

**A VIEW AT THE FOUNDATIONS:
OR, FIRST CAUSES OF CHARACTER
AS OPERATIVE BEFORE BIRTH,
FROM HEREDITARY AND
SPIRITUAL SOURCES**

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A View at the Foundations: Or, First Causes of Character as Operative before Birth, from Hereditary and Spiritual Sources by Woodbury M. Fernald

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WOODBURY M. FERNALD

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First Causes of Character,

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SPIRITUAL SOURCES.

BEING A TREATISE ON THE ORGANIC STRUCTURE AND QUALITY OF
THE HUMAN SOUL, AS DETERMINED BY PRE-NATAL CON-
DITIONS IN THE PARENTAGE AND ANCESTRY, &
HOW FAR WE CAN DIRECT AND
CONTROL THEM.

BY WOODBURY M. FERNALD,

Author of "God in his Providence," "Compendium and Life of
Swedenborg," etc.

"That he might seek a godly seed." — Gal. ii. 15.

BOSTON:

WM. V. SPENCER, 134 WASHINGTON STREET.

1865.

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TO

ALL THE MARRIED,

BUT PARTICULARLY TO

Those who contemplate entering that Holy Union,

This Little Treatise

IS RELIGIOUSLY INSCRIBED.

NOTE TO THE READER.

THE subject of this Treatise is so manifestly important, and may lead to results so vital and profound, that if any persons wish to communicate with the author, by the presentation of any new case, or particular facts, or to make any suggestions, or point out any errors, especially with reference to future editions and enlargements of this work, he would be very happy to have them do so.

PREFACE.

"In the biography of eminent men, great care has generally been taken to show at what school or college they were educated, under what able professor, and the particular course of study pursued. Yet how unimportant are these facts, when we reflect that a vast number of men, of only common capacities, pass through the same college, under the same able professors, and pursue the same course of study, without having been raised above mediocrity? The inference then is, that the biographer must go farther back than education, to elicit the true cause which produced this pre-eminence in the subject of his memoir. And to what glorious results might not such inquiry lead—probably to the important result of the mental and physical improvement of the whole human race. *And he who can establish the practicability of such improvement, will have bestowed upon the world the choicest legacy ever bequeathed to humanity.*"*

In regard to the phrase, "Moral and Intellectual Qualities Transmissible," it has been objected by some, that it is not strictly true. It is not the very, identical, actual character of the man, that is transmissible to his children, but *proclivities* to that same character. We acknowledge a degree of truth in this: at the same time, it is such proclivity as, to a degree, inevitably insures the character, and may be said to be, perhaps, more strictly, the natural ground or foundation upon which a man builds his own more personal and spiritual character, and into which is inseminated the finer and higher essen-

* Intellectual and Moral Qualities Transmissible. New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1843.

ces. It amounts, therefore, to the same thing in effect, whether we say qualities or proclivities transmissible. The result to the character is similar, for, in a certain sense, qualities are *in* proclivities, and proclivities in qualities.

"The life and happiness of individuals, the love and harmony of families, the prosperity and stability of States and Kingdoms, and the protection of life, liberty, and person, are more dependent on influences that bear upon human beings, before birth, than on any influence that can be brought to bear on them afterwards. What is *organized* into us, in our pre-natal state, is of more consequence to us, and more vital to our triumph over the temptations and obstacles that impede our progress towards perfection and happiness, than what is *educated* into us after we are born."*

"We are physiologically connected and set forth in our beginnings; and it is a matter of immense consequence to our character, what the connection is. In our birth, we not only begin to breathe, and circulate blood, but it is a question hugely significant, whose the blood may be. For in this we have whole rivers of predispositions, good or bad, set running in us— as much more powerful to shape our future than all tuitional and regulative influences that come after, as they are earlier in their beginning, deeper in their insertion, and more constant in their operation."†

"He who can convince the world of the importance of the laws of hereditary descent, and induce mankind to conduct themselves accordingly, will do more good to them, and contribute more to their improvement, than all institutions and all systems of education."‡

The great problem of our day is, *how to produce* the best original forms of humanity, for this world and the next.

W. M. F.

* Henry C. Wright.

† Dr. Horace Bushnell.

‡ Spurzheim.

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