

# **GOD'S EDUCATION OF MAN**

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God's education of man by William DeWitt Hyde

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**WILLIAM DEWITT HYDE**

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OF MAN**



By *William DeWitt Hyde*

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PRESIDENT OF BOWDOIN COLLEGE



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## PREFACE

**T**HIS book attempts to indicate in a very general way, and also within a single small section to point out in considerable detail, the radical and far-reaching change which is taking place in theological conceptions. The general remarks on the theological situation as a whole, and the outline of the larger circle of religious truth, I have placed by itself in the Introduction. This is for clergymen and such laymen as are not afraid of hard reading on fundamental themes. All others are earnestly urged to skip it altogether; or at least not to assume in advance that the main portion of the book is as dry and barren of practical results as the opening pages of this Introduction will appear to them to be.

By way of a Conclusion, I have added a



discussion of two contrasted philosophical conceptions; in which it is shown, by examples from philosophy, literature, art, politics, and missions, that in these kindred spheres there has ever been manifest that inevitable tendency to pass from abstract and transcendent to concrete and immanent conceptions, of which the position taken in the body of this book with reference to Christian truth and life is simply one more example. This also, though by no means so hard reading as the Introduction, the reader who is economical of effort and intent on edification alone is considerably counseled to omit.

The three central chapters take up in detail, and restate in modern terms, the essential truths which the ancient doctrines of sin, redemption, and sanctification sought to express. So long as God and man were regarded as alien and mutually exclusive entities, the courts of justice afforded the most obvious analogy in which to formulate the relations between them. The new

view, which regards God and man as kindred, — related to each other as vine to branch, father to child, — finds its most appropriate analogy in that drawing out of the small into the great, of the imperfect into the perfect, of the dependent into the independent, of the growing organ into the complete life, which we call education. Hence the title — *God's Education of Man*.

This divine drawing-out of man has three stages: First: Man, the imperfect fragment, the dependent member, impelled by appetite and passion, sets himself up as a complete and self-sufficient end in himself, in defiant disregard of the bonds that bind him to his fellows and to God. This false attitude of self-assertion is sin; and has to be restrained by law, which is the assertion of the relation of the part to the whole, and of the claims of all on each.

Second: The good, healthy organism reclaims the rebellious and unruly member; God comes after runaway man; in spite

of his ill-deserts, offers him a share in his own large, generous life, and willingly takes upon himself the pain and sacrifice essential to fit an imperfect and undeveloped member into place. This winning back of an unworthy and offending member to humble acceptance of his forfeited place in the spiritual world is the province and prerogative of grace.

Third: The member restored to position in the structure must be trained to specific function in the world's spiritual life. This training to specific function, whereby the member becomes partaker in the whole life and joy of the God whom he gladly and freely serves in his specific service of his fellow-men, finds its consummation in the crown of Christian character.

Instead of representing God primarily as judge or ruler, with a majesty to uphold and an authority to vindicate; and man as a culprit or "probationer," concerned mainly with being punished or pardoned; I have sought to present God as a wise and