

# **THOUGHTS FOR THE HEART AND LIFE**

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Thoughts for the Heart and Life by John Page Hopps

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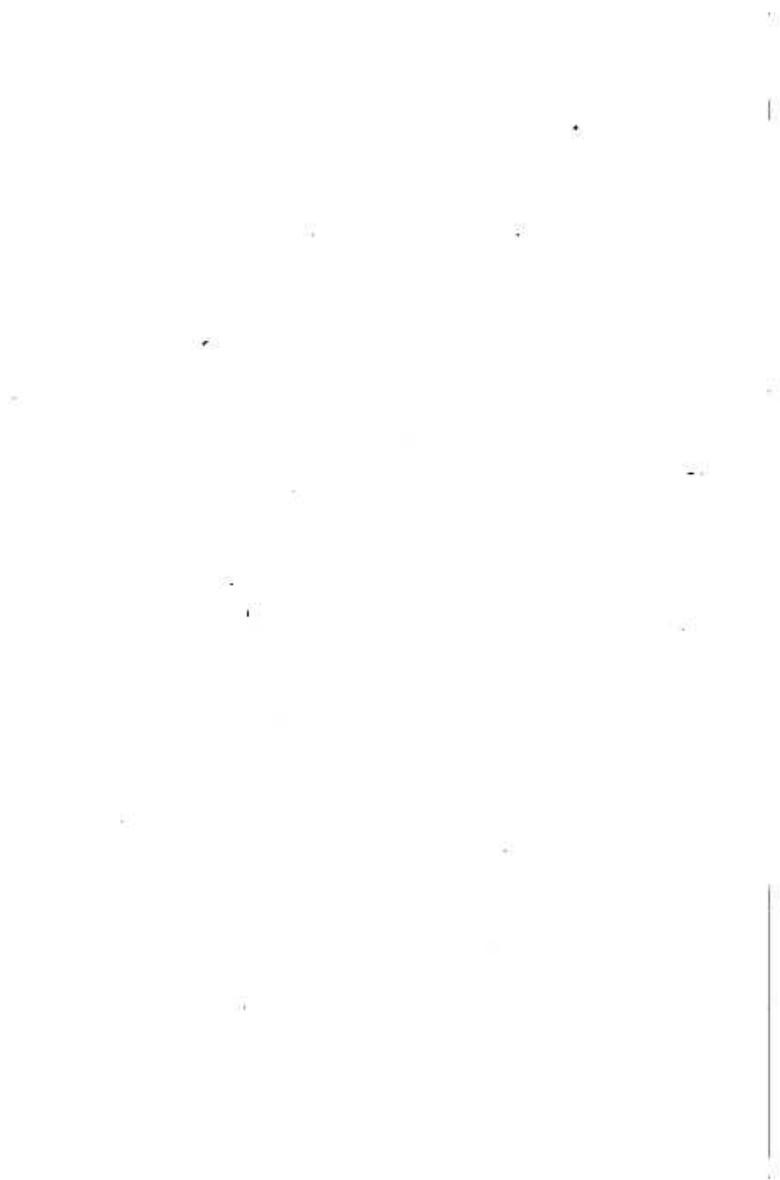
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E. T. WHITFIELD, 178, STRAND.  
1862.

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To those who feel that life is too short, and the art of it too long, to spend much time among the controversies of the schools: to those, also, who are striving to find, amid all disorder and change, and the bewildering cries of men, the true idea of life, and the reconciling thought of God, these few "Thoughts for the Heart and Life" are here given: not because they have any new thing to tell, for truth is the same "yesterday, to-day, and for ever," but with the hope that they may help inquiring and earnest minds to "feel after God, if haply they may find Him," until the beautiful and blessed revelation shall also dawn upon them, that "He is not far from every one of us."



## THOUGHTS FOR THE HEART AND LIFE.

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**T**HE heart of man is a revelation from God, but it is dumb until the Spirit of God is felt to breathe upon its lips, and then it speaks, as when, at the opening of the gates of dawn, the lips of Memnon sighed and sang, or the sweet melodies of a world awoke. For the Spirit of God is in every heart, waiting until the soul shall long for its revealings, and then its breath of life comes sweeping over the darkness and the sloth, and the dumb heart is silent never more. But this awakening of the soul can only come when the "secret of the Lord," that lies hidden there, is touched by the holy finger, and moved by the mighty breath of God. Hence no untruth, and no half truth, can awaken the true life of the soul: and things that come in the guise of truth, that do not consciously appeal to the soul, and startle it into life and freedom, are never to be received as truths: for the "secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."



When God comes in to utter His will, and to disclose the truth to His children, His summons is ever, "Come now, and let us reason together:" and when He calls upon our hearts to receive any truth, He ever asks us to see its fitness, its beauty, and its worth. We are called, moreover, to "hold fast by our confidence:" and it is evident there can be no confidence where there is no conviction; so that nothing can be received by the earnest and God-seeking heart that is repugnant to its better instincts.

There are those, indeed, who say that Revelation is the disclosing of that which we know not, and could not know, and which we have utterly to take on trust; but this is at best only partly true, because nothing can be a true revelation to the heart that does not appeal to it as being true—that does not awaken in it a response, and a glad reply; for then only can the heart be assured before the truth, and only then can it know of the doctrine (as the Saviour said it should), whether it is from God. So that Revelation is not entirely a disclosure taken on trust, but a disclosure that appeals to the heart, and entrenches itself in the strengths of its concurrence. And if any one should object to this as being a slight upon the Infinite Mind, to say that our poor human heart should be the judge of truth, and never receive as a truth that which it cannot feel to be so, there are two

things that may be urged in reply. First, we are to remember that God made our hearts what they are, and that, in so far as we are earnest, He has informed them with His Spirit, and moved them with the inspiration of His own all-glorious life. This we are sure of, that God is the God of our hearts; but we are not so sure of any outward or external disclosure: surely, then, it is better to follow the light of a known revealing, and a settled truth, than the doubtful one of what is not proven, and cannot be, unless the heart utters its concurrent "yea." And again, surely it were a more glorious thing for God to win the warm concurrence of a living soul, than to compel the cold assent of a blind obedience. And when we find that this is just the fact—that God ever delights to win the judgment, and to gain men to perceive and know the truth, that they may hold to it, and abide by it, then are we bound to conclude that belief of the truth is not submission to authority, but conviction resulting from perception; and that everything which appeals to the mind as a thing to be believed in, cannot be so believed in until it finds an answer in the heart, and something in the moral nature to answer thereto. For example: if I am told to believe, as a truth from God, that it is in the great purpose of His will to leave to eternal pain many little children, who fell in Adam, and were no

elect in Christ, my heart at once rises up against the ghastly thought—my whole moral nature rebels against it, and I do well, therefore, to say, it is not God's truth, but the Devil's lie, and must ever remain so to me. Here, it is evident, my moral nature and the instincts of my heart, are to be, for me, my invariable guide. So with any other word that professes to come from God, and to be God's; I am to appeal to my better nature—to my moral instincts, which are, for me, above all things—above even signs and wonders; for if these were wrought in attestation of what my heart rose up against, I am bound to believe my heart rather than the wonder: or, at best, I am bound to wait and suspend my belief until I am better informed, and my heart can say "yea." For the conscience and the heart are greater verities than miracles; and no number of miracles worked in attestation of an immoral or plainly untrue thing, could or ought to enforce belief in it, for we know that our moral instincts are from God, and as for miracles, it is at least open to doubt in every case, *à priori*, whether they are true. And even in respect of the miracles of Jesus Christ, every one of which we may hold to be real and true, it is to be distinctly asserted that we are not to believe in His teachings because of His miracles, but in the miracles because of the teachings.