

**CHRISTIAN SELF-CULTURE;
OR, THE ORIGIN AND
DEVELOPMENT OF A
CHRISTIAN LIFE**

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Christian Self-Culture; Or, the Origin and Development of a Christian Life by Leonard Bacon

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LEONARD BACON

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*To Rev. Leonard Bacon D.D.
with the Publisher's compliments.*

CHRISTIAN SELF-CULTURE

OR THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT
OF A CHRISTIAN LIFE.

BY

LEONARD BACON.

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P R E F A C E.

THE author of this book has had a long experience in the ministry of the gospel. As he looks back to the time when he entered on that ministry, and inquires of himself what progress he has made in the knowledge of the gospel, he finds that in nothing has the habit of his mind undergone a greater change, than in his sense of the freedom with which he may offer salvation to men in the name of Christ. Year after year, without becoming conscious of any deviation from those views of Christian doctrine which are commonly recognised as "evangelical," he has been acquiring a more enlarged and unembarrassed conception of the gospel, as opening a way in which any man who will can be saved. Surely, if there be any first principle in Christianity, which is to be held at all hazards, and which no theological system or theory may be permitted to darken, it is the principle that salvation from sin, and from the

death which is the wages of sin, is offered, frankly and without equivocation, to all men.

This book, therefore, regards the beginning and progress of the Christian life from that point of view to which the author has been brought by his experience in the ministry of the gospel, as well as by his study of the Scriptures. It assumes that in the case of every reader, whoever he may be, the beginning of a new life is possible by the grace of God in Christ. It assumes that every man may avail himself of all those offers and promises which the gospel sets before him ; may accept and appropriate the offered forgiveness of sins ; may act on the assurance that God is willing to give the Holy Spirit in answer to prayer ; may confidently trust in Christ's presence and friendship ; may immediately undertake to follow Christ, striving to overcome his own selfish and unbelieving habits, and hoping to get the victory. Therefore, it offers to the reader, not a psychological explanation of the change which takes place in conversion, nor any metaphysical disquisition about the will, but only some practical counsels for the beginning and progress of a Christian life. If it is to do any good, it must be read, not for theological speculation and discussion, nor with the expectation that it will produce its effect by some impression on the feelings, but for the practical purpose of Christian self culture.

It should not be forgotten that in this book the Christian life is considered only in one aspect. The Christian life is the life of one who, at the call of God, under the mediation and leadership of Christ, and in reliance on the promise of the Holy Spirit, has undertaken to be a new creature in Christ, to be progressively transformed by the renewing of his mind, to train himself in and for the service of God, and so to make the most of himself as a living soul whose chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him for ever. Considered in this aspect, it is Christian self-culture. Considered in another aspect, it is Christian experience; and in that aspect it has often been described and analysed, with careful discrimination between the genuine and the false. Let not this book, because it treats only of Christian self-culture, be considered as denying or doubting the reality of Christian experience. Christian self-culture, earnestly undertaken in reliance on the grace of God, and diligently pursued, will involve in its progress all that is essential to a full experience of the gospel as a quickening and transforming power.

With these explanations the author sends forth his work upon its errand, praying, and asking the prayers of others, that God's blessing may attend the reading of it.