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The Power of Silence

Horatio Dresser

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Excerpt: The World Of Manifestation ONE truth was clear at every stage in the foregoing discussion. Every atom, every event, every soul in the universe is imbued with the immanent Presence—life is a constant sharing of divine power. Whatever be the starting-point in our interpretation of experience, whether in some truth of the reason, some cherished insight of the inner life, or a fact in the outer world, there is no stopping-place short of the conclusion that God is the immanent Reality, the sufficient Ground of all existence. We may evade the point or deviate into agnosticism, by giving undue regard to the limitations of finite consciousness. But our deepest nature is never satisfied until we attain a conception which meets the ultimate needs of thought. To be sure, we found it necessary to distinguish between a logical argument for the ultimate Ground of things, and the thought of God as the object of religious consciousness. We discarded all formal attempts to prove that God exists, and rejected the popular argument from causation. But this presented no difficulty, since we are not here so much concerned with the philosophical idea of Ground, with the idea of God as transcendent, as with the immanent relation between God and His world. The modern thought of nature and of human experience demands that relationship at every point, without regard to time or space. Yet to find God in everything, is not to conclude that one finds only God. The experiences of the inner life are the severest tests. For if we are able to maintain the reverential attitude of sonship we may enter into the divine love with all joy, yet avoid the pitfalls of mysticism. Finally, we betray our real belief by what we do. To trust, to be profoundly faithful, is indeed to show that the divine immanence is a reality in our lives. By its fruits shall the degree of our love be known. The adjustment of the inner life to the thought of God is thus the first great step in the present inquiry. The mere argument, the theory of the divine immanence, is secondary. The essential is the attitude we adopt, the effect upon conduct. Unless we make this profoundest of all adaptations, we cannot expect to enter into the fullness of the other two great relationships, the adjustment to nature and to man. To regard nature, for example, in the light of the divine immanence is to take a vastly different view from that of ordinary thinking. It is the custom, nowadays, to trace the immanent connections of things, to look back of each event to its immediate physical environment as its cause. This line of inquiry is doubtless in the right direction. But it is apt to stop short of the profoundest interests in human life. The ideal of mechanical science is to describe every event in terms of exactly measurable forces, and it is doubtless a convenient fiction to regard nature as an independent, self-operating mechanism. Yet it is important to bear in mind the entire inadequacy of this working hypothesis. Above the realm of the mechanical there is the domain of the organic and the realm of the conscious. The mechanical principle is strained to the utmost to make it include the organic, and within certain limits it is no doubt applicable. This partial success should not, however, blind us to the fact that there is a higher order of existence where all quantitative explanations fail, where thought must turn from the measurable to the qualitative, and from what merely is to what ought to be. The aim of the present chapter is not to propound a complete theory of nature, but to make certain observations which bear on our interpretation of the inner life. From the point of view of ultimate values, the physical universe is not the total universe, but is the most objective, outer portion of the divine order. The highest type of reality is spiritual.

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Brian Alexander:

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