

# ENTERING ON LIFE

A BOOK FOR YOUNG MEN

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blame itself, not the summons that suffices for others. It must be something in the Bible that has its corroboration in our own consciousness, and, as such, can be nothing but the support of our moral sense and natural instincts. To feel a thing true is a higher security than any labored argument: it endorses it with the assent of our inmost being. If, then, there be in man an echo of Christian truth, catching up its doctrines and counsels, and whispering them back as its own voice, there needs no more, for either peasant or prince. To have our own nature bear witness is as if God Himself had spoken, for the instincts within us are His creation. The truth written on the heart had the finger of the Almighty to trace it, as much as the tables on Sinai.

It was a favorite argument of the Fathers, when disputing with heathenism, that there was just such a concurrence between the Breast and the Book. They used to speak of the Testimony of the soul, naturally Christian,\* urging that our religion was no new invention, but only the expression of the long pent up, inarticulate, voice of humanity. They were right. The chimes lie slumbering in the bell till the stroke awakes them; and what is harsh clangor at hand comes back from distant echoes in sweet music. Christianity is the tongue that gives our wishes fitting voice; the soft return, in articulate clearness, from the eternal hills, of the wail of cries and prayers that rises, bewildering, round us.

The Bible doctrine of God is, I think, sufficient of itself to prove a divine source for the documents that embody it. Compared with either Pantheism or Heathenism, Jehovah alone meets the cravings of the human heart as to its God. The religions of the East have presented both in their most elaborate completeness, but neither satisfies the instinctive ideal of the breast. To confound the creature and the Cre-

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\* "Testimonium animæ naturaliter Christianæ."—*Tertullian*.

ator, and deify nature by transfusing the Divinity inextricably through the vast fabric of the universe, turns Him into mere force and motion, impossible to realize as intelligence, or as in any sense a personal object of worship. Still more : it is, in fact, a deification of man himself as supremely divine ; for if the living power astir through all things be God, then man shows most of it, by adding to mere vital energy the higher province of thought and will. The highest manifestation of God is thus human thought—and man is his own deity. This is Hegelianism and modern German Pantheism generally ; the creed which Emerson openly preaches, and which, I fear, Carlyle, noble, true-hearted, and grand, as he is, endorses. You have it in part in the words of Vishnu, a member of the Hindoo Triad. “The whole world is but a manifestation of Vishnu, who is identical with all things, and is to be regarded by the wise, as not differing from, but as the same as themselves.” Emerson puts it,—“I am nothing, I see all ; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me : I am part and parcel of God.” Hegel’s formula is—“Being and thought are the same ;” and thus God is a process continually going on, but never accomplished ; our thought and God are identical—and man is the highest manifestation of God. A doctrine of the Divinity which ends in finding no better God than man is a poor result of so much philosophy. To leap at the stars, and fasten in the mud, in such a way, does not commend itself.

Contrast this with the Scripture doctrine, and the infinite difference is apparent. Take any part, there is still the same All-wise, All-powerful intelligence ; no more electric or magnetic current pervading all things, but a Being endowed with moral qualities, of which our own nature is a faint, because injured copy. There is no confounding Him with His works for a moment. Drawn in simpler metaphors in the earlier books, as was natural in the childhood of *the race*, there are still the same grand lines in *the sublime ideal*: the God of Abraham is the

God of the New Testament: the same purity, justice, controlling authority, and tender Fatherhood, show in the one as in the other. The mighty, keystone truth, of the unity of the Godhead: that God is not only one, but the Living God, is a gift from Abraham, through the Bible, to the race. In him the nations of the earth have already been blessed, in receiving this transcendent truth, for Judaism, Christianity, and Mahomedanism, which alone proclaim the living, personal God, are, all alike, sprung from "the friend of Jehovah;" and the Bible is the channel through which it has been conveyed. How is it that in Scripture only are we safe from the dreamy abstraction—the vague nature god, of ancient and modern philosophy; and find, instead of this divine ether, pervading space, a Being to whom we can look as our great exemplar and loving Father?

The gods of the various heathen mythologies stand no comparison with the God of the Bible. The gods of the East and West, alike, are worse, in many ways, than their worshippers. Homer's Gods are only idealized, unearthly, immortal men, subject to nearly all our imperfections and passions, bound by the law of space, needing food and rest, hating and loving from mere caprice, often at variance among themselves, and kindling quarrels to embroil others. They marry and have children, and, in all respects, are only colossal men. The Greek priests were wont to throw the shadow of one of themselves on the cloud of the sacrifices, and proclaim it the form of a god: their whole pantheon was nothing more: mere human shadows thrown on the clouds. The ignorant peasants of the Brocken—the crown of the Hartz mountains, in Saxony—sometimes see, at sunrise or sunset, a gigantic spectre on the mists of the opposite hills, and tremble before what they think a supernatural terror, which, yet, is only their own form, thrown on the masses of morning or evening vapor, by the rising or sinking sun. Such were and are the gods of heathenism, in every country and age. David was a contem-