

**FUNDAMENTAL  
RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLES  
IN BROWNING'S POETRY**

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Fundamental Religious Principles in Browning's Poetry by W. D. Weatherford

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**W. D. WEATHERFORD**

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Fundamental Religious  
Principles

IN

**Browning's Poetry**

By W. D. Weatherford, M.A.

*Submitted to the Faculty  
of Vanderbilt University  
as a Thesis for the Degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy.*

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## FOREWORD.

ROBERT BROWNING was one of the greatest seers as he was one of the foremost poets of his time. His poetry is a study of the deeper problems of life. These were more to him than all the forms of art. God, Christ, the World, Man, Suffering, Sin—these are in reality the subjects of his thought. They emerge everywhere in his poems. Though he was not professedly a theologian, he has thought more vitally and written more helpfully on the problems of theology than most of the theology makers. Browning saw life. He saw it sanely. He saw it deeply. His starting point was life, his data, the experiences of the human soul. Upon these he reasoned, free from the biases of theological training and the narrowing restrictions of theological method. He touches the great vital truths, and he touches them with a vital touch. He has therefore vital messages on the fundamental problems and principles. His messages will reach and help those who do not read theology—and those who do.

Mr. Weatherford has made a thorough study of Browning's works, has gathered up his views on the great fundamentals, has arranged them in systematic

order, and has put them in plain and lucid prose. Browning interpreted nature, man, life; and Mr. Weatherford has interpreted Browning's interpretation. The result is a fresh and breathing statement of the reality and personality of God, the divine-human and the human-divine of Christ, and an elucidation of the problem of evil—physical and moral—suffering and sin—which, itself out of the ordinary, affords relief and comfort of no ordinary sort.

We most heartily commend this little book to all those who want help in understanding Browning and those who want help in understanding the "mystery of this unintelligible world."

GROSS ALEXANDER.

Nashville, Tenn., May, 1907.

NOTE.—The references in the book are to the Cambridge Edition of Browning's works, in twelve volumes, edited by Porter and Clarke.

## INTRODUCTION.

It is the glory and good of Art,  
That Art remains the one way possible  
Of speaking truth, to mouths like mine at least.<sup>1</sup>

✓ THERE is in the heart of every man a philosophy of life which is struggling for expression. This philosophy, sometimes crude, sometimes more finished, is perpetually expressing itself in the life work of the individual man. The long-drawn dissertation of the philosopher is his attempt to say how he sees life. The exquisite workmanship of the artist is but the outpouring on the canvas of that ideal of life which absorbs his heart. Not less than these, and even more of necessity than either of them, ✓ every great poem becomes a more or less perfect expression of some part of the poet's philosophy.<sup>1</sup> The deeper and more absorbing that philosophy, the more difficult will be its expression. It is difficult in that the forms of

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<sup>1</sup>"The Book and the Ring," VII. 329.