

**THE UNIQUE MESSAGE
AND THE
UNIVERSAL MISSION OF
CHRISTIANITY**

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The unique message and the universal mission of Christianity by James Franklin Love

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By
JAMES FRANKLIN LOVE, D.D.



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Preface

THE purpose of this book is to show that the fundamental and saving doctrines of Christianity are peculiar to the Christian religion, to secure larger rights for the message which these doctrines constitute and to help fulfill the universal mission of Christianity.

The course of the discussion as thus indicated involves questions belonging to the science of comparative religion; but our aim being practical and evangelical, we deal with what we consider to be the essence of Christianity more than with the common content of Christianity and other great religions. The title which we have given these chapters, *The Unique Message and the Universal Mission of Christianity*, suggests a contrast rather than a comparison of Christianity with other religions, and that is the real nature of the discussion. The already voluminous and increasing literature which may be classed as studies in comparative religion, covering as it does all phases of ethnic and Christian faith, may be necessary to a broad intellectual and scientific study of religion, and the emphasis which it puts on the common elements of religions may be serviceable, but it ought to be obvious that such discursive method is

not necessary to the most practical and profitable religious study.

In view of the outline of Christian doctrines which we give, the question may arise as to certain related matters of Christian belief. Let it be said, then, that we are not inclined to ignore even minor points of Christian doctrine and practice. But it must be patent that these correlative tenets need not on all occasions be the subject of defense. They will indeed be taken care of when the fundamentals to which they are related receive proper respect. Take care of the doctrines and you will take care of the duties. When a slight is given a Christian duty the cause usually lies back of it and is to be attributed to a wrong attitude to religious authority and a false sense of the sacredness and inviolableness of the truth. A full recognition of Christian essentials and a genuine reverence for them will foster a respect and jealousy for all truth and all duties which Christianity prescribes. A proper safeguarding of the roots and great trunk of the tree of Christian doctrine will secure protection to every limb and twig of minor but intimately related matter.

There is a special class of doctrines which one must not even seem to minify and which some, perhaps, may expect to find set forth among the peculiar and fundamental doctrines; such, namely, as Regeneration, Justification by faith, etc. These are, indeed, distinctive Christian doctrines and belong to the very essence of the evangelical gospel;

but we conceive of them as gathered about the great doctrines and as implied in them. They indicate the way by which these are made effectual and explain how their benefits are procured. They will always receive a relatively adequate treatment by the man who gives a Scriptural setting to the Atonement, Regeneration, etc. While we do not number them in these pages, they are not only implied in the discussion but are emphasized in connection with these constitutive doctrines. Some readers may think that sin and human depravity ought to be included in our outline of the distinctive Christian doctrines. The Christian doctrine of sin is indeed peculiar to Christianity and fundamental to evangelical faith, but we conceive of it as having its distinctive Christian significance chiefly in the light of and in its relation to the doctrines of the New Birth and the Atonement, and for this reason have given attention to it in connection with these subjects and that of futurity rather than in a separate chapter.

All the teachings of the New Testament cluster about certain preëminent truths there taught and corroborated by Christian experience and illustrated in Christian history. Christianity also comprehends some things which are common to all religious systems that represent any degree of serious thought on the great mysteries of life; but these common features do not constitute the essence of Christianity. A knowledge of the elements in heathenism which are common to all