

**THE GROWTH OF
RELIGIOUS IDEALS AS
ILLUSTRATED BY THE
GREAT ENGLISH POETS**

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The Growth of Religious Ideals as Illustrated by the Great English Poets by H. G. Rosedale

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LONDON: GAY AND BIRD

THE
GROWTH OF RELIGIOUS
IDEALS

AS ILLUSTRATED BY
THE GREAT ENGLISH POETS

BY THE
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PREFACE

IN offering this book to seekers after truth on both sides of the Atlantic, I claim no originality of interpretation with respect to the message of any one of all the authors who come under our consideration. I do not even flatter myself that the idea itself is quite novel, or that others have not expressed the teachings of our several poets in a far abler way than I have done. All I claim is that in the volume before my readers there is matter interesting to the earnest evolutionist, and many indications of a growth and developing continuity in the thoughts underlying the works of the greatest poets of England in

succeeding centuries—a fact which cannot fail to interest the intellect and to fill the hearts of true men with a sense of security and confidence.

It has been my practice for some years to deliver a series of lectures to my congregation on some unconventional and educational subject during the season of Lent. In the year 1898 I prepared and delivered a series of lectures on 'Teachings from the Poets.' Before this course was completed I realized that there was an undoubted relation of thought between the various authors, and that this relationship lay in the direction of 'a mainly upward movement.' After pursuing this study for some time I came to the conviction that those poets whom I had selected for special study, under the belief that they were the flower of English poesy, showed in certain directions a continuous and remarkable progress and systematic expansion.

Under this impression I prepared a paper on the subject to be read before the Royal Society of Literature. The paper was so kindly received that I have ventured to take the advice of some of my friends, and to produce the paper in an enlarged form and with many additions, in order that the sense of Divine guidance which the subject both postulates and demonstrates might be of help to a wider circle, and might lead some thinkers to see the hand of God writing his Revelations in the literature of this land. I desire to help by this small work to bring nearer the time when none shall fail to recognise the guiding care of a loving Father in all the affairs of human life.

In offering this book, purporting to direct men's minds to a Divine Revelation through our national literature, to the world of English readers, I do so with the profound conviction that I am adding to, rather than detracting

from, the force and glory of other Revelations.

In considering a subject of so unlimited a range it is not possible to do more than touch the fringe of many of the matters which come before us. I have not attempted to do more, believing that by suggesting the ideas others will be led to a deeper and more thorough study of one or two of the themes herein alluded to.

To myself, the subjects seem capable of infinite enlargement, and to be, what is even better, treasure-rooms of noble and holy inspiration.

H. G. ROSEDALE.

ST. PETER'S VICARAGE,
BAYSWATER, W.
June, 1902.

PROGRESSIVE CONCEPTIONS OF GOD

THE GREAT 'FIRST CAUSE.'

Baucer.

'The First Movere of the Cause Above.'
Knight's Tale, line 2,987.

'What maketh this but Juppiter the King,
The which is Prince and Cause of Alle Thyng.'
Knight's Tale, line 3,035.

THE JUST KING.

Shakespeare.

'Great God! how just art Thou!'
2 Henry VI., v., 1.
'That dread King that took our state upon Him.'
2 Henry VI., iii., 2.

THE MERCIFUL JUDGE.

Milton.

'Easy it may be seen that I intend
Mercy colleague with justice.'
Paradise Lost, x., 58.