

**SPIRIT AND LIFE:
THOUGHTS
FOR TO-DAY**

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Spirit and life: thoughts for to-day by Amory H. Bradford

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AMORY H. BRADFORD

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THOUGHTS FOR TO-DAY

BY

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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, MONTCLAIR, N. J.

One accent of the Holy Ghost
The heedless world hath never lost.
The Problem. — EMERSON.

NEW YORK
FORDS, HOWARD, & HULBERT

1888

TO MY FATHER,

Benjamin F. Bradford, D.D.,

WHO THROUGH A LONG PUBLIC MINISTRY, AND STILL
MORE IN THE CIRCLE OF HIS HOME, HAS
ILLUSTRATED "THE SPIRIT AND
THE LIFE," THIS VOLUME
IS AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED.

PREFACE.

THE most important of experiences is that which leads to a rational and credible idea of God. This cannot be taught in the schools. No man or body of men have authority to delineate it; the largest and noblest conception of the Deity ever possessed, even though imparted by revelation, has been at the best but a "broken light." And yet, on clear views of God hang the glory and usefulness of human life. If there is no God, there is no hope, life is a dream, and he is happiest who knows no waking. If God exists but has no care for men, or is interested only in the universe and not in individuals, then for us it were as well if there were no God.

The sermons in this volume revolve around two thoughts: (1) God has manifested himself in a form which can be understood by men. The Incarnation is not simply a dogma of theology, but something demanded by the heart of man, and—spiritually discerned—appealing to his

highest reason. It gives the only adequate conception of humanity, and the only definite idea of God. The Incarnation is "the light of men" concerning Deity, duty, destiny, and is the standard by which all pretended revelations are to be tested. It has relation to all time, and to all the universe. The Being disclosed in the Christ is the God of all worlds and of the eternities, and all things are in his hands and will be forever. The Incarnation, in short, condenses all that is revealed of God, and of his purpose concerning man. (2) The Deity is never far from humanity; he is always in contact with our spirits, and "the spiritual life" is the life of God manifesting itself through the spirits of men. The Holy Spirit is not "an influence," but God himself in spiritual operation and manifestation. The Christ declared that his work would be continued and completed by the Spirit which would abide forever in Christian hearts. This is fundamental. God is in living relation with all who submit their wills to his will, as it is made known in conscience and in Christ. Those who do that need no human teacher: they are led and inspired by the Spirit of God; they "have an anointing from the Holy One."

These sermons are none of them polemical. Indeed, controversy about the infinite and eternal among those who, however much they may differ among themselves, are all moving in the same

direction and seeking the same ends, is sheer absurdity. If any good has resulted from the "battles of the theologies" in the past, it has been only because God has made the wrath of man to praise him.

Without attempting any orderly discussion of dogmatic themes, I have brought together here a few of the results of a pastor's practical labor, and offer in these discourses something of what a patient study of God's Word and a reverent scrutiny of his works—"the two revelations"—have suggested to me concerning the Spirit and the Life. The fact that these partial views of truth have helped many in a narrow field to more satisfying conceptions of God, and to a more constant reliance on his Spirit in their search for truth, and in their attempt to face bravely the conflict and mystery of life, is the only excuse for offering them to an audience which may be larger and may be smaller.

Of the following sermons, the four on "The Holy Spirit" and the one entitled "The Appeal to Experience" have already appeared in *The Christian Union*. "The Vicarious Principle in the Universe" was read before the American Institute of Christian Philosophy, and "The Conditions of Spiritual Sight" was the first sermon preached before that Institute. Both have been published in *Christian Thought*. "The Theological Thought of our Time" is the substance of the