

THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS

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The fundamental principles of Christian ethics by James Joseph Conway

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JAMES JOSEPH CONWAY

**THE FUNDAMENTAL
PRINCIPLES OF
CHRISTIAN ETHICS**

Catholic Summer and Winter School Library

THE
FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES
of
CHRISTIAN ETHICS

FIVE LECTURES

BY
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PREFACE



MY first intention, upon concluding to publish these lectures, was to supplement the necessarily condensed matter of the text with a running commentary in the shape of footnotes. I would thus have been enabled to enlarge upon points which the circumstances attending the delivery of the lectures did not permit me to develop at length. For there is much in the exposition and elucidation of the doctrine, as set forth in the lectures, which will appear abstruse, when it is really only condensed. The arguments, too, upon which the doctrine rests may at times, perhaps, appear unnecessarily profound or subtle, because I was not at liberty to spend more space and time upon their elaboration. The same observation is true of the systems of Ethics reviewed in these lectures. While I

have everywhere, in rehearsing them, aimed to render myself free from bias, that I might thus present a perfectly fair résumé of adverse views—and those familiar with these matters assure me that I have been very careful and without groundless prejudice—yet I feel that much has been lost to the strength of my own position and to the cause of Christian Ethics by the unavoidably close condensation of the ethical theories which I have examined, and by the brevity of the arguments and of the refutation which I have urged against them. A commentary, for this reason, would have added materially to the utility of the lectures.

Yet while a commentary in the shape of footnotes would, I see clearly, have compensated for the synoptical character of the text, the extent of such a work, were it to meet its demand, deterred me from pursuing it. For the fact is, that I began such a commentary—which is the reason why these lectures did not appear earlier—but the unwarrantable bulk to which the notes, and only necessary notes, to the first half of the

first lecture had swollen, convinced me that it would at least look better to relinquish my desire to furnish the lectures with a commentary. The disproportion would have been too awkward. For the commentary would have been a larger work than the lectures it was meant simply to supplement and explain.

However, it is my hope that even without the proposed commentary, these lectures will furnish suggestive reading matter to every type of ethical student. That they are opportune, I will not go out of my way to establish. Anything and everything touching the moral existence of man is always in place and time for the study of man. The destiny of man upon which the character and ground-features of his moral existence hinge, carries with it its own interest. Moreover, the natural law, conscience, the doctrine of right and wrong, human responsibility, and the eternal sanction of the moral law are at all times vital questions. Finally, the present chaotic condition of the public mind upon so many moral issues, ought to render every legitimate endeavor to circulate the

teachings of Catholic philosophy opportune and, in proportion to its fitness, also welcome.

JAS. JOSEPH CONWAY, S. J.

ST. LOUIS, MO., May 1, 1896.

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