

**THE RELIGION OF  
DEMOCRACY; A  
MANUAL OF DEVOTION**

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The Religion of Democracy; A Manual of Devotion by Charles Ferguson

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**CHARLES FERGUSON**

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# THE RELIGION OF DEMOCRACY

A MANUAL OF DEVOTION

BY  
*CHARLES FERGUSON*



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1900

## FORE WORD.

### A SYMBOL.

On the way across the park that stretches its *parterres* between the Capitol and the new Congressional Library, one may stop and rest on a stone bench in front of the vast, pillared, porticoed, Græco-Roman building where Congress meets. Close by is the togged statue of Washington, seated in a kind of curule chair, and pointing, with one finger, up to heaven. To the right and left, in flawless symmetry, stretch the classic wings of the Capitol, fit each for a Parthenon; and over all, the pompous dome, Argus-eyed with serried little glimmering windows, broods and settles mightily down in obstinate immensity.

Seen thus, in the afternoon sun, the building grows into one's mind as a symbol of things that have been, but are passing away. The suggestions of the scene are reminiscent. This is the America of foreign and ancient tutelage, trailing the Old World; the nation that did not know the originality of its vocation, and did not venture to breathe deep. It is the America of the paper constitution, of orations on the classic model, of moralizing art, and intolerant virtues; the land of Spartan seclusion from the world, yet of huge comfortableness; the land of the perfect plan that must not be spoiled; the

not  
all  
idea  
was

## Fore Word.

sophomoric land that had not yet loved and suffered.

Over against this picture there is in my mind a vision of very different suggestion. There are nights when, looking from my window across huddling chimneys and the flat roofs of houses, I see the Capitol transfigured. The colossal dome, white and magnificent in the moonlight, swims in a luminous, electric mist that comes brimming up from the city. The glorious ghost of the Capitol, looming over sordid chimney-tops, seems like a symbol of the new age and the America that is in the making. Here is modernity, the age of electricity—and mystery. Here is the type of the longing of the people, the awe of science, the passion for the eternal, the cosmic fear, the victorious faith, the contradictions of life, the problems, the poverty, the tragic perplexity, the cry in the night; here steel-clad battleships and sudden war, the knight-errantry of the Republic, the pathos of Spain and Italy and Greece and China, immense expansion and contraction, the old ethnic hate, the effacement of boundaries, world-wide equality, fraternity, ecumenic democracy, unanimity.

This shimmering dome in the moonlight, mystic, aerial, portentous, seems a wraith of revolution—the prophetic, insurgent spirit of the nation.

I perceive how deep down in the infinite are the springs of history. And I am reassured of the love of God.

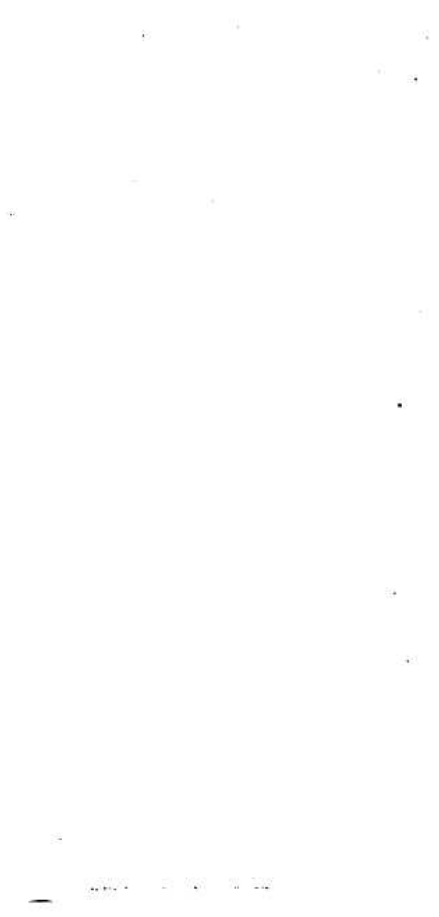
WASHINGTON, 1898.

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# The Religion of Democracy.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE RETURN TO THE CONCRETE.

I.—The spirit of the age is saying to its children: Have faith. Make yourself at home. This is your own house. The laws were made for you, gravitation and the chemical affinities, not you for them. No one can put you out of the house. Stand up; the ceiling is high.

This is eternity—now—you are sunk as deep in it, wrapped as close in it as you ever will be. The future is an illusion; it never arrives. It flies before you as you advance. Always it is to-day, and after a long while it is still to-day; and after death and a thousand years, it is to-day. You have great deeds to perform, and you must do them now.

If you should act with simplicity and boldness, do you think that you would have to stand alone and take the consequences? Have you no

## The Religion of Democracy.

idea that God would back you up? That is as if you thought this world were mainly bones, and the soul a pale prisoner, looking wistfully through the ribs of it. It is as if God were caught in His own body, and could not move otherwise than according to the laws laid down in the books, and as if all the people that pass in the streets had wan, scared souls caught in their bodies like animals in a trap. For if God may not do as He likes, how can a man be other than a prisoner?

God is free. Go out doors and see for yourself. Are not the trees wayward and whimsical? Is not the wind let loose, and is not the sea savage enough? Do not the birds wheel and turn as they like? So does God do as He likes. He is not caught in His body; neither are you. You can move if you try; have faith. Have faith in God.

I come to you with great ideas, ideas big with revolution—but they are common. You will recognize them as your own. Only it is necessary to put words to them. Words are the wings of ideas; without words they brood, but cannot fly. And these ideas of ours must fly from land to land and kindle the whole earth.

Civilization grows senile; but the soul is al-