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# The Religion of Jesus

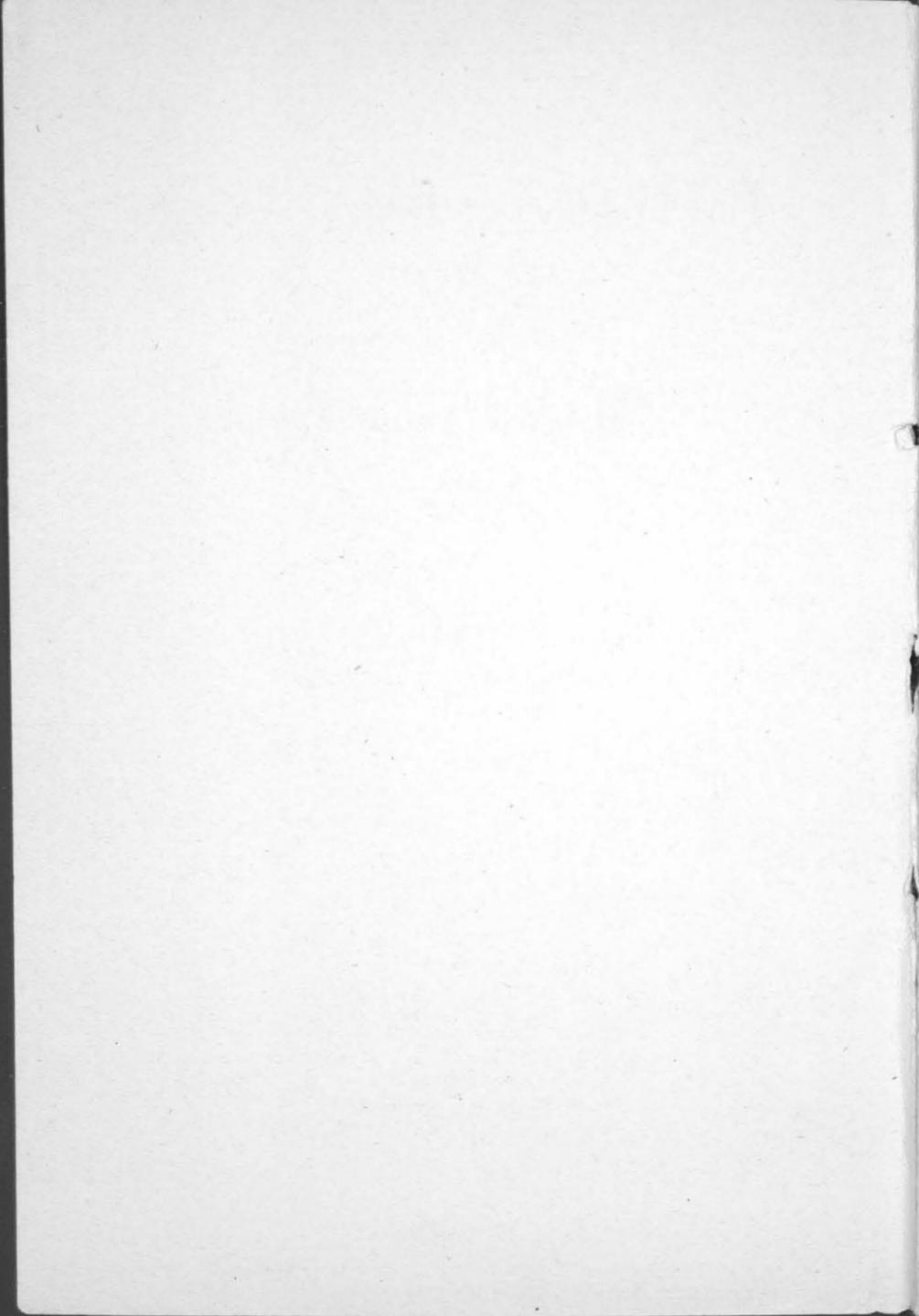


As Exemplified  
in the  
Life and Sermons  
of

## Bishop Phillips Brooks.

By

A. Z. CONRAD,  
D.D.

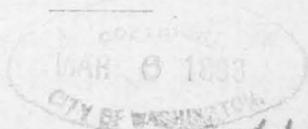


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*returned*  
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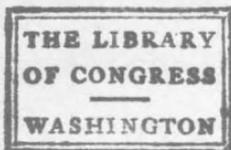


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THE RELIGION OF JESUS AS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE LIFE  
AND SERMONS OF BISHOP PHILLIPS BROOKS.\*

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John xv.: 5. He that abideth in me and I in him, the same  
bringeth forth much fruit.

A deeper hush, a diviner silence, has not often rested upon the Christian world. The burden of universal bereavement lies on humanity's heart. The shadow has fallen on castled walls, lies dark across the drawing room of the palace, and shapes itself on the hearthstone of the humblest cottager. The good of all lands, all creeds, all confessions, all conditions, pause, pray and join the solemn requiem. It is no formal grief. The tears are not wrung out at the command of custom. It is the heart that mourns.

It would be reprehensible not to read the handwriting on the wall of Providence. A weeping nation and a weeping world challenges serious

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\*Sermon Preached in the Old South Church, Worcester, Jan. 29, 1893.

attention, and demands thoughtful interpretation.

God speaks in clear full tones through this universal sorrow. Reverently we read His word to us.

There is no time when the eloquence of gifted orators is more likely to fall short of its purpose than when a truly great man waves a last farewell to earth and goes to his reward. The highest eulogy is reverential silence. A life conspicuous for its Christlikeness, enjoys an exaltation far beyond the reach of words. Bishop Brooks needs not that any should sound his praises. His life was eloquent beyond the most gifted utterance. Not eulogy, but interpretation is the thought central in this discourse. Any true interpretation of the exalted life that has blessed this nation and the world, will find a splendid vindication of the claims of the religion of Jesus Christ, to enable humanity to realize divine ideals.

This universal sorrow is the more remarkable from the fact that the man so deeply mourned was not adorned with the insignia of earthly greatness. It is not, indeed, as though a military genius, mighty in battle, and world-renowned for

his ability to command armed and uniformed men, and lead them on to victory, had fallen. When a man gifted in diplomacy, whose statesmanship conducts nations through great crises, leaves the stage of action, we can understand why the world bows in reverence, and how men gifted in speech vie with each other in the utterance of eloquent tributes and encomiums. When the poet laureate of England closes his eyes in death, his mortal remains are borne to worthy sepulture, and the lovers of the true and beautiful in every land do in sentiment and heart weave perfumed garlands of his own choicest flowers and hang them on the tomb of the departed. America's large-hearted, Christian poet, Whittier, writes "Sundown," "and gathers the drapery of his couch about him, and lies down to pleasant dreams" and to a glorious resurrection, while the hearts of multitudes are torn with a personal bereavement.

But how shall we explain the tender, almost sacred sadness which now pervades all lands, all courts, all classes? How is it that when the pulses of the great good man ceased beating, the

heart of the whole Christian world is so profoundly agitated? How is it possible for one strong soul to become so identified with the interests and affections of millions, that his departure tears the heart tendrils of a multitude? When before has it been seen that a man occupying no office of state had the power to obliterate all ecclesiastical boundary lines, and effect the annihilation of all class distinctions, so that members of the body of Christ in any and every communion should say, "He was ours," and people of all classes should say, "He was our friend," and each individual should be enabled to declare truly: "He loved *me*, therefore I weep?"

We *must* have the secret of this man's prodigious power! We must know from what fountain he drank, from what table he ate, and at whose feet he learned. Our very souls cry out for a revelation of the "mystery of Godliness" outlined in such a life.

He was a Bishop; and a worthier man never wore the vestments of that sacred office. But it is no uncommon thing for Bishops to pass away from earth almost unnoticed. Furthermore,

Phillips Brooks as rector of Trinity Church was as widely known and tenderly loved and as sincerely admired as Bishop Brooks. It was not the superior influence of Trinity Church that gave him celebrity. Indeed, it might rather be said that Trinity Church became famous through association with the name of its distinguished rector.

He was an orator. Yes, though he ignored and defied the written laws recorded by masters of eloquence, and set at naught the usages of the most learned and eloquent, still he was an orator. Great congregations hearkened to his discourses with unabated interest to the final "amen," with absolute absorption, in the man and the message. Who could more completely capture and control vast assemblages of men? Truth poured from his lips in rolling, rushing torrents and carried listening multitudes upon its powerful current. Though every rule of the schools be given to the winds, yet he who by his presence, voice, manner and message can move, persuade, convince and control assembled multitudes, is eloquent.

At the mid-day hour I have stood inextricably wedged in, in the midst of eager, earnest men,

beneath the roof of that venerable temple of God, Trinity Church, New York city. The announcement that Phillips Brooks of Boston was to preach Jesus Christ to dying men, at the hour of high noon, in that historic edifice, sufficed to call multitudes from vocations and avocations of every kind. They thronged through the wide open doors,—merchants, brokers, clerks, mechanics, lawyers from the courts, physicians from the sick room, gamblers from the dives, seamen from the anchored ships, clergymen from their sanctums, men of every class and every station. What a congregation! Look upon their faces! Some furrowed by repeated disappointments; others hardened by long self-indulgences; many in the flush of youthful expectancy; some telling by expression the story of inward unrest; an interrogation stamped upon the faces of not a few, while many faces were illumined with the blessed hope, born of faith. Here were the strongest representatives of the industrial energies of the nation's metropolis. It was a scene never to be forgotten. In attitude of earnest expectation, that great throng of men awaited the appearance

of the justly renowned preacher of truth. Every sitting, every inch of standing room from chancel-rail to the great doors, was occupied. A silence deep and significant fell upon the throng as the courtly Christian man, with the majesty of a king, and the humility of a child of Jesus, moved to the spiral stairway, ascended, and kneeled with hands clasped and eyes lifted heavenward in supplication. Wave after wave of strange, intangible spiritual power rolled over the waiting worshipers. The Christian disciples felt it and praised God. The unbeliever felt it, and powerless to explain it, waited with unusual emotion stirred, what should follow.

In clear, though rapid utterance sounded the announcement of the hymn, which each successive noon for days together was sung by the mid-day worshipers: "Awake, my soul, stretch every nerve." Such singing! The mighty volume rolled through the vast cathedral from door to dome. It sounded like the war-cry of a vast army. Men who had not sung the hymns of the church for years, recalled the scenes and experiences of by-gone days, before money-getting and

godless gaiety became the passion of their lives, and opening their lips, enthusiastically engaged in the service of praise, to the God they had long neglected. Men who had lost and gained in the great industrial race of life, now sang of the "heavenly race" in which all who run are surely crowned.

The text is a sentence from the lips of Jesus. Such preaching! How earnest! How simple and yet how profound! Great as was the man, he hid himself completely behind the message. Men forgot Phillips Brooks as they looked upon the Christ portrayed. He reasoned resistlessly and appealed persuasively, and lifted to the summits of hopeful assurance. The central thought from which he did not even for one brief moment wander was this: "True humanity is realized only through Christ." The dehumanizing influences of sin with consequent inhumanity are forcefully presented. The trumpet blast of warning sounds clear and loud. The humanizing effect of Christianity is demonstrated. Then follows the persuasive appeal to men to adopt the only means of elevation and exaltation. For forty-five

minutes the vast assemblage stands in reverential awe before the man and the message. Here was a revelation of the tremendous power of Christianity on the hearts of men when presented in sublime simplicity. No one could question the deep conviction of the preacher that he was an ambassador of Christ, and that he appreciated the immeasurable worth of the God-sent message.

Yet all this is not enough to explain the deep affection of the religious world for this noble man. American history records the names of scores of men whose impassioned eloquence swayed the multitude as summer winds the standing corn. But many of them died unwept and unhonored by these same multitudes.

When we examine his sermons, we look in vain for anything startling. He was not a theologian. He dealt very little with abstract propositions. Hardly a sermon from his pen is either polemic or apologetic. Ancient, mediæval, and modern "isms" rarely found their way into his recorded thoughts. Theological and philosophical disputations scarcely engaged his attention. Yet he was a deep thinker; but found so much *positive*

truth to preach he had no time for controversy. I open a volume of his sermons and scarcely a page is without a word portrait of Jesus. The distinguishing feature of his sermons was this : they were Christological, Christocentric. Every sermon revolves about one centre and that centre is Jesus Christ. With lucidity remarkable, he portrays Jesus as the world's Redeemer. No one could ever question his loyalty to the living Word. He was not troubled about "higher criticism." He did not think it worth while to engage in defense of the immutable Word, when pseudo-science attacked it, nor did he once condescend to bandy words with loud-mouthed infidels. His consciousness of the urgency of duty is indicated in this, that the message was ever positive, unequivocating, unambiguous, simple, yet almost matchlessly profound. He has been called liberal. But in all his writings no sentence can be found that depreciates the Biblical doctrines of sin, salvation and sanctification. Christ's words to Nicodemus were his words to dying men : "Ye must be born again." He was liberal, but not in any such sense as that in which the word is all

too often employed. His liberality was not laxness. He held tenaciously to fundamentals. His liberality was in the nature of comprehensiveness and loving charity. No knight of the century drew lance more courageously for the truth which fell from the lips of Jesus, yet his warfare was like that of the sun upon the icicle, compelling surrender by the kisses of his rays. When will we learn, as preachers, the immeasurable power of love as a lever to lift?

A few sentences taken at random from his sermons will indicate his estimate of the divine Christ, and the possibilities of humanity:—

“Before the young Christian lie the doctrines of his faith: God’s being, God’s care, Christ’s incarnation, Christ’s atonement, immortality.”

“The man whose God has been far off and cold, sees God in Christ, and loves him with a love which makes life seem worth living, simply that it may be devoted in work for him. This is the power of Christ’s redemption. It transfigures to a man his own soul, and his brethren and God, and seeing them in the new light of Christ, the man lifts up his head and his old tasks are altered.”

“Make Christianity a personal knowledge of Christ, and then with ever new enticements, each

little that he knows opening to him something more to know of the infinite personal life, obedience feeding love, and love stimulating obedience, he presses on in the never stale, never weary ambition of knowing Christ."

"Every man needs not merely a God to worship, but also, taking the fact which meets us everywhere of an estrangement by sin, between mankind and God, every man needs some power to turn him and bring him back; some Reconciler, some Saviour for his soul."

"While you are living a wordly and a wicked life, letting all sacred things go, caring for no duty, serving no God, there is another self, your possibility, the thing that you might be, the thing that God gave you a chance to be; and that self, wronged and trampled upon by your recklessness, escapes and flies to God with its appeal: 'O come and help me. I am dying. I am dying. Give me Thyself for Father. Give me Thy Son for Saviour. Give me Thy Spirit for my Guide.'"

"Here is the Gospel in its fullness. Here is God for you to worship. Here is Christ to save you. Here is the Comforter. Have you asked for them?"

"I only spread before you the great offer of Christ, wherein he promises to save our souls

and make them healthy, so that out of them nothing but healthy fruits can grow."

"You look on high, and God is too mighty. You look close by your side and Jesus Christ the God incarnate has the very words you need."

Not only were his sermons filled with Christ, but they overflowed with *hopeful assurance*. The power of the religion of Jesus to develop nobility and true manliness was a favorite theme with him. But full of truth as they are, and intellectually and morally stimulating though all must acknowledge them, still the sermons of this departed man of God will not account for the universal reverence in which his memory is held.

We turn to the prominent characteristics of the man, and inquire of them for the secret of his greatness.

His lack of ostentation was noteworthy. Only a truly great man can be sublimely simple. Simplicity as we see it illustrated in Jesus Christ, both in manner and in teaching, is never fully reached by man, but when we see men striving after it and faintly approximating it, we see genuine greatness.

Unswerving fidelity to truth was another conspicuous fact and factor of his life. Broad as were his sympathies, and deep as was his love, they did not blind his eyes for a moment to the fact that truth is supreme. He loved mankind too well to preach a false doctrine or hold out a false hope. His interest in the well-being of his fellow men was too great to permit him to offer to them any substitute for the salvation of Jesus, and the sanctifying power of the Spirit. In urging men to the attainment of high and holy things, he never forgot to offer the ever living Christ as the help which man must have to realize divine ideals.

Again : he had a most exalted idea of service. One of his favorite texts was : " The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." He not only preached from the text, but he *lived* its suggestion and exhortation. Whosoever adopts such a text as a life monitor, will be found in tenderest relations with the sad and lowly of this world, and their friends will be heart-friends, loyal and lasting. Humanity may well weep when ministering hands lie nerveless on the breast, and when ministering lips may no

longer utter the soothing word or the life-giving truth ; when feet swift to bear relief to the suffering and courage to the despairing, are cold in death.

The world is full of mercenaries and mendicants, but the true spirit of ministry is not common. To be effectual as a spiritual magnet, the heart must abound in love of service. It is when services are the spontaneous expression of deep love, that they become a power to lift men from their lower to their higher selves.

Service of the nature of servitude neither renovates nor reforms, but service bearing the label of love imparts hope and leads Christward.

Capaciousness of soul was another distinguishing characteristic of the late Bishop. He was too courteous to wound the feelings of those with whom he might differ upon subordinate matters. It was his true Christian courtesy that endeared him to Christian people of every communion. He was larger than any humanly constructed creed or ritual. With him righteousness was first and ritualism was second. He refused to be held in the superficial bands of High-Church ceremo-

nialism. His whole career and counsel uttered anew the inspired saying: "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." It was this soul-capaciousness that caused him to be charged by certain of the High-Church party with ecclesiastical laxity. He was a Christian first, a churchman afterward. "*Christ first*," said and lived this noble servant of God. "That in all things *He* might have the pre-eminence." He recognized the true brotherhood of all who serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Not once did he deign to reply to acrimonious criticism, when he was a candidate for the bishopric of the diocese of Massachusetts. He interpreted the utterances of his brethren with the largest charity.

Unbounded hope lived in his soul. It was a heaven-born and heaven-developed hope. His expectancy was no blind, sentimental anticipation of good. The base was deep and broad and strong. His hope was the offspring of eternal truth, which had become a part of his very being. He could say: "I know in whom I have believed." "Nevertheless the foundations of God standeth sure."

His belief in the boundlessness of human possibilities awakened in his heart an intense enthusiasm for the lost. As the sculptor sees his angel in the rough, unhewn block of marble, so he saw in the coarsest, most depraved character, a *possible* Christian man or woman.

Without this belief in human possibility, large enthusiasm in proclaiming the salvation of Jesus is not possible. Unless we can lift the golden chalice to the lips of the thirsty, believing that it is verily the elixir of life, capable of satisfying the deepest yearnings of the immortal soul, our half-heartedness will insure the rejection of the offered cup of salvation. On the contrary, when with all our hearts we believe Jesus Christ can revive the dead in sin, and will heal the gaping wounds made by transgression, the intensity of our desire that souls shall partake of the blessings of salvation will become a very passion with us, and wheresoever we go, humanity will see and recognize in us a brother and a friend.

The essence of every appeal uttered by Phillips Brooks was this: "Friend, come up higher." He believed that evil must be overcome, if over-

come at all, with good. He believed that the mightiest blows against error are struck, when truth is imparted and implanted. Boundless confidence in the leavening power of truth would lead many men, whose tongues are given over to perpetual and violent attack of that which they recognize as wrong, to such a persuasive and persistent advocacy of truth, that right would conquer and the evils would necessarily abdicate the throne. Reforms are more certainly advanced by the dissemination of truth than by abusive attack of those with whom we may differ regarding the evils to be overthrown.

With such a record—stainless, noble, manly—no one can wonder that the influences of the life were world-wide in reach and intense in power. Such qualities are a product! But of what? What vine can produce these Eshcol clusters? When you seek the explanation of such a character, the secret is to be found behind every external manifestation. All the superior qualities to which we have alluded, are but the expression of something hidden behind them all and acting as their progenitor. They are the water of the

fountain whose sweetness is not to be explained by the flow, but by conditions and causes of the flow. There was a sermon behind every sermon he preached. His words were not the significant thing about his sermons. The spell-bound multitudes who hung upon his words and departed to their vocations in deep thought, were conscious of a subtle something which lay hold of their souls. It was not the sermon as such. The sermon was but a vehicle carrying conviction to the sinner ; it was an anchor of steel to the storm-tossed ; a balm of healing to the wounded ; a thrill of joy to the disconsolate ; resolution to the discouraged,—and Heaven to the weary and oppressed.

It was the personality behind every act and utterance that gave them such sacred significance.

Phillips Brooks was a conspicuous illustration of the sublimity of a *sanctified personality*. *His prodigious power lay in his Christfulness*. I employ the word because no other quite expresses the idea. It was his Christfulness that made him a universal preacher. He walked with God until the image of the Master shone in his face. He communed with the Son of Man until his

whole soul became illuminated with light from the Throne. Infidelity, agnosticism, theosophy, indeed each and every form of unbelief is absolutely impotent to develop such a character. Nothing ever has or ever can produce such a man as Phillips Brooks but faith on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Not words, but personality determine influence. A sanctified personality can no more be hidden than the sun can refuse to shine. It is as necessary for Christfulness to heal and help as for the magnet to lift. Whenever Christfulness can be truly predicted of an immortal soul, then emanations of spiritual power are as constant as the love of God. Christ, in the presence of the multitude, was touched by one diseased. Instantly he recognized "that virtue had gone out of him." In like manner, a Christful soul imparts virtue to whatsoever it touches.

But we must go back one step more and ask the secret of Christfulness. Here is the key to unlock the mystery.

"He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." A soul engrafted into the true vine is vital with the vine's nature.

Union of man with God is the most blessed of all truths. It is thus that the dead becomes the living; the deformed and malformed, the complete; the invalid, the convalescent; the weak, strong; the impure, holy; the retrogressive, progressive, and humanity realizes its most exalted ideals. A blow at Christ smites virtue in the face. Denunciation of Christianity is expressed contempt for the one thing that makes life worth living and enables a true humanity to be experienced. To reject Jesus is to reject the religion of Jesus, for they are one. To remain separated from Christ is to prevent a fruitfulness which alone can exalt the soul.

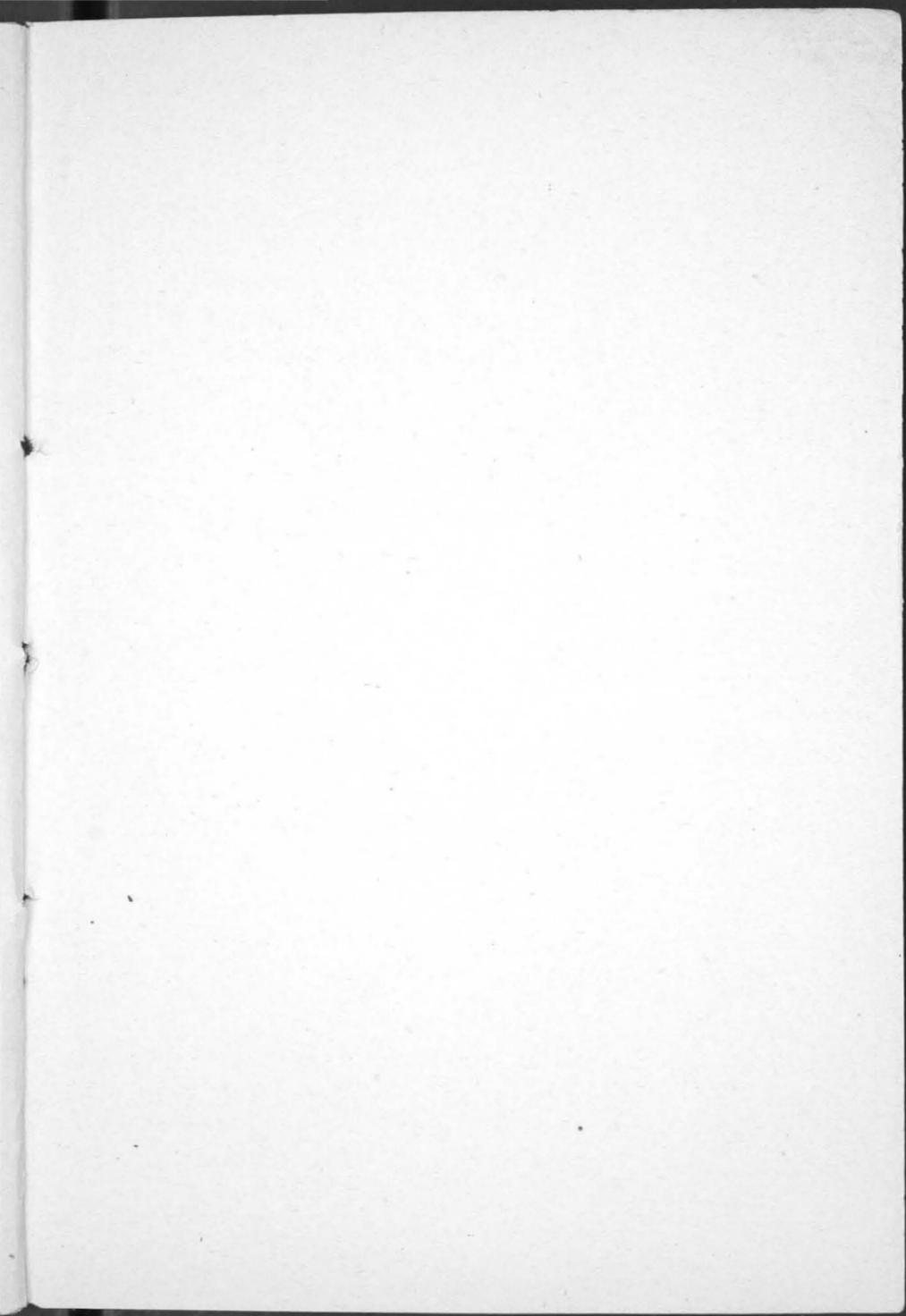
If you admire stalwart knighthood and soul capaciousness and immensity of love, know that these are the fruits of the branch that feeds on Christ, the world's Saviour. The soul is engrafted by faith.

It is the religion of Jesus that produces Christful men. Nothing else can accomplish so stupendous a task. A saved and sanctified personality will make your life a mighty fact and factor in society, and when summoned to higher services

“beyond the river,” your death will be like the breaking of the alabaster-box of sacred story, filling the world with the sweet and sanctifying fragrance of blessed truth. The secret of spiritual, eternal exaltation is CHRISTFULNESS.

“ In the secret of His presence  
How my soul delights to hide ;  
Oh how precious are the lessons  
Which I learn at Jesus’ side ;  
Earthly cares can never vex me,  
Neither trials lay me low,  
For when Satan comes to tempt me,  
To the secret place I go.

Would you like to know the sweetness  
Of the secret of the Lord?  
Go and hide beneath His shadow,  
This shall then be your reward ;  
And whene’er you leave the silence  
Of that happy meeting place,  
You must mind, and bear the image  
Of the Master in your face.”



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