mind can deny the wisdom and power of the Creator of physical nature. No one who studies the laws and phenomena of the physical world can long be in doubt as to its author; the attributes of God are disclosed in the constitution of the material universe. The wonders of the heavens, the countless beauties of organic nature, and all the myriad mysteries of life disclose God's power and skill. In the order and arrangement of the physical order as well as in the

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processes and movements of cosmic action are found evidences of a supreme and all-wise Being. But while the material world presents to us an all-powerful God as its Creator, it is silent as to the divine love. It tells "of power, but not of goodness; of life, infinite life, but not of moral order, love, and mercy." Indeed, a study of the physical universe reveals much that seems wholly meaningless and devoid of moral worth. The unfriendly attitude of the world to man in his aims and endeavors apparently does not accord with the good-will of its Maker. Indeed, so antagonistic does the material order seem to the higher interests of mankind that the problem of reconciling the cruelty of nature with the infinite benevolence of God has been declared impossible. One scientist writes, "I can not see one shadow or tittle of evidence that the great unknown underlying the phenomena of the universe stands to us in the relation of a Father—loves and cares for us as Christianity asserts." So depressed was Mr. J. S. Mill with the mystery and savagery of nature that he asserted that He whom it conceals is not a Being whose face is "humanized to the lineaments of love." The divine goodness must be sought elsewhere than in

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the physical universe. From a study of the world we could never infer that the essential qualities of its Creator are those involved in the idea of Fatherhood. But "back behind all in this world, which seems so cruel, so unjust, so unequal, Christians believe there beats the heart of a Father, a heart of impartial love." And this belief is based as we have seen on the revelation that God has given of Himself in the incarnation, life, and death of Jesus Christ. In Christ alone is the heart of the Infinite adequately disclosed. Here He reveals Himself as the Father and Friend of men. Here we learn that the essential spirit of God Himself is mercy, benevolence, and love. Here He stands forth as the Lover of mankind and the Chief Servant of the race.

The Christian conception of the divine Fatherhood is one which commends itself to the human mind. While it is the most fundamental idea of Christianity and must be made the starting point of all theologies, it appeals with convincing force to human thought. This doctrine accords with correct reason and the principles of sound philosophy; it satisfies the head as well as the heart. The needs of the reason, the ideals of the will,

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and the aspirations of the soul find here their truest satisfaction.

During the history of philosophic speculation many "sublimated substitutes" have been offered for the personal God of Christianity. Attempts have been made to supplant the divine personality by such phrases as "unconditioned reality," "persistent force," "impersonal energy." By certain writers the God and Father of spirits has been denied, and His place filled by such abstractions as "the Absolute," "the Moral Will," "the Unconscious," "a power not ourselves which makes for righteousness," "the Unknowable," "the Universe," "Humanity." But these abstractions of modern speculation are pitiable substitutes for the personal God of the Christian faith. They are utterly unable to bring hope to the human heart. The claims of the intellect, the demands of conscience, and the cravings of the affections find no response in an appeal to these gods of modern thought. No! No! these are not thy gods. Huxley declared that he would as soon adore a wilderness of apes as the Positivists' rationalized conception of humanity. Nothing less than a personal Being who is a loving Friend and Father can

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satisfy the deeper needs of the soul. The heart of man can rest in nothing less than One whom it can love and trust. And such a One is He whom Christ presents. "He aims to rescue the idea of God from the realm of cold and powerless abstraction, and to make it a practical, living power in the heart." He reveals God, the Creator of our spirits, as One into whose face we can confidently look, in whose fellowship we may live, and through whose favor we may obtain all earthly and spiritual good.

“ Christ is all, and in all.”—COLOSSIANS 3:11.

“ Jesus Christ is the center of all, and the goal to which all tends.”—PASCAL.

“ The Person that literature felt to be its loftiest ideal, philosophy conceived as its highest personality, criticism as its supreme problem, theology as its fundamental datum, religion as its cardinal necessity.”

—FAIRBAIRN.

“ If Jesus Christ is a man,
And only a man, I say
That of all mankind I cleave to Him,
And to Him I will cleave alway.

“ If Jesus Christ is a God,
And the only God, I swear
I will follow Him through heaven and hell,
The earth, the sea, and the air!”

—RICHARD WATSON GILDER.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PRE-EMINENCE OF CHRIST.

THE Christian religion is inextricably bound up with the life and personality of Jesus Christ. It is, as we have already seen, not a theological system nor a code of morality, but the life of faith in Christ. To speak of Christianity is not to speak of certain doctrines, rules of conduct, or forms of worship, but of Jesus. With Him Christianity arose, and with Him it stands or falls. It would be as impossible to separate the light from the sun-beam, as to separate Jesus from the history and significance of the Christian faith. While the Christian religion has brought new elements of truth into the world, and has a temper and spirit of its own, a living Person is its very heart and essence. "It owes its character at every point to Him. Its convictions are convictions about Him. Its ideals are born of His teaching and His life. Its strength is the strength of His spirit."

Since Christianity is determined by the

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life of Jesus Christ, no adequate estimate can be made of its meaning and power until we inquire into the character and work of its Founder. Since the spirit of Jesus is woven into the pattern of the gospel, no just appreciation of the Christian revelation can be had until we exhibit the greatness of its divine Head. Would we understand fully the temper of the Christian faith we must discover what manner of man Christ was.

We have come to learn that Jesus Christ is the choicest spirit that the human race has ever produced. We have come to see that He is the noblest fruit borne by the tree of humanity. Were we to call the roll of the illustrious names of earth we would discover that to Christ must be accorded the highest honor. Were the mightiest of the mighty sons of men placed by the side of Jesus and both measured by the standard of true greatness, the pre-eminence must be ascribed to the latter. "Measure Him by the world's greatest sons—how poor they are! Try Him by the best of men—how little and low they appear!" What the glorious sun, the orb of day, in its noontide splendor is compared with the glimmering stars, that is Jesus Christ compared with the long line of illustrious men who have

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made luminous the page of history. As Mount Everest, lifting its crystal domes and lofty peaks 29,000 feet in the air, towers high above the hilltops that surround its base, so Christ rises in lofty grandeur to a height that far surpasses the highest elevation reached by the noblest representatives of the race. "We find Him on the most exalted summit of humanity's greatness and goodness."

The writers of the New Testament recognized the supremacy of Christ. This is seen from the many names they ascribed to Him. Christ lays claim to many titles. Indeed, no other representative of humanity lays claim to so many titles as does Jesus. His disciples and followers poured forth their love for Him in the many tender words and phrases in which they described His work and character. He is "the Savior," "the Great High Priest," "the Prince of Life," "the Intercessor," "the first born of many brethren," "the Prophet of the Highest," "the Alpha and the Omega," "the Bright and Morning Star," "the King of kings and the Lord of lords."

The pre-eminence of Christ has been recognized by many writers of the past nineteen centuries as well as by the New Testament

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writers. The most diverse types of mind have vied with one another in wreathing garlands for His brow. The distinguished philosopher, Spinoza, proclaimed that Christ is the symbol of divine wisdom. Renan said: "Whatever may be the surprises of the future, Jesus will never be surpassed. His worship will grow without ceasing; His story will call forth tears without end; His suffering will melt the noblest heart; all ages will proclaim that among the sons of men there is none born greater than Jesus." Goethe pronounced Him "the divine Man, the Saint, the type and model of all men." Napoleon gave his testimony in the following words: "I think I understand something of human nature, and I tell you all of these—the heroes of antiquity—were men, and I am a man, but not one is like Him; Jesus Christ was more than a man. Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, and myself founded great empires; but upon what did the creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded His empire upon love, and to this very day millions would die for Him." Gladstone avowed, "The older I grow, the more convinced I am in the belief that Jesus Christ is the only hope of humanity." Strauss called

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Him "the highest object we can possibly image with respect to religion, the Being without whose presence perfect piety is impossible. Never at any time will it be possible to rise above Him or to imagine any one who should ever be equal with Him." Carlyle exclaimed: "Jesus of Nazareth, our divinest symbol! Higher has the human thought not yet reached." Theodore Parker asserted that "He unites in Himself the sublimest precepts and divinest practices." Jean Paul Richter wrote that "the life of Christ concerns Him who, being the holiest among the mighty, the mightiest among the holy, lifted with His pierced hands empires off their hinges, and turned the stream of centuries out of its channel, and still governs the ages."

The greatness of Christ, like that of all men, must be measured by the extent of the influence He has exerted upon the world. We consider those alone great who have had a wide and beneficial influence upon the human race. Tried by this test our Lord is supreme among men. Judged by this standard Christ stands alone. Measure Him by the influence He has exerted upon the nations of the earth and He is the greatest born of woman. The impression He has made on the life of the

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race is without a parallel in the experience of mankind. The page of history has become luminous with the light that He has shed. His star is the brightest and most intense in the firmament. The destinies of the civilized world are controlled by Him, and His kingdom embraces not less than one-third of the inhabitants of the entire globe. So firmly woven is the name of Jesus Christ into the history of humanity, that to tear it "from the world would be to shake it to its very foundations."

To estimate the influence of Christ on humanity it will be necessary to inquire concerning His influence on those who were His daily associates. No true estimate of His power can be made until we take into account the impression produced on His disciples and followers. We must hear the story of those who were His companions and came under the spell of His personality. "Twelve men came into His intimacy; in eleven He kindled a fire that made them saints and heroes, and the traitor broke his heart through remorse, so he also must have loved." So great was the influence of Jesus upon those who were associated with Him that they were willing to die for him. Indeed, according to tradition,

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the whole band of disciples except one gained the martyr's crown. It is said that Peter, feeling that he was unworthy to die in the same manner in which his Master had died, requested that he be crucified with the head downward. History presents no leader who has exercised such a powerful influence over his followers as did Jesus. Not only did they suffer for their Master, but were willing for His sake to go to prison and to death. And this was not because an appeal was made to their patriotism or honor, as in the case of the soldier, but because they loved Him. It would have been impossible for one lacking in intellectual strength and moral vigor to have exercised such an influence over men as did Christ over His followers. Did He not possess a compelling personality and exhibit intellectual greatness and moral integrity, He could not have won their devotion and love. Moreover, it must not be overlooked that the disciples when first they came in contact with Jesus were rude and bigoted men. These were the men who on one occasion wished to call down fire from heaven to consume those who refused to receive Christ into their village, and who on another occasion strove among themselves concerning the

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chief places of His kingdom. And the influence of Jesus was not confined to His immediate followers. Paul, the greatest of the apostles, undertook herculean tasks, endured scourging and imprisonment, and suffered the loss of all things that he might win Christ. The honors of earth were but dross to him in comparison with the favor and fellowship of his Divine Lord. He “denied the faith that was once dear to him, and flung away the world that was once his ambition, to welcome innumerable labors and exhaust the resources of martyrdom, for the sake of One whom he had never seen, save in mystical vision, and formerly hated unto the shedding of blood.”

The love kindled in the early disciples has been kindled in the hearts of multitudes and has glowed with intense effect during every century of the Christian era. With the gathering years men have beheld in Christ new revelations of beauty and have enthroned Him King of their most sacred affections. His influence has not been confined within narrow limits, but has been felt by all classes of men and has been as powerful as the throbbing centuries. While the influence of other great world leaders has been limited to some

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age or nation, His has been confined to no age, no continent, no realm of thought, no field of activity. Confucius belongs to China, Gautama to Asia, Plato to Greece, Michael Angelo to Europe, Abraham Lincoln to America, but Christ belongs to no country nor age. He is the typical representative of humanity and is as world-wide in His sympathies as the human race. As the mighty ocean is confined to no single land, but laves the shores of every continent and isle, so the presence of Jesus is felt in the ongoings of every movement of human history. There is no fact in the doings of the nations so real as the effect of the life of Christ upon mankind. No adequate account can be given of human institutions, the progress of society, and the temper of the nations, during the past nineteen centuries, apart from His spirit as the causal force. The peoples who are in the van of modern civilization, and who seem destined to be the leaders of the future, are those whose institutions embody the teaching and spirit of Jesus. Since He came His life has been the most potent factor in the progress of the race and the onward march of the centuries.

It was Horace Bushnell who wrote: "The

world itself is changed, and is no more the same that it was; it has never been the same since Jesus left it. The air is charged with heavenly odors, and a kind of celestial consciousness, a sense of other worlds, is wafted on us in its breath. Let the dark ages come, let society roll backward and Churches perish in whole regions of the earth, let infidelity deny, and, what is worse, let spurious piety dishonor the truth; still there is something here that was not, and something that has immortality in it. Still our confidence remains unshaken, that Christ and His all-quickenings life are in the world as fixed elements, and will be to the end of time; for Christianity is not so much the advent of a better doctrine, as of a perfect character; and how can a perfect character, once entered into life and history, be separated and finally expelled? It were easier to untwist all the beams of light in the sky, separating and expunging one of the colors, than to get the character of Jesus, which is the real gospel, out of the world.''¹³

The influence of Christ on education, literature, and art has been deep and abiding. He has inspired much of what is noblest and best in the literature of the nations and the

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educational institutions of the western world. The institutions of learning which have been founded by Christian peoples have been due in no small measure to the high estimate Christ placed on childhood. Throughout its entire history Christianity has fostered education and placed high value on the proper development of the human mind. While the primary duty of the Christian Church has been to turn the hearts of men Godward, she has never forgotten that the propagation of learning is one of her chief functions. The teachings of Christ have been the germs from which have sprung the schools and universities of the European and American continents. From the noble school of Alexandria, founded on the shores of the Mediterranean in the second century, to the last institution of learning established under Christian influences, the Spirit of Christ has been the guiding factor. The educational institutions of Christian lands find their causal force not in the schools of the Greek and Roman world, but in the emphasis laid by Christ on childlife, in His insistence on the value of man, and in the progressiveness of His thought. And the Christian Church has not confined herself to the education of teach-

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ers to perform the functions of her office, but has trained men for every department of thought. Law, medicine, science, philosophy, poetry have found within her fold a congenial atmosphere and have flourished under her protection. From beneath her fostering care men and women with minds enriched, characters strengthened, and hearts aglow have gone forth to increase knowledge and to kindle in the hearts of others a passion for truth. Through such scholars as Origen, Augustine, Erasmus, Melancthon, Bacon, Milton, and Newton the Christian Church has laid the human race under perpetual obligation.

The reality of Christ is present in literature. The noblest literature produced by the western world is but an elaboration of the ideas which found expression on the lips of Jesus. All writers of Christian nations who have contributed to the world's thought are vastly indebted to Christ for their ideas. Ruskin tells us that he devoted his life not to "the study of the beautiful in face and flower, in landscape and gallery, but to an interpretation of the truth and beauty of Jesus Christ." Were it possible to go through the libraries of the world, those storehouses of

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human learning, and destroy every Christian idea contained therein, human culture would as a result suffer an irreparable loss. Indeed, were all thought destroyed which bears distinctively the Christian stamp, the entire structure of civilization would be laid level with the ground. Literature eliminated of all Christian teaching would become a Babel, a confusion of tongues.

It is, however, in the realm of social action that the influence of Christ appears as nowhere else. In every sphere of activity His spirit has wrought changes whose effects are seen in the culture of human character and the improvement of the social conditions of men. As the energy of the stone thrown into the sea may be measured by the diameter of the circling waves which are set in motion, so the influence of Jesus may be measured by the intellectual enlightenment, social reform, and moral uplift which He has wrought. The reforms that have been inaugurated by Christian nations for the past nineteen centuries have taken their rise from the teaching of Jesus. Every true reformer who has eradicated evils from the social body, and introduced a new leaven which has changed the face of society, has found his inspiration

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in the life of Christ. "The fundamental moral principles of Jesus, His golden rule, His new commandment, His doctrine of the brotherhood of humanity, His substitution of self-denial for self-aggrandisement as the test of human excellence—these ideas have been adopted by almost every thinker of repute." Indeed, it is not too much to say that all reform in politics, in social institutions, in industrial life is traceable to the new world-view that Christ has given to mankind. Through His spirit prisons have been reformed, slaves set free, governments made humane, and laws made just. He has transformed the home, ennobling womanhood and making children sacred. Martineau somewhere observes that Jesus Christ must be called the regenerator of the human race. "To-day all political economy is being rewritten in the light of the Sermon on the Mount, says the greatest of economic writers. Christ is increasingly the inspiration of our charities and philanthropies. All the great social movements of our era are centering about Him. Already His teachings are the watchwords of coming revolutions. Reform, duty, art, music, statesmanship, philosophy—

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all have joined Christ's triumphal procession." All efforts made to break down class barriers and establish the equality of man may be traced to the idea of brotherhood as conceived of by Christ. The attempts put forth to eliminate poverty and elevate the masses are due to the fact that Jesus identified Himself with the poor. Missionary undertakings whose aim is to rescue men from religious superstition and social degradation are the direct outcome of His command to preach His gospel to all nations. The benevolent institutions which are causing the earth to rejoice and blossom as the rose are rooted in His thought.

Mr. Lecky inspiringly writes: "It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character which, through all the changes of eighteen centuries, has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love, has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions, has been not only the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice, and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more

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to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers, and all the exhortations of moralists.”

An ancient legend tells us that on the morning of the resurrection as Jesus walked away from His grave sweet flowers sprung up in His footsteps behind Him. The legend contains a profound truth. Since Christ walked forth from His tomb, more than eighteen centuries ago, wherever His feet have trod flowers possessing an immortal bloom have sprung up and are filling the whole world with their fragrance. His life has been the germinating force of those flowers of love, of kind deeds, of high-born hopes, of moral uplift, of noble institutions whose presence has been the source of all that is best and purest in the earth. All movements that make for enlightenment and happiness, freedom and toleration, righteousness and truth must be traced to Him. Wherever we find men in whose hearts are blossoming the fruits of love, joy, peace, gentleness, faith, and goodness, there we discover the presence of Christ.

The greatness of Jesus must also be estimated by the purity of His life; the nobleness that was in Him must be appraised by

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His moral character. Judged by the test of moral integrity, the life of our Lord is absolutely flawless. Indeed, in the realm of moral character Jesus is the only Being of the sons of earth who is perfect. Neither the ancient nor the modern world ever produced one whose life was stainless. Christ is the sole member of the human race who presents to the world a holy life. "Never has there been but one white soul, never but one life unspotted, never but one mind without stain, never but one heart perfect." "No one of our noblest men was a spotless sun; no one reached sinless perfection. From all our loftiest specimens of manhood I turn dissatisfied to Jesus Christ, and in Him I find the ideal becomes actual, the dream real, and the hope fruition."

There were few things which impressed the minds of Christ's disciples so thoroughly as the sinlessness of their Master. To be sure, no proof of his sinlessness can at this distance be adduced, since the account we have of His life is imperfect. The Gospels give but a broken record of the public ministry of Jesus. It has been estimated that not more than one-thirtieth of His public life has been preserved. But though the record is incomplete

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it gives us a clear picture of His character and reveals the impression He made on His followers. Those who were nearest to Him, who associated with Him daily, who shared His privations and His joys, were convinced that His was a spotless life. The beloved disciple who understood Him best declares that "He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin." Peter testifies that He "did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." The writer to the Hebrews asserts that He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." He also says that He is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." And Paul adds his testimony in the words, "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin."

The enemies of Christ produced the same testimony. Those who conspired against Jesus and sought His death, when requested to give proof of His guilt, were unable to adduce the least evidence. Their hatred of Him was due to the fact that He had exposed their hypocrisies and rebuked their sins. Their pride was hurt. It was for envy they delivered Him to be crucified. Pilate, who condemned Christ, was convinced of His innocence, as seen in the vain attempt he

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made to rid himself of all responsibility in His death. Judas, who betrayed Jesus into the hands of His enemies, was overwhelmed with the enormity of his crime as he, stricken with remorse, brought back the thirty pieces of silver and casting them down at the feet of the chief priests, exclaimed, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." And after nineteen centuries of critical study of the life of Christ, the verdict of mankind accords with that of those who hated Him. No flaw has been discovered in His character. "Enemies have searched His career with lighted candles, but no hand has been found so profane or vulgar as to tarnish His blameless name."

The impression made on the minds of the friends and enemies of Jesus is in accord with the consciousness of Christ Himself. Jesus Christ does not seem to have been conscious of sin in His life. His experience is marked, as far as we know, by an utter absence of the sense of guilt. Even in childhood He is the embodiment of virtue. Of all the children of earth Jesus is the only one whose childhood is spotless and pure. The biography of no man portrays his childhood days as being free from the follies and

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waywardness that cling to youth. But here is One in whose childhood are in germ all spiritual excellences waiting to be unfolded in all the beauty of a perfect character. So beautiful is His life and so attractive His spirit that He is described as being in favor with God and man. Moreover, He increases in wisdom and obtains new visions of things divine. "The child grew, waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him."¹⁴

The public life of Christ is as free from any consciousness of wrong-doing as are His childhood years. From the day that He goes down to the Jordan to be baptized until He ascends to heaven from Olivet we see no token of repentance, no confession of wrong, no prayer of forgiveness. His life is absolutely free from contrition. There is no sign of remorse, no regret, no compunction of conscience, no consciousness of having ever broken the moral law. "In all the history of His life we are not able to detect the faintest indication that He slips or falters." I do always, He says, those things that please Him. Bushnell writes: "The most righteous, or even self-righteous, men blend expressions of sorrow and vows of new obedi-

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ence with their exercises. But Christ in the character given Him never acknowledges sin. It is the grand peculiarity of His piety that He never regrets anything that He has done or been; expresses nowhere a single feeling of compunction, or the least trace of unworthiness. On the contrary, He boldly challenges His accusers, in the question, Which of you convinceth Me of sin? and even declares at the close of His life, in a solemn appeal to God, that He has given to men, unsullied, the divine glory that was deposited in Him.”¹⁵ “From advent to ascension, in act and thought, in public ministry and in private fellowship, from the beginning to the end there is the same surpassing beauty of character.”

This sinlessness on the part of Christ differentiates Him from all the saints of history; He alone wears the white flower of a blameless life. Even the best of men have fallen far short of the full requirements of the moral law. Indeed, the most spiritually minded men of the race have been deeply conscious of guilt as an unclean thing clinging to their inward experience. The dominion of sin over the soul, blinding the intellect, deadening the affections, and fettering

the will, has been not a theory, but the personal experience of many of the best spirits of all lands. The noblest souls of Biblical history were conscious of moral delinquency. From Abraham, the friend of God, who records his experience in the words, "I am but dust and ashes," down to Paul, who declares that he is the chief of sinners, all feel the sense of inward sinfulness. And the experience of every Bible saint has been the experience of every man. Go through, if you will, the history of the Christian centuries and you will discover that the holiest men acknowledge wrong-doing. Not one of earth's saints or heroes can be pronounced sinless. Not one of the long line of sages, teachers, or benefactors of the race presents a stainless life. Even those who have been conspicuous for noble benefactions and for virtue in its highest reaches have displayed moral weakness. The great ones of earth who have distinguished themselves in knowledge, in the display of noble qualities, and in service to their fellows have come short of inward purity. Neither in Augustine, Savonarola, Luther, Wesley, Knox, Shaftesbury do we find the perfect man. By the testimony of their own lips all men are convicted of sin. But in

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Christ is united in a perfect whole all divine virtues and heavenly graces; in Him shine forth undimmed all justice and goodness, all tenderness and mercy, all wisdom and love. Our moral sense is offended by no word or act of His. He always speaks the right word and does the right thing. In His entire life there is not one discordant note. He holds to the path of truth and virtue and never takes a false step. Truer than the needle to the pole is the conduct of Christ to the moral ideal. In One alone has humanity reached its perfect type. In One alone have the powers of the soul been realized in the full blossom and beauty of moral character. Christ is the flower of humanity. "His soul was filled with internal beauty and purity, having no spot, distorted by no obliquity of view or feeling, lapsing therefore into no eccentricity or deformity." Like the sunbeam, which is compounded of the primary colors of light, so Christ unites in Himself all moral virtue and excellence. He is the purest, noblest Being on which human eyes have ever gazed.

A third criterion of eminence is that of intellectual ability; power of thought constitutes one of the elements of greatness. And

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Christ was supreme in the realm of intellect. The pages of history present no teacher or sage who possesses such an intellectual grasp of truth as does Jesus. In His insight into spiritual truth, as well as in His ability to instruct men in things divine, Christ surpasses the world's greatest teachers. He, among the master minds of earth, is the Supreme Teacher who speaks with authority. George Romanes, in his "Thoughts on Religion," observes that one of the strongest pieces of objective evidences in favor of Christianity consists in the fact that none of the words of Christ ever pass away in the sense of becoming obsolete. The growth of human knowledge—whether in natural science, ethics, political economy, or elsewhere—has not in the least discounted the truths that Christ proclaimed. Contrasted with thinkers of like antiquity, such as Plato, the words of Jesus abide while theirs have passed away as far as having had any deep and lasting effect on the moral life of mankind. John Stuart Mill says that "about the life and sayings of Jesus there is a stamp of personal originality, combined with profundity of insight, which must place the Prophet of Nazareth in the very first rank

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of the men of sublime genius of whom our species can boast.”

One fact which distinguishes Jesus from all other teachers is His self-assertiveness. The race presents no thinker who is so sure of the truth he proclaims as is Christ. He assumes no air of apology nor admits that He may be mistaken. While others admit that they are liable to err, Christ instructs with the consciousness that He is an infallible teacher. There is such a ring of certainty in His words as to carry conviction to the minds of men. He never expresses His views nor offers His opinions; He teaches with authority. He never speaks as if He were in doubt; He announces the truth with absolute assurance. He instructs “with an universal and eternal accent.” And this self-assertiveness is born of the confidence that He is in possession of ultimate truth. It is this which gives His message the air of finality. It is not by the use of argument or dialectic skill that Jesus wins the assent of His hearers, but by the deep conviction that He possesses perfect knowledge. It is not by the use of logic that He sets aside those of old time and impresses men with the majesty of His own teaching, but by a

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tone of authority which makes it absolutely certain that in the sphere of religion He is supreme. "He impressed them as a speaker who had a warrant for what He was saying, who had unwavering confidence in what He affirmed, who felt an absolute certitude of His doctrines, bearing down all opposition by the force and majesty of truth." He carries conviction to their hearts because from His own inner life He speaks concerning the things which He Himself sees and knows.

The question might here be raised as to the sources from which Christ derived His knowledge. "From whence hath this Man these things?" "How knoweth this Man letters, having never learned?" Was Christ acquainted with the philosophical systems of His time, or did He sit at the feet of the great Jewish masters? Did He find inspiration in the Rabbinical literature, or did He gather wisdom from the writings of the sages of other lands? Some have held that He was trained in the Rabbinical schools of His day, while others have affirmed that He borrowed His ideas from foreign sources. The theory has been current among certain rationalistic writers that He borrowed from

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the Essenes, while it has been claimed by others that He was an imitator of the Jewish teacher Hillel. The best authorities assure us, however, that there is positively no evidence that the thought of Jesus was influenced to any marked extent by Jewish or other schools of learning. At no time did He come under the influence of any great teacher, nor were His ideas derived from the literature of any of the prominent philosophic and religious systems. "He had access to no famous school and to no celebrated masters in His own or other countries." Harnack says that it is very improbable that Christ went through any Rabbinical school, for He nowhere speaks like a man who had assimilated any theological culture of a technical kind, or learned the art of scholarly exegesis. He also asserts that it is absolutely impossible to maintain that He was in any way influenced by Greek philosophers, or was ever in touch with the thoughts of Plato or the Porch. The attempts made to prove that Christ derived His doctrine from the Essenes, the Persians, and the religions of Egypt have also palpably failed. Ederheim, in "The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah," tells us we may feel certain that

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the teaching of Christianity had no connection with Essenism. Indeed, the teaching of Christianity is in many respects the opposite of that of Essenism. To be sure, Christ incorporated all the current lofty conceptions of God and man that were known to Him into His own teaching. He adopted all the religious truth and ethical wisdom of the ancient world with which He was acquainted. He made all truth His own, from whatever sources gathered. The chief text-books, however, which Christ studied were the Hebrew Scriptures, the volume of nature, and the book of human life. These were the sources that fed the flames of His genius and furnished Him the material from which He forged ideals of life that are even to-day not fully appreciated. These were the human antecedents of that spiritual code, that rule of conduct, which Christ gave and which is as universal and as binding on men now as when first given.

To what extent was Christ an original teacher? Did Jesus reveal to men spiritual certainties of which they before were ignorant? Did He possess knowledge that had been denied the prophets and sages of past ages? Did He solve problems which here-

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tofore had been considered insoluble? While the mental reach of Christ in matters pertaining to the moral and spiritual life was greater than that possessed by other world-thinkers, we nevertheless believe that the claim made by many writers that He gave to the world a new set of ideas is a mistaken one. Jesus Christ was not an original teacher in the sense that He gave to the race a new system of truth. Indeed, it might be possible to select from the works of the world's great teachers the same truths in substance that Christ taught, with perhaps a few notable exceptions. While the doctrine that He poured out concerning God was as beautiful as the sunlight, it was but the full-orbed vision of the broken views which good and true men had in all ages entertained of the Divine Being. His task was not to annul, but to carry to completion the work of the ancient teachers. He came not to destroy, but to fulfill. As the glory of the noonday does not destroy, but absorbs and completes the morning twilight, so the truth that Christ presented did not cancel, but completed the ideas concerning man and God which sage and prophet had brought mankind. The originality of Jesus, therefore, did not con-

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sist so much in presenting truth which before was not known to men, as in clothing old truth with a new life. He made old truths glow and burn until they became a living force in the creation of character. "There was power in them—as there always is power in the truth, when properly presented, to stir the feelings, rouse the conscience, and sway the will." With the words that He spoke He united the power of a living personality. His words had behind them the force of a life that was irresistible. That was the element that was new. That was how He differed from other teachers.

Moreover, it must not be overlooked that Jesus Christ nowhere puts forth the claim that He is acquainted with all knowledge. There is no reason to believe that He had taken all truth to be His province. There were many fields of learning which to Him seemed to be a closed book. It was not His mission to instruct men concerning such matters as science, philosophy, and history. He did not feel it His duty to correct false scientific conceptions, solve profound metaphysical problems, or impart historical knowledge. Such matters lay wholly outside His field. He dealt wholly in moral and spiritual certain-

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ties. His work as a Teacher was to instruct men in things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. He has been called the High Priest of the Divine Nature. He came to open up anew the stream of revelation until the moral consciousness of the people, which long had been stagnant under the theological pedantry of the Jewish rabbis, flowed again full and free. His task was to impart new visions of God and to reveal to men their glorious heritage. Christ moved in the spiritual realm and shed a light that becomes more and more luminous with time. For man's spiritual nature He is without doubt earth's most illuminating Teacher.

The living truths that fell from the lips of Jesus Christ and around which His teaching centered were those concerning the character of God, His relation to the world, the Divine Fatherhood, a loving Redeemer, the divine nature within man, the pardon of sin, the regeneration of the soul, an indwelling Spirit, communion with God, good-will towards men, the reign of love upon earth, and the life everlasting. "These are the themes of Jesus, and on them He has said the last word. He cleansed away the mists that hung round the loftiest reaches of truth,

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and has made plain the soul's way unto God. No one can deny that Jesus has given to mankind what deserves to be called the truth."

Although the sphere of Christ was religion, it must, however, be kept in mind that He nowhere gave minute instructions concerning the divers questions that pertain to the spiritual life of mankind. The time at His command was too brief to discuss fully the problems that center around the religious life. Even if He had given precise instructions, they would soon have become obsolete with the changing conditions of society. What He gave were rules of action, and not detailed guidance. He laid down basic principles on which each may build a perfect manhood. He formulated rules of conduct which might be worked out and applied to the whole round of daily action. "Jesus taught the world various principles of religion—the nature of faith, the glory of sacrifice, the secret of peace, the strength of love." To be sure, it has been asserted that the avowed aim of Christ was to solve for all time those problems which have their root in the body politic. Some have professed to have discovered in the gospel of Christ an economic program

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covering the many questions that vex the social body. Others have affirmed that Christianity in its origin was a social movement whose aim was to bring relief to the oppressed classes. Those, however, who go to the teachings of Jesus seeking a solution of social and economic problems are from the start doomed to disappointment. Christ formulated no doctrine on social, industrial, or political questions. What He did was to give us living principles which, when applied to the social organism, have power to eliminate the evils that afflict it. Like the self-evident truths of mathematics on which are constructed great intellectual systems, the teachings of Jesus furnish the basis of all moral and spiritual development. As the majestic oak is contained potentially in the acorn, so within the truth that Christ taught lies implicitly a power which is able to transform society. We doubt not that if the teaching of Jesus were applied to such questions as the relation of capital to labor, the attitude of the white man to the black man, the obligations of the body politic to the criminal classes, the proper use of wealth, the attitude of society to the drink traffic, the duty of the State to the unemployed, and the regulation

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of monopolies and trusts, a solution satisfactory to all would at once be reached. "Christianity," says Rothe, "bears in itself the power of forming the State and of developing it to its full completeness." The application of the Golden Rule of Jesus, which Locke designated as the foundation of all social virtue, to existing social conditions would literally renew the face of the earth and raise society to a state of material power and spiritual exaltation undreamed of by reformer or seer. His teaching is fitted, if obeyed, "to make earth all that a finite and material scene can be, and man only a little lower than the angels."

It must, moreover, not be overlooked that Jesus was in His life and conduct what He Himself taught. His life was a perfect transcript of His own teaching. He embodied in His own experience the truth that He gave to others. The religion of love which He preached found its noblest representation in Himself. Did He proclaim the Kingdom of God as the summation of all blessedness? He Himself was a loyal member of that Kingdom. Did He preach self-denial as a necessary condition of entrance into His Kingdom? He denied Himself, even to the lay-

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ing down of His own life. Did He teach that God was the Father of men and that union with Him was man's highest attainment and chief joy? He lived in daily fellowship with His Father in heaven. Did He command His disciples to love all men, even their enemies? He loved all, even His enemies. "Christ lived as He taught. He bade men lose their lives and He lost His; He bade men trample the world under foot and He trampled it; He commanded men to love, and He loved even unto death."

He, too, taught that He was the truth. He was not merely a Teacher of the truth; He Himself was its source and essence. Truth was a part of His very being. Others had speculated concerning the truth and had proposed methods by which it might be reached, but Jesus declared, "I am the truth." He was the truth because He lived it; in His life it found its full and perfect expression. His life demonstrated the religion He proclaimed.

"And so the Word had breath, and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds
In loveliness of perfect deeds,
More strong than all poetic thought."

“Let us make man in our image.—GENESIS 1:26.

“On earth there is nothing great but man; in man there is nothing great but mind.”

—SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON.

“Were I as tall to reach the pole,
Or grasp the ocean in my span,
I must be measured *by my soul*.
The mind’s the standard of the man.”

—ISAAC WATTS.

“Man is neither the master nor the slave of nature; he is its interpreter and living word. Man consummates the universe, and gives a voice to the mute creation.”

—ED. QUINET.

CHAPTER V.

MAN IN THE IMAGE OF GOD.

THE oldest declaration made concerning man in the Holy Scriptures is that he has his origin in God. The opening words of divine revelation affirm that he has a divine ancestry. His parentage is traced back to the Infinite, whose likeness he bears. "Let us," says God, "make man in our image."

As to the exact meaning of the phrase, "the image of God," commentators are not agreed. Various theories are advanced in explanation of the term as used by the Biblical writer. Some hold that it denotes reason, freedom, and the moral sense, while others assert that it signifies man's ability to rule. One class of writers teach that it refers to man's mental powers, while another limit it to his dominion over the world of nature. The former view is doubtless the correct one. Sovereignty or dominion over the physical realm and the animal world is a function of man and not an essential con-

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stituent of his nature. While it is rooted in his intellectual powers, it must be regarded as one of his activities and not that in which his kinship to his Creator consists. It is man's mental and moral qualities and not any mere temporal rule that constitute his likeness to God. It is in the capacities of the human soul that the image of God is found. Man's kinship to the Divine consists in that which belongs to man as such, that which constitutes his distinctive nature, something inalienable, and not an expression of his ability. Oehler describes it as the "whole dignity of man, in virtue of which human nature is sharply distinguished from that of the beasts." Dr. Driver asserts that it is the gift of self-conscious reason with all that it implies which forms the image of God in man. Man is allied to God in the possession of the intellectual faculties with which he is endowed. "What reason and judgment and memory and love in the small are in man, that they are in the large in the great God." In his creative ability, by means of which he makes progress in all that tends to the enrichment of his life; in his power of self-direction, which lies at the basis of all moral development; in his amenable-

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ness to moral law, in his power to enter into relations of love and sympathy with his fellows, and in the possession of a spiritual nature, by which he communes with God, man may be said to be an image of his Creator.

This view of man, held by the early Hebrew prophet, is shared by other Old Testament writers. Job teaches that man is of divine lineage and has his being in God. "The Spirit of God," he says, "hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life." The psalmist, too, as he beholds God's wonderful works and reflects on the divine love, is convinced that man has a divine origin. In wonder he exclaims:

"When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers,
The moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained;
What is man that Thou art mindful of him?
And the son of man that Thou visitest him?
For Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels,
And hast crowned him with glory and honor."

The valuation placed by Christ on man accords with the high estimate placed on him by the Hebrew Scriptures. Christ teaches that every man is a child of God. It is true that Jesus nowhere attempts to prove that the human being comes from God and is in his nature divine. Nowhere does He attempt

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to establish the truth that the soul is essentially like God in its moral and spiritual qualities. Nowhere do we find any doctrine of the soul, its origin, its nature, its powers. Christ assumes that man has his origin in heaven and "is a miniature of the Divine Being." He takes it for granted that man is a spirit, possessing vast capacities, divine potentialities, and is heir to an immortal destiny. He proclaims that the soul is of priceless worth. Man is "a being who is capable of the highest, the brightest, the most glorious destiny." He is a being of "large discourse, looking before and after." On earth there is nothing that can be compared in value to a human life. So great is the soul, says Christ, that with its loss the gain of the whole world is as nothing. Man is essentially spirit "and is linked with, because derived from God, who is Spirit." He is not an automaton nor an emergence from the brute, but a self-conscious and free being who is a child of the Most High. Harnack writes: "Jesus Christ was the first to bring the value of every human soul to light, and what He did no one can any more undo. We may take up what relation to Him we will; in the history of the past no one can refuse

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to recognize that it was He who raised humanity to this level.”

Moreover, in His estimate of man Christ shifts the emphasis from the accidental and non-essential to the real and abiding. Hitherto birth, wealth, position were the standards by which human worth had been determined, but Christ discovers in character and in manhood the true essentials of the soul. According to Jesus, the value of the individual consists not in outward possessions, not in social rank, not in anything that is of the earth, earthy, but in his spiritual nature with its capacities and powers. Christ looks beneath the artificial distinctions that divide men, He sees through all the false tinsel of life, and discovers in the soul within man's true dignity and worth. He “placed His finger upon the soul, capitalized manhood, and made the name of man a title superior to that of ruler and lord.” He teaches that even in the humblest bosom there are rich possibilities and noble faculties capable of endless development. “Jesus Christ calls to every poor soul; He calls to every one who bears a human face: You are children of the living God, and not only better than many sparrows, but of more

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value than the whole world." And what others fail to see in human nature Christ sees and values. Beneath the uncouth and rough exterior He sees hidden powers potential with life, with manhood, with moral loveliness. While others turn away from the publican, the outcast, the harlot, Christ lingers and is deeply moved as He discerns in each a moral germ from which may spring flowers of kindness, of self-sacrifice, of love. Amid the most unfavorable surroundings of the soul, amid sordidness, obscurity, selfishness, moral leprosy, He beholds latent possibilities which may issue forth into sweetness and nobility. In the meanest and worst of men He sees a dignity and a worth that must be redeemed to a life of service and blessedness. He discerns in the woman who is a sinner and kneels at His feet "elements of womanhood of the finest quality, waiting for disenthralment." He sees in Zacchaeus, the publican, with his ill-gotten gain, that hunger after a better life which constitutes him a potential citizen of the Kingdom of God. He beholds in the woman of Samaria, degraded in soul and despised by the Jews as she was, a spiritual nature which is capable of receiving the loftiest truth. Like the

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precious jewel which sparkles and shines by means of a wondrous light within, so Jesus discerns in the human heart a beauty which may flash forth with a radiance divine. He sees in the dullard, the commonplace man, the possibility of service, heroism, sainthood. "With words of matchless eloquence He called about Him the multitudes, the children of poverty and ignorance, the children of sickness and suffering, the publican and the prodigal, and lifted above all alike a banner inscribed, not with those words called wisdom or riches or birth, but with the words, 'Made in the image of God.' "

To ordinary eyes the disciples of Jesus, those uncouth fishermen of Galilee, were ordinary men possessing no special gifts and incapable of any high enthusiasm, but as seen by Christ they possess latent energies which when awakened transform them into great moral leaders. He beholds them setting in motion new spiritual tides which will ultimately lave the shores of every continent and isle with health and blessing. He sees them going forth to heroic struggle, to persecution, and to death. He sees them surcharged with His own high devotion to righteousness and truth until they in turn surcharge the lives

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of multitudes with the same lofty ideal. From common laborers they rise to be workers of good deeds, exemplars in self-sacrifice, and imitators of their Divine Lord.

Dr. Lyman Abbott reminds us that the great poets as well as the prophets of the Bible teach that God dwells in man and is coming to the manifestation of Himself in developing redeemed humanity. He recalls the fact that George MacDonald, in one of his beautiful poems, tells us that the babe got the blue of his eyes as he came through the blue sky. In one place the poet speaks of the kiss of the angel that blesses the child on its way to earth. Wordsworth, in his "Intimations of Immortality," asserts that the soul comes from God, and that its entrance into the world is attended with celestial light. In eloquent strains he sings:

" Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting ;
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar ;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home :
Heaven lies about us in our infancy."

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This, to be sure, is fancy. But in the imaginings of the poet there is profound truth. "We need not believe that this aspiration that shows itself in the pure mind of a little child is a trailing glory that he has brought with him from some pre-existent state. We need not think that it is physiological fact that the sky colored the eyes of the babe as the babe came through. But beyond all this imagery is the vision of the poet. God in man; a divine life throbbing in humanity; man the offspring of God; man coming forth from the eternal and going forth into the eternal."¹⁶

The Christian religion teaches that man has been created in the intellectual image of God. Christianity affirms that man shares with his Creator a common mental life. Man's intellectual likeness to God is seen in the power of the human mind to interpret physical nature, the work of God, in terms of thought. The material world in which we live is a thought structure, a temple that reveals intelligence, an edifice that is full of mind. "Both in its form and in its arrangement it is crammed with mathematics and chemistry and logic." The visible uni-

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verse is constructed on mathematical principles. Nature's processes contain an exactness of relation that surpasses the finest adaptations of human skill. The forces of nature can be expressed "in the most precise mathematical formulæ." The law of gravitation, which controls all objects, small and great, far and near, is mathematically described. The motions of the heavenly bodies may be expressed in the same terms. One writer says that "the heavens are crystallized mathematics." The chemical elements combine in strict numerical proportions. Crystals are formed on geometrical laws. The snowflake is a mathematical gem. Plant life develops under the same mechanical rules. The chemical and physical processes which first clothed the fields with life and beauty are identical with those that still cause the plain and meadow to rejoice.

Now, it is evident that the scientist who discovers and interprets the laws which are writ large in nature does not create those laws. Science is not the creator of the principles which underlie the material universe; it merely reproduces and announces them. The rational system which science but par-

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tially reveals existed prior to the advent of man. Science simply reads out what is contained within. In a word, when the scientist discovers and formulates the laws of the physical universe he is deciphering the thoughts of its Author. As he studies the principles implicit in the world and translates them into human speech, he is interpreting the divine ideas which have been expressed in material symbols. From this the inference is clear that "God and man are essentially alike in mental structure." Between the Infinite and the finite a fundamental kinship exists. Man reproduces the ideas of God because he is a partaker of the divine nature. He deciphers the meaning of the physical world and thus enters into God's thought because his mind is a counterpart of his Creator's. Indeed, science is possible only on the assumption that the reason we find in ourselves is a reflex of the divine reason. Did not the laws of thought correspond with those of fundamental being, God could not reveal Himself to man nor could man understand the works of God. Goethe has well expressed this idea in the following lines:

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“ Wär’ nicht das Auge sonnenhaft,
Die Sonne könnt’ es nie erblicken ;
Läg’ nicht in uns des Gottes eigne kraft,
Wie könnt’ uns Göttliches entzücken?”

The great astronomer, Kepler, after having brooded with the whole energy of his mind on the number, the size, the motion of the planets, finally elaborated a theory as to their movements. This theory, the product of his own thought, he held to be a true representation of the planetary bodies. One night he turned his telescope to the heavens to ascertain if the actual orbits of the planets were in harmony with the scheme he had worked out. Imagine his surprise on finding an exact correspondence between his plan and the celestial order. Little wonder that he shouted out in the silence of the night, “O God! I am reading Thy thoughts after Thee.” The mind grasps the vast intellectual conceptions in the universe and translates them into human language because there exists between it and the Infinite Mind an essential similarity. “Man, the servant and interpreter of nature, is also, and is thereby, the servant and interpreter of the living God.”

Man has been created in the æsthetic

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nature of God. By this we mean that man is the possessor of artistic ideals like unto those by which God has fashioned the world. Now, it is evident to all that the world is full of loveliness. From its center to the outermost rim it is crammed with beauty. And this loveliness is of divine origin. The Church Father, Athenagoras, has said: "For beauty on earth is not self-made, but sent hither by the hand and will of God." John Ruskin held that "The foundation of beauty in the world is the presence of God in it." The same truth is finely expressed by Dr. A. H. Strong in the following words: "As finite truth and goodness are comprehensible only in the light of some absolute principle which furnishes for them an ideal standard, so finite beauty is inexplicable except as there exists a perfect standard with which it may be compared. The beautiful is more than the agreeable or the useful. Proportion, order, harmony, unity in diversity—all these are characteristics of beauty. But they all imply an intellectual and spiritual Being, from whom they proceed and by whom they can be measured. Both physical and moral beauty in finite things and beings are symbols and manifestations of Him who is

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the Author and Lover of beauty, and who is Himself the Infinite and Absolute Beauty.”¹⁷

The psalmist beheld the divine beauty and grandeur in the midnight sky with its constellations swinging from horizon to zenith and its planets rolling in their orbits. “The heavens,” he wrote, “declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork.” Linnaeus once said of the unfolding of a blossom, “I saw God in His glory passing near me, and bowed my head in worship.” An old Scotchman tells us that it was his custom every morning for twenty years to go outside his cottage door and uncover his head to the beauty of the world.

The world is a great picture gallery on the walls of which God has hung up the masterpieces of His wisdom and skill. Everywhere on the face of nature the Divine Artist has drawn His pictures with colors infinitely richer than ever conceived of by a Rubens or a Raphael. God has made the world so beautiful that the painter’s brush is in despair. “The passing seasons, with the majesty of summer and the sanctity of winter, represent the canvas upon which He portrays His passing thoughts.” The wild flowers that carpet the fields, the sweet buds

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and blossoms of spring, the autumnal forest with its green and gold, and the glory of the setting sun disclose the divine loveliness. The blue of the sky, the breast of the robin, the cup of the violet, the wing of the insect, the snow-capped mountain peak, and the tall pine forest reveal the wealth of the mind and heart of God.

“ A haze on the far horizon,
The infinite, tender sky,
The ripe, rich fruits of the corn-fields,
And the wild geese sailing high;
And all over upland and lowland
The charm of the goldenrod,
Some of us call it Autumn,
And others call it God.”

Now, it is evident that we appreciate the beautiful in the world, which as we have seen is the work of God, because we share with God His nature and ideals. We partake of the divine loveliness because there is an essential kinship between our souls and the Infinite. Did there not exist a fundamental likeness between the soul of man and the mind of God, the splendor of the material universe would awaken no response in the human heart. It is because our minds are tuned to the Infinite that nature enthralls us with her enchantments. And were man's

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æsthetic sense his sole endowment it would be a sufficient proof of his kinship to the divine. Man's æsthetic nature is a badge of royalty.

The present writer once stood before the "Sistine Madonna," Raphael's masterpiece, which hangs in the great art gallery at Dresden. There are two faces in that picture which look down upon the beholder, "the memory of which will forever after sweeten all the springs of living." In the center of the canvas is the virgin, "the divinest image that ever shaped itself in palpable hues and forms to the living eye." Robed in a blue mantle, red tunic, flowing veil, and with the Infant in her arms, the Madonna stands upon the clouds as if she were stepping forth from the depths of space. Now, as I looked upon that supreme work of art I was deeply impressed with its loveliness. Indeed, it is absolutely impossible to eliminate the impression it makes upon the mind. And as I gazed upon that sublime creation I felt that to some slight degree I entered into the thoughts and ideals of the great master. Somehow a kinship arose between us. This kinship was made possible by the fact that I shared with the artist a common artistic nature. That

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supreme creation was the product of Raphael's ideals, and I interpreted and appreciated something of its splendor because I possessed to some extent the æsthetic sense common to all. In like manner we appreciate the loveliness of the physical world because we have our being in God, the source of all beauty. Man is endowed with divine qualities and is thus a partaker of the divine glory which God has stamped upon material things. Nature's loveliness awakens responses within our hearts and entrance us because we bear the image of Him who made us. We share with God a common æsthetic life.

Christianity affirms that God has made man in His moral likeness. It teaches that as man shares with his Creator an intellectual and æsthetic nature, so he shares with Him a moral nature. By the moral nature we do not mean that man has a knowledge of right and wrong, but that he possesses a faculty which lies at the basis of moral distinctions. What man possesses is not moral knowledge, but a moral constitution. The moral "ought" or the ethical imperative is a constitutive part of the soul. While moral truth increases with a growing experience,

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man feels from the beginning that he is under obligation to choose the good and eschew the evil. He knows that conscience is a reality, self-approving and self-condemning. He knows that he ought always to do the right and shun the wrong.

The doctrine of man's moral likeness to God is one which occupies a large place in the Christian religion. Christianity proclaims as one of its chief glories that man is a potential child of God, dowered with moral capacities that may unfold into a life of spiritual excellence and beauty. The doctrine is implied in the command of God to His ancient people through the mouth of His prophet, "Be ye holy for I am holy." It is implicit in His requirement of all men to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with Him. Nowhere, however, is the doctrine proclaimed with greater emphasis than in the teaching of Christ. Indeed, His whole teaching is intelligible only on the assumption that He regarded men as endowed with moral attributes like unto those of the Infinite. "Love your enemies," says Jesus, "bless them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which

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is in heaven.” Now, this sonship which Christ urges men to realize is made possible, not by any metaphysical dependence on God, but by likeness to His moral character. Men are children of the Heavenly Father, not by any mere metaphysical relation, but by conforming to the moral ideal of the divine. This moral conformity to the divine ideal is also implied in the words of Christ, “Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” Paul, too, exhorts Christian believers to “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

The teaching of the Christian religion concerning the moral nature of man has been confirmed by a large number of moralists. Thinkers in all ages have seen in the moral law of the human heart a transcript of the mind of God. The inner voice which we call conscience has been recognized as a voice from out the unseen announcing to the soul its kinship to the Deity. The ideals of conduct which the moral sense reveals to us and which bind the will with absolute authority take us back to the Infinite, the ethically perfect Being, who is the ground of all moral truth. All character and all moral

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progress are transcendent and have their source in the heart of the Eternal. Wordsworth speaks of conscience or the moral law as

“ God’s most intimate presence in the soul
And His most perfect image in the world.”

Robert Browning says that conscience is “the great beacon-light God sets in all.” Seth, in his “Ethical Principles,” writes: “The Kantian theory of autonomy does not tell the whole story of the moral life. Its unyielding Ought, its categorical Imperative, issues not merely from the depths of our own nature, but from the heart of the universe itself. We are self-legislative; but we reenact the law already enacted by God; we recognize, rather than constitute, the law of our own being. The moral law is an echo, within our own souls, of the voice of the Eternal.” Thus scientific ethics confirms the Christian faith in its doctrine that the moral nature of man is derived from his Creator.

Modern thought in its estimate of man is fast approaching the position held by the Christian revelation. The theory of a generation ago, that man instead of being a child of the Most High is but a higher mammal with the same history and prospects as the

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brute, has been abandoned. The view that human nature is but a passing phase of an eternal substance and has no more value for the universe at large than the ant or the fly of a summer's day has been given up. Science as well as Christian thought has invested man with dignity, with kingship, with divinity. It has come to regard him as the goal to which the solar system has been striving ever since it floated as a cloud-bank in illimitable space. From the dawn of life nature has travailed in pain to give birth to this self-conscious, personal, moral being. To be sure, man on the physical side is correlated with the animal kingdom as he is with the entire physical world. The entire structure of the human body, its functions, its modes of nourishment, its laws of reproduction unmistakably proclaim man's kinship to the brute creation. But while his physical life and history announce his likeness to the lower order, to which he is linked by indissoluble ties, his moral and spiritual powers reveal his kinship to the Unseen. Like the blue-bird with the brown of the earth on its breast and the azure of the sky on its back, man may be said to be a representative of two worlds. While he is the highest of animals,

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he is at the same time the commencement of a new creation. And man is conscious that two worlds meet and unite in him. He knows that while his physical existence constitutes him a citizen of the temporal, his self-consciousness, power of self-direction, sense of responsibility, and moral nature constitute him a citizen of eternity. While his entire history—birth, hunger, famine, disease, death—reminds him that he belongs to the animal realm, the stirrings of his deeper being, his discontent with earthly pursuits, his cravings for the eternal, his longings for immortality, the tides of hope and love which like a wave from the eternal shore break in upon his soul, are a constant reminder that he is a child of the Infinite.

No other religious faith has conceived so nobly of man as has Christianity. No extra-Christian religion has placed such high value upon the soul as has the Christian religion. The same may be said of the speculative systems of the ancient world. No philosopher or sage has entertained such a lofty conception of the human soul as has the gospel of Christ. Jesus is the sole Teacher who has ascribed to the human personality its real worth. Emerson says that Christ “saw with

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open eye the mystery of the soul. Drawn by its severe harmony, ravished with its beauty, He lived in it and had His being there. Alone in all history He estimated the greatness of man."

Previous to the advent of Christianity the nations of the earth entertained poor opinions of one another. To the Jew, every man outside the race of Abraham, whether a cultured Greek, a proud Roman, or a swarthy son of Africa, was a dog. In the eyes of the Greeks all other nations were barbarians, while to the imperial Roman the proud claim, "I am a Roman citizen," was the sole badge of merit. Plato even congratulated the Athenians for having exhibited a pure and heartfelt hatred towards the Persians. Moreover, the doctrine was current that all rule and authority should reside in the well-born and the cultured classes. Affairs of the State were to be entrusted, not to the masses, but to the patrician and the man of genius. The social distinctions that existed among mankind were not an accident that might be removed by the dissemination of education and culture, but had its roots in the constitution of things. Aristotle taught that some men were born to be savages, while others were

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“destined by nature to be slaves.” Indeed, he saw in slavery an institution pregnant with benefaction to the race and worthy to be perpetuated to all time. Plato’s conception of man, like that of his great disciple, was also fundamentally defective. In his ideal commonwealth the interests of the individual were sacrificed to the welfare of the common good, while his rights were merged in and absorbed by the State. “Exhibitions of physical degeneracy or weakness should not be tolerated in the Platonic State; deformed and sickly infants should be abandoned, and food and shelter should be denied the sick.” Thus Plato, notwithstanding his profound insight into human life and his devotion to truth, had no adequate idea of the worth of man. The claim of the Christian religion, that man is a potential child of God and may be fitted for blest fellowship with Him, was a notion wholly foreign to the philosopher of the Academy. That all men are the sons of God, and that none are to be neglected or degraded, was a thought as far above the Greek thinker as the heavens are above the earth. It was reserved for Christianity to shed a new light upon human nature and to place a right estimate on the soul. It

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is in the New Testament, as Denney observes, that the soul which in contemporary literature is bound in shallows and in miseries, is raised as on a great tidal wave of spiritual blessing.

“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”—MATTHEW 5:48.

“The finest fruit earth holds up to its Maker is a finished man.”—HUMBOLDT.

“The end of human existence is perfection, which can be obtained only by entering into living communion with the living God.”—WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING.

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.—1 JOHN 3:2.

CHAPTER VI.

ON MORAL PERFECTION.

OUR survey of man will not be complete until we discover the end for which he has been made. For what purpose has man been sent into the world? What is the *summum bonum*, the supreme good of life? What is the significance of human existence? In the question of the Shorter Catechism, "What is man's chief end?" What should he strive for and prize above all else? "How shall we determine the end of the human being? Why was he made—this mysterious creature—driven by so many impulses, gifted with such diverse powers, and free to turn them in such countless directions?" This question, asked by sages in all ages, is the first and final question of Christian as well as of moral philosophy.

We have already seen that the doctrine of Judaism and Christianity concerning the origin of man is essentially the same. Both the Old and New Testaments declare that

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man came from God and is a partaker of the divine nature. In his intellectual and moral powers he is akin to his Creator. The teaching of the Hebrew Scriptures, however, concerning the end of life or the goal of existence falls far short of that of the Gospel. According to Jewish thought, the social welfare of the nation rather than the personal good of the individual was the end of all endeavor. The blessings bestowed upon Israel were conceived of as national blessings. The promise made by God to Abraham was not a promise of well-being to himself, but one which through his seed was to be to all peoples; "In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." The covenant which Jehovah made with the nation was not with single persons, but with the entire Hebrew race, and when the covenant was broken the whole people were punished. Israel and not the individual Jew were the special object of the divine care. This conception of religion colored their entire spiritual existence and even lay at the root of their Messianic expectations. The individual was merged in the social organism and his hope was identified with that of the community. He was sunk in the nation and his personal interest

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was linked with the interest of collective Israel. Stalker, in "The Ethic of Jesus," says: "The conception of religion as a corporate impulse is specially the view of the Old Testament, in which both the reproofs and the promises of the prophets are, as a rule, addressed not to the individual but to the nation at large; and only slowly and dimly, as the Book is drawing to its close, does the idea emerge that the individual is capable of a personal relation to God."¹⁸

On the other hand, the New Testament emphasizes the individual good rather than the national or social well-being. Jesus Christ "stripped religion of its national and racial character" and made it individual. The nation can be redeemed only as the lives of individuals are purified and ennobled. It is only as the individual soul becomes a partaker of the divine character that blessing and peace can come to all. The ideal of Christianity is that the fullness of the gospel of Christ may be the possession of every heart. The Beatitudes are pronounced, not upon the community, but upon single persons. Christ prays, not for the world, but for the disciples whom His Father has given Him. "In the great conception of the Kingdom of

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God the social aspect of religion is acknowledged; but the originality of Christ consisted not in emphasizing this, but in seizing on the emergent notion of the dignity and value of the individual soul and elevating it to the forefront."

Moreover, the ideal of Hebrew thought was not spiritual, but material good. The vision that floated before the eyes of the nation as the embodiment of all blessedness was not moral attainments, but flocks and herds, abundant crops, and an overflowing vintage. The object that lured them on in their journeyings from Egypt and that saved them from utter despair in the wilderness was the report of a land that flowed with milk and honey. Virtue was rewarded with material prosperity; vice was attended with social disaster. The word of the Lord as proclaimed by His prophet was, "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword." Virtue as being its own exceeding great reward, whether accompanied by pain or gain, was an idea foreign to the life of the people. Tangible or material good was the goal of their hopes and expectations.

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The Christian conception of the ultimate aim of life, on the other hand, shifts the emphasis from material well-being to spiritual good. The Christian religion seeks to transform man until he reflects the character and will of God. While it teaches that material happiness is associated with virtue, it nevertheless sets moral perfection before its followers as the end of all endeavor. Christianity proclaims that the *summum bonum* or the chief end of action is the moral perfectibility of mankind. Man's highest good or the goal of his being is to be found in his spiritual development or in his participation in the divine nature. The soul reaches its highest estate, not in any mere outward possession, but in the free and harmonious unfolding of its intellectual and moral powers. The aim of Christianity is to cleanse away from the soul the sin that defiles it and fill it with a new energy and life. "Intellectual, moral, spiritual perfection—or, in other words, that life and energy of reason, of conscience, and of will, which brings our whole spiritual nature into harmony with itself, with our fellow-beings, and with God—this alone deserves the name of good. So teaches Christianity. For this religion has

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for its great end to redeem the soul from every disease, excess, infirmity, and sin, to re-establish order among its complex powers, to unfold within it the principle of duty as its guiding law, and to develop it in the beauty of perfect rectitude and universal love.’’¹⁹

Christ places the ideal of moral perfection before the vision of men as the end for which they should strive. He lays increasing emphasis on the spiritual values of life. The true and abiding asset of the soul is moral character. Such values as birth, rank, wealth, which society had placed upon mankind, are fictitious and fail to touch man’s higher worth. “Jesus taught that the beginnings of the Kingdom of heaven lie in personal character, and its good is to be realized through the new life and spiritual victory of the individual man.” He came to redeem mankind from sin and to make of them a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. His mission was to recover humanity from moral guilt to a state of holiness and to lift the race to a plane of high spiritual attainment. He came to fill the hearts of men with the life of God so that they may rise to heights of

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spiritual power yet unattained by the world. "Newness of life is the clarion note of the Son of God." To create us anew after the image of God and to make us partakers of the divine nature was Christ's sole aim.

The doctrine of the perfectibility of man is nowhere presented by Christ in a more striking manner than in His teaching concerning the Kingdom of God. The term "Kingdom of God," though often on the lips of Jesus, was no new phrase. It was a term that was current among the Jews when Christ appeared among them. Indeed, the phrase had been used for long centuries by the Hebrew race to sum up the relation that God sustained to them. The idea had penetrated Jewish thought and its roots lay far back in the life and history of the nation. The history of the Jewish people was founded on the notion of a theocracy, *i. e.*, a government in which God is the King. This conception was basal in their doctrine and polity. It filled their thinking, permeated their literature, and determined the form of their social and political institutions. So large a place did it fill in the thought of the nation that the great prophets conceived of a kingdom which should embrace all nations and

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whose glory should fill the whole earth. They looked forward to a world-empire in which truth, righteousness, and justice should prevail. Divine in its origin and spiritual in its laws, it was destined to grow until it became as wide as the world. Nations should come to its light and kings to the brightness of its rising. To be sure, the actual history of the people shows that this ideal of the prophet was far beyond their attainment; indeed, it gradually faded away until it was all but lost. The ideal of a divine kingdom wherein dwelleth righteousness, which had fired the hearts of the prophets of God, gave way to one of material prosperity, political power, and earthly splendor. Christ, however, early in His ministry adopted the idea and made it the vehicle of a deeper spiritual truth than had ever been associated with it in the Jewish consciousness. In His teaching it was purified of all the false notions with which it was invested and became the grandest conception that ever entered the mind of men.

But what is the Kingdom of God? How is it to be defined? What is its essential nature? The Kingdom of God as conceived of by Christ is in its origin, character, and

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purpose divine. It consists, not in any outward good, but in the inward life of the Spirit, in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. It is the Kingdom whose means are justice and truth, and whose ends are perfection and peace. It is pre-eminently a spiritual system, a moral order, a divine rule, in which men fulfill all filial relations to God and all brotherly relations to one another. It is the power of God in man renewing his soul and shaping it after the divine pattern. It is the entrance of a potency and living force into the world transforming it in all its activities. The Kingdom of God is the highest state of moral and spiritual development of which the human race is capable. It is the reign of God on earth, the universal reception and dominion of the divine purpose among men. It is a new commonwealth composed of redeemed souls who do God's will on earth as it is done in heaven. It is "a universal spiritual reign, the reign of rectitude, purity, wisdom, truth, love, and peace, the reign of God in the understanding, conscience, heart, and will of men."

And this ideal is presented by Christ, not to a few select spirits, but to all men. Others had taught that high moral attainment was

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for the sage and the philosopher, but Jesus proclaims that it is within the reach of every man. The infinite good of the gospel is for all alike. The blessings of the Kingdom of God are not conditioned by rank, culture, or social distinction, but are open to all. Christ teaches that it is the purpose of the Infinite to bring all mankind, irrespective of race and creed, to a state of spiritual elevation far beyond their fondest hope and fairest dreams. And the sole qualification for admission into this new society is the state of the inner spirit, the disposition of the heart. "The morality of Plato was one not for the multitude, but for the few select souls. But Christianity is a religion for all; its fundamental principle is one capable of influencing every human heart; it demands no special qualifications, it offers no exclusive privileges; the rich and the poor, the wise and the ignorant, are equally welcome within its pale if they submit themselves to its conditions." The African with black skin and fiery passion and the noble Livingstone may be members of the same divine commonwealth. The Esquimau, sluggish of thought and dull of moral apprehension, and the heroic missionary who instructs him in things divine may

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be loyal subjects of the same spiritual kingdom. The door of the Kingdom of heaven lies open to the meanest and the poorest sons of earth.

The perfectibility of man is an attainment made possible by his moral and spiritual nature. The power of man to reflect the divine character is a necessary implication of his intellectual and moral constitution. Since man is a child of the Most High he may attain to a life of moral beauty. Since he bears the image of God he may become perfect in life and character as God is perfect. Goodness, purity, love, and truth may be the dominant elements of his being. "Man is here, erect and beauteous, with mind, heart, conscience, will, his every faculty fitted for everlasting progress and ceaseless, blest fellowship with God." The biologist tells us that the leaf of the plant is covered with tiny mouths, similar in form to human lips, which seizes the carbonic acid gas in the air and transmutes it into itself. So man, by means of his spiritual powers, may lay hold on the life of the Infinite and transmute it, glorious and beautiful, into his own life. As the seed which is put into the earth germinates and grows until it reaches its richest expres-

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sion in the full-grown plant with its richness of foliage and blossom, so the human heart under influences divine may produce a noble manhood with its fullness of strength and beauty. To be sure, the seed which is hid in the soil in springtime is vastly different from the flower with its rich coloring and fragrance which crowns the plant in summer. But within the seed lies a latent germ which, when aided by the laws and conditions of vegetative life, by soil, air, and sunshine, rises into beauteous blossom and flower. Within the soul of man are potencies which when nurtured by the sunshine of the divine love realize themselves in lofty ideas, virtuous conduct, and holy endeavor. Within man are capacities and powers which when appealed to by the gracious influences of heaven unfold themselves in filial experience, loving service, and distinct sonship to God. In the soul may shine undimmed all the moral excellencies of the divine. "From God we came forth, with all the beginnings of life in us, the capacities for thought, the possibilities of action, the channels through which life must be set in flow; to God we are to come back, that He may Himself complete that which He has begun, and that He may

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fill up with His own thought the capacities for thought which He has created, and that He may Himself develop into activities of His own the possibilities of action which He has set within, and that He may set His own life coursing through all the life-channels He has formed.' '20

As man's moral nature is his highest endowment, so the perfectibility of the soul is the highest good to which he can attain. Man can receive nothing better than the unfolding of his spiritual life. The Infinite Himself can perform no greater task than to perfect the human soul. He can achieve nothing nobler than to eradicate sin from the heart and fill it with a life and power divine. "I affirm that there is, and can be, no greater work on earth than to purify the soul from evil and to kindle in it new light, life, energy, and love." And if at the dawn of creation the morning stars sang together as they beheld the wondrous works of God, the spiritual transformation of mankind might well call forth an anthem of praise from all things that He has made.

This conception of the highest good as set forth by Christianity is the sublimest that has ever entered the thought of the human

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race. No religious faith or philosophic system has conceived so nobly of the end of mankind as has the Christian religion. No teacher, ancient or modern, has entertained such a worthy idea of the goal of human endeavor as has Christ. No sage or philosopher has ever forged such an exalted ideal of life as is presented by Jesus. The dreams entertained of the final goal of humanity by the prophets and poets of all ages are surpassed by the hope which Christianity sets before us. "One may look in vain in all other ethics, ancient or modern, for a conception of the supreme good so vital, so human, so homelike as this." The highest good that Buddhism offers to mankind is the extinction of being; the end of life is the Nirvana wherein personality ceases and consciousness is extinguished. Confucianism holds out no hope to the individual since all initiation and originality are crushed out from his life by the traditions and customs of the past. The conception of the chief end of man as held by Greek thought was as inadequate as that of the extra-Christian religions. Aristotle says: "Since all knowledge and all purpose aim at some good, what is the highest of all realizable goods? As

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to its name, I suppose, nearly all men are agreed, for the masses and the men of culture alike declare that it is happiness." The doctrine of the highest good as enunciated by Greek philosophy has been adopted in substance by a large number of ethicists in modern times. The hedonistic ethics of the Greek world is reflected in the writings of such men as Locke, Bentham, Spencer, and Mill. Spencer, who may be taken as a representative of this class, writes, "No school can avoid taking for the ultimate moral aim a desirable state of feeling, called by whatever name—gratification, enjoyment, happiness."

The Christian ideal of the supreme good, however, is no elimination of being or loss of conscious life, no hopeless clinging to the past, no mere attainment of enjoyment, whether sensuous or mental, but union with God in truth, righteousness, and love. It is the freedom of the soul from passion which devours, from lust which destroys, and from moral weakness which ends in debility and death. It is the infilling of the heart with the life of God. It is the mind of Christ incarnated in man, cleansing the thought, purifying the emotion, and reproducing itself in daily action. It is the individual soul

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living at its highest and best in all that ennobles thought, strengthens the will, and develops character. And while the Christian ideal transcends the fairest pictures of human felicity drawn by prophet or sage, it finds a ready response in the human heart. Men feel that the abundant life is no impossible dream or unattainable blessedness, but that it may become a glorious possession. "As every drop of sap in the tree flows toward foliage and fruit" and "every drop of blood in the bird beats toward flight and song," so every activity of man may tend toward moral beauty and a perfect manhood. All the sublime potencies latent in the individual may be lifted into gracious and glorious realization until he embodies in himself all heavenly virtues and reproduces the life and will of God.

The claim of Christianity that the intellectual and moral development of the race is the final end of all things has received marvelous confirmation from science. "The naturally revealed end" toward which evolution works is the ideal of Christian thought. Science bears unmistakable testimony to the meaning and purpose of God in the creation of man. Like the Christian religion, it affirms

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that the end of the physical realm is a moral one. The theory once prevalent in certain quarters that man is the product of material forces and has no more value for the universe than the mote in the sunbeam, has receded before the larger view that he is the glorious consummation of nature's work, and that his perfection is the end toward which she has been striving from the beginning. From fire-mist and glowing globe and across vast stretches of time nature has looked to the production and perfection of humanity as the crown and goal of her labor. 'At the summit of nature's process of development—through inorganic matter, vegetable life, animal life—stands a spirit, intelligent, moral, and free, who is capable of infinite progress. Having sketched the history of the origin of man, John Fiske says: "Our historical survey of the genesis of humanity seems to show very forcibly that a society of human souls living in conformity to a perfect moral law is the end toward which, ever since the time when our solar system was a patch of nebulous vapor, the cosmic process has been aiming." Professor Drummond affirms that were not the goal of humanity moral likeness to God, "evolution would have no future.

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no meaning, no fulfillment." "This," he says, "is the one far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves and for whose realization all nature waits, as it were, with anxious heart and gaze of hope." Henceforth the task of nature will not be to give birth to any higher creature, but to perfect this masterpiece which she has produced.

"All tended to mankind,
And, man produced, all has its end thus far;
But in completed man begins anew
A tendency to God. Prognostics told
Man's near approach; so in man's self arise
August anticipations, symbols, types
Of a dim splendor ever or before
In that eternal circle life pursues."

And this work will continue until the face of the earth is renewed and mankind delivered from the curse of sin. The moral culture of the race thus far attained is but a prophecy of what will be when the gospel of Christ, working on slowly through the ages, shall have accomplished its purpose upon the human soul. The moral transformation of men will go on until the race comes into full accord with the life and plan of the Infinite. Man is destined not merely to live forever, but to grow, to expand, to unfold his capacities until he reproduces the divine

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life and becomes all it is possible for a redeemed son of God to be. Through the coming ages he will continue to climb until finally he reaches the summit of manhood and is crowned with glory. This world of ours has before it a future that is large with blessing to the human race. The Golden Age has yet to come. The ideal and perfect state of which philosophers and poets have so fondly dreamed will yet appear. The time will come when the world, which has revolted from the authority of God and which has been so long marred by sin, will be redeemed and made beauteous as the light of heaven. The earth, whose history has been stained through with guilt, will by divine love be cleansed and made a glorious dwelling-place for the sons of God. The day will dawn when humanity will be purged of its dross by the fires of discipline and come forth refined as pure gold. "Led by its Father's hand it will yet enter and take possession of a kingdom to the hither frontier of which it has as yet scarcely come." The vision of the man of lonely Patmos, hemmed in by the sea as by a prison wall, will eventually be fulfilled: "And I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, pre-

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pared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." And this city is no future world far away in the sky, but a community of righteousness established upon the earth. It is no celestial home reserved for the spirits of the blessed, but a human community where men will serve God and toil with Him in the building of His kingdom. It is a city which descending out of heaven and resplendent with the light and life of God, shall renew this old earth and make it beauteous and divine.

The means by which this sublime experience must be attained is the life and personality of Jesus Christ. Jesus, for the first time in the history of mankind, revealed to the world the glorious possibility of humanity when it is in full accord with the will of God. We have in Christ "an Exemplar vouchsafed, in an early age of the world, of what man may and should become, in the course of ages, in his progress towards the realization of his destiny." Jesus, in whom God has incarnated Himself and disclosed His nature in

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terms of human consciousness, "becomes the type of the highest development of humanity and the goal toward which the rest of us must strive." By His unselfish service and holy love culminating in Calvary He revealed to men the moral and spiritual heights to which they might attain. He is the head of a new creation, the forerunner of a race which shall conform to the divine. What Christ was in all the high reaches of His spiritual experience, that man may be. What He was in His unblemished character, matchless love, and devotion to truth, that every individual may become. The virtues that were full-statured in His life may be realized to their fullest extent in the life of every child of earth. He is able to work a divine work in the human heart. As nature in her mysterious laboratory changes worthless charcoal into costly and precious diamonds fit to adorn the monarch's brow, so Christ can transform human souls into spiritual jewels fit to shine in His own Divine Kingdom.

Hawthorne's story of the Great Stone Face is familiar to many. Nature in a mood of majestic playfulness had sculptured on the perpendicular side of a high mountain which overlooked a spacious and lovely valley a

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figure which resembled the human face. From the lofty eminence with the vapor of the mountains clustering about it the benign and noble features with an expression grand and sweet beamed over the valley illuminating the clouds and infusing sweetness into the sunshine. For long ages a legend had been told that at some future day a child should be born hereabouts who was destined to become the greatest personage of his time and whose countenance in manhood should bear an exact resemblance to the great stone face. Of the many who in youth went forth from the valley to other places to seek fame and renown, not a few in after years came back to visit the home of their boyhood. Among the number were a wealthy merchant, a famous general, an eminent statesman, and a renowned poet. So illustrious had these men become that each in turn was hailed by the people as the fulfillment of the ancient prophecy. After the enthusiasm, however, had in each case passed away it was found that none of these distinguished sons of the valley was he for whom the people watched and waited. The soul of the merchant was sordid and shrunken with the lust of gold; the face of the warrior lacked in gentle wis-

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dom, in the deep, broad, tender sympathies; the statesman had a weary gloom in the deep caverns of his eyes as of a man whose life was vague and empty; the poet had lived among poor and mean realities and had lacked faith in grandeur, beauty, and goodness. In the valley was born a lad who as he grew to manhood years cherished an enduring faith in the old legend and longed for its fulfillment. While others concluded that it was an idle tale, his faith remained undimmed. The boy as he advanced to manhood and to old age, gazed and meditated upon the benign face on the mountainside until the noble sentiments expressed in it enlarged his heart and filled it with high-born thoughts and affections. The pure and high simplicity of his thought was visible in the good deeds and loving service of his daily life. One evening as he was discoursing to an assemblage of the neighboring inhabitants in the open air in sight of the great stone face, which was lighted up by the golden rays of the setting sun, some one suddenly observed that this man's countenance resembled the face of the mountain. What this observer saw was at once beheld by all the people, and the whole multitude shouted that the

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prophecy was at last fulfilled. Carved in the rock of eternal truth is the divine face of Jesus Christ. As the ideal expression of the Infinite we have placed before us as our pattern the perfect life and matchless character of the Son of God. With devotion to His Kingdom, and loyalty to His truth, we shall be changed from glory into glory until our lives conform to His divine image. By gazing upon His face our hearts shall be enlarged and filled with holy affections and our lives transfigured with a glory begotten of the skies. He is able to impart new ideals to men and furnish them with a power by which they may realize their noblest and best. "Within Him were the energies needed to create a perfect order, a holy society, a humanity that should articulate the Creator's ideal."

“He hath set eternity in their heart.”

—ECCLESIASTES 3:11.

“In My Father’s house are many mansions.”

—JOHN 14:2.

“Our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”—2 TIMOTHY 1:10.

“Thou wilt not leave us in the dust;

Thou madest man, he knows not why;

He thinks he was not made to die;

And Thou hast made him; Thou art just.”

—TENNYSON.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LIFE EVERLASTING.

I.

THE annals of English history tell us that in the seventh century of our era there arose a discussion at the court of Edwin, the Anglo-Saxon king, as to whether the Christian religion should be adopted. One of the nobles, speaking in defense of Christianity, said to the king as follows: “The present life of man, O king, compared with that space of time beyond, of which we have no certainty, reminds me of one of your winter feasts, where you sit with your generals and ministers. The hearth blazes in the middle, and a grateful heat is spread around, while storms of rain and snow are raging without. Driven by the chilling tempest, a little sparrow enters at one door and flies delighted around us till it departs through the other. While it stays in our mansion it feels not the winter storm; but when this short moment of happiness has been enjoyed, it is forced again into the same

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dreary tempest from which it has escaped, and we behold it no more. Such is the life of man, and we are as ignorant of the state which preceded our present existence as of that which will follow it. Things being so, I feel that if this new faith can give us more certainty, it deserves to be received.”

The test which the old earl applied to the Christian religion is after all the final test. The question concerning life after death is one which men would rather have answered than any other question the human mind can raise. What light does Christianity throw upon the continuance of life? What assurance of immortality does it bring to the human heart? Does the gospel of Christ lift the veil which separates this life from the future? Does it teach that the soul of man is destined to live on after the death of the body? If so, it is a religion that is worthy to be adopted. If it brings to the heart of humanity a well-grounded hope of life beyond the grave it deserves to be received.

And this is what Christianity has done for mankind. The crowning glory of the Christian revelation is that it has brought life and immortality to light. The Christian faith has given to the race a new and im-

perishable hope that will last as long as the earth endures. The great truth of a world of life and beauty beyond death where the soul will continue to achieve and develop its powers is the contribution of the Christian revelation to the religious faith and thought of the race. "Immortality," says Channing, "is the glorious discovery of Christianity." And this truth, one of the noblest possessions of man, is the ground of all worthy endeavor. It saves multitudes from despair and furnishes incentives to high and noble living. It lies at the root of duty, love, and self-sacrifice, and "gives glory, beauty, and meaning to human character." "One of the greatest boons which the teaching of Jesus and Paul conferred upon man—perhaps the greatest ever conferred by any religion—was the opening to the Christian believer of a brighter world beyond the grave."

This does not mean that prior to the advent of Christianity belief in a future life was wholly unknown. It does not mean that before Christ came there existed no hope of immortality. The Christian conception of a future life does not claim to be a new doctrine. Long before the rise of the Christian

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religion the ancients lived in the thought of another world to which the soul went after death. Belief in the persistence of life was as universal as belief in the existence of divinities. But previous to the advent of Christ faith in a life beyond rested on no sure and certain knowledge; it was largely a guess, a matter of conjecture. Doubts arose even in the minds of the best men as to the reality of a future existence. Even the mind of Socrates was shrouded in doubt and gloom. The closing words of his apology were: "But now the time has come, and we must go hence; I to die, and you to live. Whether life or death is better is known to God, and to God only." Cicero said: "Which of these—two theories, of life or no life after death—God only knows; and which is most probable is a very great question." Jesus, however, rescued the belief from doubt and made it a moral certainty. Concerning the immortality of the soul He spoke with absolute assurance. What was obscure and fragmentary in the teaching of others became lucid and complete in His teaching. While others hesitated and were filled with uncertainty, He spoke with a conviction born of absolute knowledge. While

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others faltered before the mystery of death, He taught in clear, full tones and cast an imperishable light upon the destiny of man. Not a shadow of doubt as to the certainty of the deathlessness of the soul ever crossed His mind. A calm assurance "as of impregnable faith and clear insight" breathes through His words, carrying conviction to every heart.

Turning to the direct words of Christ, we find that He teaches in calm, majestic tones that man is destined to live on endlessly. The substance of His teaching on this question is that God will give unto His children that life which He Himself possesses. Jesus looks forward to a future life of bliss for all true believers. In His pregnant and infallible way He announces that the life of God in the soul is of endless duration. To the sorrowing Martha at the grave of Lazarus He exclaims: "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." He teaches that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "This is life

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eternal," says Christ, "that they might know Thee the only true God." On the eve of His departure He comforts the hearts of His disciples with the assurance that He is going to His Father to prepare a place for them. "His last and most intimate revelation of the life beyond death He put in the plain and common language of our human homes and fellowship." He tells them that there are mansions in His Father's house which will be their eternal home. Perfect in love and one with God as He is one with the Father, they will see Him and dwell with Him forever. "Where I am there ye may be also." "Like a great bell of hope, mellow, ceaseless, glorious in its music, the words of the soul's Savior ring across the world: 'Because I live, ye shall live also.' 'In My Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so I would have told you.'"

The same truth shines forth in the writings of the apostles. John, the beloved disciple, expresses his sure hope of immortality in the words: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Paul, who had seen his

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Lord in mystic vision, writes: God “will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life.” The appeal of Jude to believers is, “Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” And Peter assures Christian believers that there is reserved in heaven for them “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.”

The assurance which the Christian revelation gives of immortality does not rest, however, on certain proof-texts of the New Testament, but is inseparably bound up with the truth that Christ proclaimed concerning the character of God and the nature of man. It is interwoven with the wonderful system of truth which Jesus has given the world. It is an essential part of His doctrine of God, of life, and of the human soul. It is an assumption that is absolutely necessary to the intelligibility of His own life and teaching. Apart from the doctrine of an endless life many of the words of Christ become empty sounds. Consider His teaching concerning the soul. We have already seen that Jesus proclaims the soul as a thing that outweighs in value the

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whole material creation. Man is immeasurably above the brute realm; he is dowered with lofty intellectual and moral powers. He is rational, self-conscious, and free. God, moreover, is solicitous in his every need. Jesus counsels men not to be over-anxious concerning food and raiment, but to trust implicitly in God for all earthly good. He teaches them to labor, not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life. He commands them to be perfect like unto their Father which is in heaven.

What does a being of such proportions mean? Why has he been so richly endowed? Why is God so deeply concerned in His welfare? Why has the Infinite been at such pains to hedge about His human child with His care and to show him the fullness of His love? Why has He made rich provision for his physical and spiritual needs? Such a relation of man to God not only expresses the possibility of the soul's communion with the divine, but it involves immortality. God's solicitude in His children approaches as near to a proof as it is possible to possess of the immortality of the human soul. On no other assumption is the attitude of God to man

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intelligible. From God's vital interest in mankind the doctrine of a future life follows.

Moreover, man's union with God is an earnest and pledge of the immortal life. The new birth and the ever-present Spirit furnish an assurance of the after-existence of the soul. The life of God in man, Christ teaches, is eternal. Eternal life, says Jesus, is the union of the soul with God. Jesus prayed that the life of God which was in Him might be reproduced in the hearts of His disciples. The endless life is no super-added element, but is knowledge of God. "This is life eternal that they might know Thee, the only true God." It is no gift externally bestowed, but consists in doing the will of God. "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever." The life of the believer whose joy is to do the Father's will and whose soul is filled with the inflowing tides of the divine love "is knit up with the very life of the Eternal." Man can not perish for the personal life of the Infinite dwells in him, filling and overflowing all the channels of his being. While at death the body returns to the earth whence it came, man's union with God becomes more intimate and real.

The strongest evidence in favor of immor-

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tality is, however, furnished by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection of Jesus abolished death and gave to the world a new and imperishable hope of life beyond the grave. The Easter message is the gladdest and most triumphant that ever came to the world. Its essential truth is that man shall live. It is an assurance that man's faith in a future world, his yearning for the illimitable, is no fond dream, but a well-based hope that will be gloriously realized. Christ's resurrection robbed death of its terrors and created a new belief in the unseen world. His triumph over the grave has enlarged the faith of mankind in a life beyond and has quickened the inner experience of all true believers.

Harnack, in speaking of the resurrection of Jesus, confirms the view that the grave of Christ is the primary source of our hope in an immortal life. "Whatever," he says, "may have happened at the grave and in the matter of the appearances, one thing is certain: *This grave was the birthplace of the indestructible belief that death is vanquished, and there is a life eternal.* It is useless to cite Plato; it is useless to point to the Persian religion and the ideas and

literature of later Judaism. All that would have perished and has perished; but the certainty of the resurrection and of a life eternal which is bound up with the grave in Joseph's garden has not perished, and on the conviction that *Jesus lives* we still base those hopes of citizenship in an eternal city which makes our earthly life worth living and tolerable. 'He delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage,' as the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews confesses. That is the point. And although there be exceptions to its sway, wherever, despite all the weight of nature, there is a strong faith in the infinite value of the soul; wherever death has lost its terrors; wherever the sufferings of the present are measured against a future glory, this feeling of life is bound up with the conviction that Jesus Christ has passed through death, that God has awakened Him and raised Him to life and glory.'²¹ His resurrection is the promise and surety of the deathless life of man. The destiny of the race is bound up with His victory over the tomb. Because He is the master of the grave and holds the keys of death and hell the immortality of mankind is assured. "Because

I live, ye shall live also.” In this assurance is centered our hope, not only for ourselves, but for all our loved ones who have fallen asleep in Christ.

II.

From the teachings of the Christian religion we turn to learn what science and the human reason have to offer on the question of immortality. In addition to the light that Christianity sheds upon our knowledge of a future existence, the human mind has formulated certain arguments in favor of the deathlessness of the soul. A brief examination of the most important of these arguments will not be amiss since they tend to strengthen our faith in the Christian doctrine of life beyond death.

One of the most convincing arguments for life beyond the grave which is furnished by human thought is that founded on instinctive desire. “The strongest argument,” in favor of an immortal life, says Cicero, “is that nature herself is tacitly persuaded of the immortality of the soul; which appears from that great concern, so generally felt by all, for what shall happen after death.” Within

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the human heart are immortal longings. Man is endowed with an instinctive and powerful love of life; there is begotten within him a hope that he will survive the grave. An inward horror arises at the thought of annihilation. The soul utterly refuses to entertain the idea that at death it sinks into oblivion and is forgotten. Man can not endure the thought that he dieth as the brute dieth; he has an irrepressible faith in his own survival. And this belief is normal, "for it is a product of the unperverted constitution of the human mind." It is not a selfish desire nor the result of human conceit, but an essential element of man's inner being. It is an instinct of self-preservation and is inwoven into the very fiber of the soul. So deeply inwrought and ineradicable is this instinct in the human breast that no argument can overthrow it nor doubt efface it.

The belief in immortality is universal as well as instinctive. All men, of every age and clime, ancient and modern, pagan and Christian, have implicitly believed in it. There is no trace of any tribe or nation who have not looked forward to another life. "All men," says Theodore Parker, "desire to be immortal." Before the yearning imagination

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of all peoples have flitted visions of another world where the soul lives after its existence on earth has ceased. "The unvarying verdict of the common consciousness of mankind" is that man is immortal. The testimony of the ages avers that death is not the end. The voice of history proclaims that man survives the destruction of the body. In the heart of the race is rooted the idea that the human being was not made for a day, but is heir to an immortal life. And the hope of immortality springing up in the human heart has been strengthened with the passing centuries. It has not been confined to the illiterate and unthinking, but has become the possession of many of the noblest minds of all ages. It does not belong exclusively to the untutored and the ignorant, for it has been the faith of the best spirits that the world has produced. "It is not he who believes in a life beyond who is called on to prove his faith; he has the majority of the ages behind him, and in that majority have been the wisest, purest, and most thoughtful of those who have lived in every nation."

Whence arises this instinctive and universal belief? How is it that the desire for immortality is deep-seated and persistent?

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Why is it that the longing for an endless life is rooted in the heart of the imperial thinker as well as of the untutored peasant? If there be no future existence, how shall we account for the irrepressible faith in its reality? Some have called belief in immortality a dream, but whence came the dream? Others have declared that it is a superstition of ignorant minds, but whence arose the superstition? It is incredible that a conviction so deeply inwoven into the very warp and woof of man's spiritual nature should be devoid of meaning. The longing of the heart for an immortal life is in itself a proof of such a life. Aristotle says: "Whatsoever that be within us that feels, thinks, desires, and animates, is something celestial, divine, and consequently imperishable." The fact, moreover, that belief in the continuance of life has prevailed through all the ages, among all classes of people, in the heart of the sage as well as in the bosom of the savage, can be explained on the sole assumption that man is destined to live forever. The universality of the desire is an argument that He who has implanted it within the soul is pledged to insure its fulfillment. It has been justly observed that whatever endures from

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age to age and resists expulsion from the feelings of the race gives overwhelming evidence that it is true.

The argument for immortality which is based on instinctive desire finds its analogue in the laws that prevail in nature. Science informs us that in the material realm every organism has its appropriate environment. There exists no organism which does not find its fitting complement in the physical order. There is no desire which does not somewhere find its gratification; every organic instinct has its correlate. Provision is made for every want of man, beast, and plant. The eye and the sunbeam, the ear and the waves of sound, the lungs and the air, are wondrously adapted to each other. When God made the fin of the fish He made the water for it to swim in; when He made the wing of the bird, He made the air for it to fly in; when He made the insect, He made for it the forest bed. As it is in the physical realm, so it is in the moral and spiritual realm. The desire for immortality in the hearts of men finds its complement in a world of life and truth. The same God who has made the sunbeam for the eye and wave-sounds for the ear has provided an endless life for man. He

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who has made moisture for the root of the plant and sunlight for the leaf, will not fail to gratify the deep yearnings of the human heart. He will not mock us by giving immortal longings that must forever remain unsatisfied. We feel confident that God's promises to us will be fulfilled. He is not a man that He should lie. He will keep His word with us. The longing of the heart for the illimitable and the unseen is itself the evidence of the reality for which it calls. As the rich coloring of the plant points unmistakably to the potencies of light, so the instinctive desire for a life beyond points to a future world. As the æsthetic sense finds its answer in the beauties of the world of nature, in flower and in landscape, so the soul with its wistful longings for the invisible finds its answer in a world of infinite truth and beauty. Like some tropical bird in a Northern clime that is called by the instinct within to the sunny lands of the South which are its true habitat, so the voices within man draw him to that larger life for which he is destined and which is his own true home.

An Indian chief was asked by an officer: "Why are you content? Pain and old age are not good things?" The aged chief was silent

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a while, and then said: "The bird that builds its nest on the tree near my wigwam in summer leaves it when winter is coming, and travels thousands of miles to the southward, but in the spring it will come back across mountains and rivers to that very same nest. How do such creatures know the way? They have no map, no guide. The Great Spirit puts something in their hearts to draw them back to their homes. And He has not forgotten to put something in each man's heart that draws him, draws him all his life long, up to his home. I am coming near to mine. Shall I not be glad?"

The argument for immortality founded on instinctive desire has been well summarized by Addison in the following lines:

"Plato, thou reason'st well,
Else whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
This longing after immortality?
Or whence this secret dread, and inward horror
Of falling into naught? Why shrinks the soul
Back on herself, and startles at destruction?
'Tis the divinity that stirs within us;
'Tis heaven itself that points out an hereafter,
And intimates eternity to man."

A second argument for life beyond the horizon of earth is based on the fact that human existence is too brief for a complete

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development of the powers of the mind. The scale on which man is planned is too large for completion in this world. The faculties with which the human spirit is endowed are in this life but meagerly developed. As untold treasures of gold, silver, and gems lie hidden in the earth, so within the human heart lie uncovered riches. Many of the best thoughts, noblest aspirations, and deepest yearnings of the mind are never expressed. There are within us all faculties which find no adequate expression within the limits of this earthly existence. History has shown us that there have been many dowered with vast capacities and capable of lofty deeds who have died without reaching the plenitude of their powers. Many are there who, possessing large possibilities, advance but to the bud and blossom stage of development. Like the plant which is smitten by the untimely frost ere it bears its fruitage, so many a life is cut off by death ere it comes to fruition. Upon the tombstone of many a grave may be written the words, "A mute inglorious Milton here doth rest." Chatterton dying at seventeen, Keats at twenty-five, Raphael at thirty-seven, are illustrious examples of the truth that the successes of man are broken

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and incomplete. The fact of the matter is that the brief span of time at man's disposal is all too short for the full development of his being. Theodore Parker on his deathbed exclaimed: "I wish I could carry on my work. I have only used half my powers." "Bushnell's mind teems with new thoughts to the last; and he carried with him infinitely more and better thoughts than he left behind him, noble as these are." Think also of the untold millions of human souls created in the image of God who go down to the grave without even any adequate conception of the larger possibilities of life. To the teeming millions of Africa, China, and the isles of the sea, few opportunities are given for mental and moral growth. As nature in the springtime lavishly clothes the plains and meadows with fragrant flowers only a few months later to sweep them aside forever, so she produces teeming populations which ere they begin to unfold their powers or are even conscious of them fall to the ground and die.

Why is it that the Creator has dowered man with faculties that require infinite ages for development and allowed him but three-score years and ten? Why is it that the

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Eternal has implanted in the human child germs that need an endless period and a favorable clime for their maturing and granted him but a brief summer under uninviting skies? Why has He created the soul capable of illimitable progress and allotted it but a short day? "It impugns the wisdom of God to suppose that a being which He has endowed with such marvelous powers is created to perish." If there be no future life where the work begun here will be carried to completion, where the ideals formed on earth will be realized, and where the soul will come into full possession of itself, God is the most irrational of beings. Should He cast man with his plans unfulfilled, his hopes unattained, his thirst for knowledge unsatisfied into unmitigated night, He is the greatest of deceivers. Should He allow the soul with its immortal longings, its boundless aspirations, its quenchless love to die as the beast dieth, He deserves naught but execration and contempt. Human life without immortality to complete it becomes an egregious blunder, a ghastly mockery. If man's hopes are to be blighted, his yearnings crushed, his high-born thought to slide into oblivion, this present existence becomes a hollow sham, a mean-

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ingless wail. A universe which sends man down to the pit, dooms him to eternal darkness, and covers him forever with the pall of death is at its very root irrational and unmoral.

“My own dim life should teach me this,
That life shall live for evermore,
Else earth is darkness at the core,
And dust and ashes all that is.”

But we think that the universe is not thus constituted. We believe in the rationality of God. God would not prostitute His creative power by bringing into being this thinking, emotional, and moral spirit and cast him finally into oblivion. “For my own part,” says John Fiske, “I believe in the immortality of the soul, not in the sense in which I accept the demonstrable truths of science, but as a supreme act of faith in the reasonableness of God’s work.” That is the point. If God is a just Being, if the universe is grounded in rationality, if life possesses meaning and worth, if moral values are lasting, then it is altogether incredible that man goes forth into darkness and death. Those, therefore, who are cut down in the midst of their labors with their work unfinished will be afforded another life where the tasks of earth shall be taken up and carried forward

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to completion. The powers of the soul which here under uncongenial skies are but meagerly unfolded will there in the presence of the eternal sunlight become fully developed. Cicero asserted that the endowments of the mind seem to imply another life. And Kant wrote: "In view of the divine wisdom, and having respect to the splendid endowment of human nature and to the shortness of life, so inadequate for its development, we can find an equally satisfactory ground for a doctrinal faith in the future life of the human soul." Thus man's intellectual and moral gifts, his achievements which are utterly incommensurate with his desires, and above all his quenchless love, assure us that his education begun on earth will be continued in a brighter world.

A third argument for immortality is founded on the inequalities of human life. The world is full of wrong. Human life is burdened with injustice. Rewards are not always distributed according to merit. Vice clothes herself in purple and fine linen, virtue lies at the gate, eating crumbs and clothed in rags. Justice is defeated, wrong sits in authority. Good men are afflicted and oppressed, bad men prosper and triumph. The

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hero lies in the dungeon, the tyrant sits on the throne. The reformer lives in a hovel, the sot dwells in the palace of a king. The innocent man is sent to the gallows, the criminal whose hand is red with blood goes free. Wise and brave men are cut down by death in the flower of life, ignorant men and cowards go down to the grave full of years. Many whose lives are devoted to the service of their fellows are victims of disease, others whose presence is a menace to society enjoy prosperity and health. The saint is burned at the stake or is thrown to wild beasts, the villain is set up on high.

Now, there is in the heart of man an instinctive feeling that such inequalities should not exist. We are outraged and our sense of justice shocked when men are wronged. The human heart is so constituted that it can not view with complacency injustice and wrong. We think that since God has brought human beings into existence He is obligated to secure for them just treatment. He has duties toward men which can be discharged only as He insures justice to all. Such a life, therefore, as this can not be complete in itself. The present scene of action can not be man's sole sphere of activity. No just and

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beneficent God would have created a world so full of imperfections without having ordained a future life where the wrongs of earth may be righted and its mysteries made clear. A world, complete in itself, in which the innocent suffer, the brave and true are oppressed, and where righteousness is defeated can not be the work of a wise and good God. If there be no life beyond where the present inequalities shall be set right, human life becomes a disappointment and despair. A future existence is absolutely essential where the glaring injustices of earth shall be corrected and where God shall vindicate His ways to men. It was Socrates who said: "I believe a future life is needed to avenge the wrongs of this present life. In the future life justice shall be administered to us, and those who have done their duty here in that future life shall find their chief delight in seeking after wisdom."

"There is no reconciling wisdom with a world distraught,
Goodness with triumphant evil, power with failure in
the aim,

If—(to my own sense, remember! though none other
feel the same!)—

If you bar me from assuming earth to be a pupil's place.
And life, time,—with all their chances, changes,—just
probation space,
Mine, for me!"

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The nature or constitution of the human mind, moreover, affords an argument for the immortality of man. Human personality is essentially unlike everything else in the world. However spirit may be defined it has nothing in common with material things; it belongs to another and higher order. It is a self-conscious agent which reflectively experiences the world of nature. We are not, however, unaware of the materialistic assumption that the soul is the function of matter and perishes with the dissolution of the body. We are told that the mind with all its states—thought, volitions, feelings—has been evolved from the fire-mist by mechanical processes, and that with the destruction of the physical organism it vanishes forever. To enter upon an examination of materialism is beyond our present purpose and would take us too far afield. We pause, however, to state that to identify the mind with matter is as unscientific as it is unphilosophical. Though the mind is closely connected with the brain, yet it can in no way, without the overthrow of reason itself, be identified with it. We quote here the trenchant words of John Fiske: “The materialistic assumption that there is no such state of things (as thought

and feeling without a cerebrum), and that the life of the soul accordingly ends with the life of the body, is perhaps the most colossal instance of baseless assumption that is known to the history of philosophy."

Since the mind is a self-conscious agent which remains one and the same through all the change and shift of material things, there is no reason why it may not survive physical decay and dissolution. If as a self-identifying being it persists amid the flux and flow of this earthly life, we may well suppose that it will continue after death. Its persistence through all the changes of experience furnish irrefragable proof that it will outlive the body. This implies that the relation of the soul to the body may be that of the harper to the harp. As by means of the harp the harper gives expression to the music that is within him, so the body is the soul's medium of expression. And though the music ceases when the harp is broken, the harper himself is not destroyed. His instrument may be put out of action, but the musician himself lives. So with the soul. The body, the soul's harp, may decay and die, but the soul itself persists. To assert that the soul vanishes with the death of the body is as if one were to affirm

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that the harper perishes when his harp becomes useless. Decay and death which reign supreme in the physical world are unknown in the realm of the spirit. It is in the assurance that the soul is untouched by the changes that take place in nature that Addison sings :

“ The soul, secure in her existence, smiles
At the drawn dagger and defies its point.
The stars shall fade away, and the sun himself
Grow dim with age, and nature sink in years,
But *thou* shalt flourish in immortal youth,
Unhurt, amidst the war of elements,
The wreck of matter, and the crash of worlds.”

The question still remains, What light does the law of evolution cast upon the doctrines of immortality? What confirmation of our faith is given by the new idea of creation which in recent times has appealed so powerfully to the minds of men. The dictum of science is that the career of man is not completed in the present life. Indeed, “the discovery of the law of evolution has furnished us with a powerful argument for the immortality of the soul.” Man is, as we have already seen, the last and greatest achievement of nature’s work. He is the crown and goal of creation. He has been the end to which nature has tended ever since the time when the universe rolled as a cloud-bank in illimita-

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ble space. The long stages through which evolution has run, the formation of the planets from nebulous haze, the preparation of the earth for living creatures, the vast procession of life from the lowest organized forms to the highest species have all been preparatory for the advent of the human being. And at infinite pains and with a cost immeasurably great has nature produced him. All the energy which she has put forth, all the suffering she has undergone, all the travail in pain through which she has passed has been for his sake. Must we then suppose that nature which has produced man at so great a cost will cast him finally into the abyss of forgetfulness? Is it reasonable to believe that this masterpiece of creation's work will ultimately slide into oblivion? Were man the costliest production of the process of evolution, to perish and be forgotten it would prove conclusively that the whole scheme of things is rooted in unwisdom. Nature would forever stultify herself were she to destroy her last and finest work. We therefore think that the energy which nature has spent and the sacrifices she has made to produce man furnish unmistakable proof that he will continue forever. The processes which

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have operated to produce this thinking, free, and moral being will, we feel confident, not end until he is crowned with immortal life. John Fiske exclaims that "he who regards man as the consummate fruition of creative energy, and the chief object of divine care, is almost irresistibly driven to the belief that the soul's career is not completed with the present life upon the earth." Thus "evolution is a sort of philosophy of redemption, and is therefore inspired by a vast hope."

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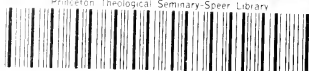
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