

DOMINANT IDEAS AND CORRECTIVE PRINCIPLES

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Dominant Ideas and Corrective Principles by Charles Gore

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CHARLES GORE

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BY
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PREFACE

This little book opens with three addresses delivered during a visitation of the diocese of Oxford in the early summer of this year. The first two addresses are devoted to maintaining that the dominant ideas of present-day democracy are fundamentally Christian ideas, but that Christianity is needed to supply the correctives of these ideas as popularly current. The weakness of the democratic movement is that it is much more occupied with claims than with responsibilities, and shows itself as a whole too little conscious of the moral difficulties involved in realizing its ideals. It exhibits but little sense of how profound a claim real democracy must make upon the average citizen—not only upon his intelligence, but also upon his character. It demands not only deepened and prolonged education, but also profound and widespread moral reformation. Jealousy, dishonesty, slackness, and lust appear to be as prevalent in the circles of "labour" as in any others; and their prevalence does, I fear, threaten democracy with

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failure, unless the message "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" receives a quite new welcome on a very wide scale. In other words, there is no real hope of the establishment of a true human fellowship without a greatly deepened and widened sense of the moral claim of God upon the individual.

The third part of the charge puts forward proposals for reconstruction in religious education; which, if they are to be judged aright, must be taken as a whole.

The addresses which form chapters iv-vi justify, I think, their inclusion in the volume by the kinship of v to i and ii, and of iv and vi to iii. Chapter vii is included only because there appears to be need for it.

C. OXON:

CUDDESDON

August, 1918.

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DOMINANT IDEAS AND CORRECTIVE PRINCIPLES

I

DOMINANT IDEAS¹

My Brethren of the Clergy and of the Laity,

Since my last Visitation in the autumn of 1914, this country has been involved in the most awful war which the record of history presents. It has taxed, as nothing in our experience or in the experience of our forefathers has ever taxed, the vital energies of the nation. It has so occupied our attention that it has been difficult to think of anything else. And it is still being waged with no end in sight and its issues uncertain. We were bound to enter upon the war, and we are bound to fight it through, in the sacred cause of human liberty. But in the process the very foundations of our long and slowly-built-up civilization seem to be

¹ A charge delivered at the Bishop's Visitation of the Diocese of Oxford in May and June, 1918. It consisted of this and the two following addresses.

threatened. "Men's hearts are failing them for fear and for looking after those things that are coming on the earth."

What effect is this vast catastrophe producing in the ideas and habits of men—especially in their religious and moral ideas and habits? In this diocese our social conditions have not been as violently changed as in some other parts of the country. But the changes are still great. Oxford is a quite different city from of old. Many of our rural districts have been transformed in their interests and occupations by the planting in the midst of them of military camps or factories or stores; we come upon gangs of German prisoners or Chinese labourers in our quiet country places: refugees from London have crowded up our towns and villages; everywhere the absence of the younger men makes our villages sad places to live in; we are almost all working harder, and often at unfamiliar tasks; we are "eating our bread by weight and with carefulness";¹ the world is full of anxious and bereaved hearts.

What religious and moral changes, then, is the war bringing about among us? Almost nowhere do I hear of what could be called a wide and deep religious revival such as might

¹ Ezekiel iv. 16.