

**THE AFFIRMATIVE INTELLECT,
AN ACCOUNT OF
THE ORIGIN AND MISSION
OF THE AMERICAN SPIRIT**

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The affirmative intellect, an account of the origin and mission of the American spirit by Charles Ferguson

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CHARLES FERGUSON

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AN ACCOUNT OF
THE ORIGIN AND MISSION
OF THE AMERICAN SPIRIT**

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THE AFFIRMATIVE INTELLECT

*An Account of the Origin and
Mission of the American Spirit*

BY
CHARLES FERGUSON
Author of "The Religion of Democracy"

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY

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The shout of the battle dies away. We are tired of the heroism of crowds. One crowd is no better than another crowd, and never was better. The only availing victories are those that one man wins against the mob.

Every man's body is environed with a sacred precinct; and every fine, free life is a challenge to all the world. To be a friend to another is to defy him. And it is death to surrender to a friend—fataler than to any enemy.

The greatest man is the Man that is nearest—and farthest away. My arm is around His neck, yet I have never touched Him and dare not. He has broken bread with me familiarly, and I have been filled with awe, as if I had seen God.

INTRODUCTION

The real battles of history—those that have issues—are those waged between the men of affirmative and creative intellect on one side and the men of negative and passive intellect on the other. The creative intellect is that which is dominated by the ideal—never for a moment abandoning the heart's desire and the inner law of humanity. The passive intellect is that which is cowed by the appearance of things and prostrated to an external law. On both sides there are those called *a priorists* and those called *a posteriorists*—on both sides men of letters, men of science, and men of affairs.

On the side of the creative intellect there are craftsmen, and there are men who spend their lives over microscopes and in laboratories, side by side with the makers of statues and sermons. And on the side of the negative intellect may be found theologians who postpone to a book the

Introduction

The central drama of history is Christianity, which is in its broadest aspect simply the attempt to supersede the old world social order, governed by an external authority and the prepossessions of the passive intellect, by a new world-order governed by an internal authority—the faith of the affirmative spirit.

The meaning and use of the historic Church is that it has served as a mighty causeway between the old order and the new—between theocracy and democracy. It belongs to both the old and the new. For a thousand years it gestated the soul of the West in the womb of the East. The very nature of the Church, in its medieval constitution, was contradiction; it could not otherwise have done its work. Every dogma of the Church was a proclamation of liberty framed in the language of slaves. Every sacrament was a pledge of equality, making its difficult appeal in the acceptable symbols of privilege and caste.

The inner logic of the Church's great system of administration was not the permanent separation of the sacred from the secular, but the winning of a new polarity of social organization.