

THE MORAL CONDITION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD

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The moral condition and development of the child by W. Arter Wright

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BY

W. ARTER WRIGHT, Ph. D., D. D.

WITH INTRODUCTION BY

TRUMBULL G. DUVALL, B. D., Ph. D.

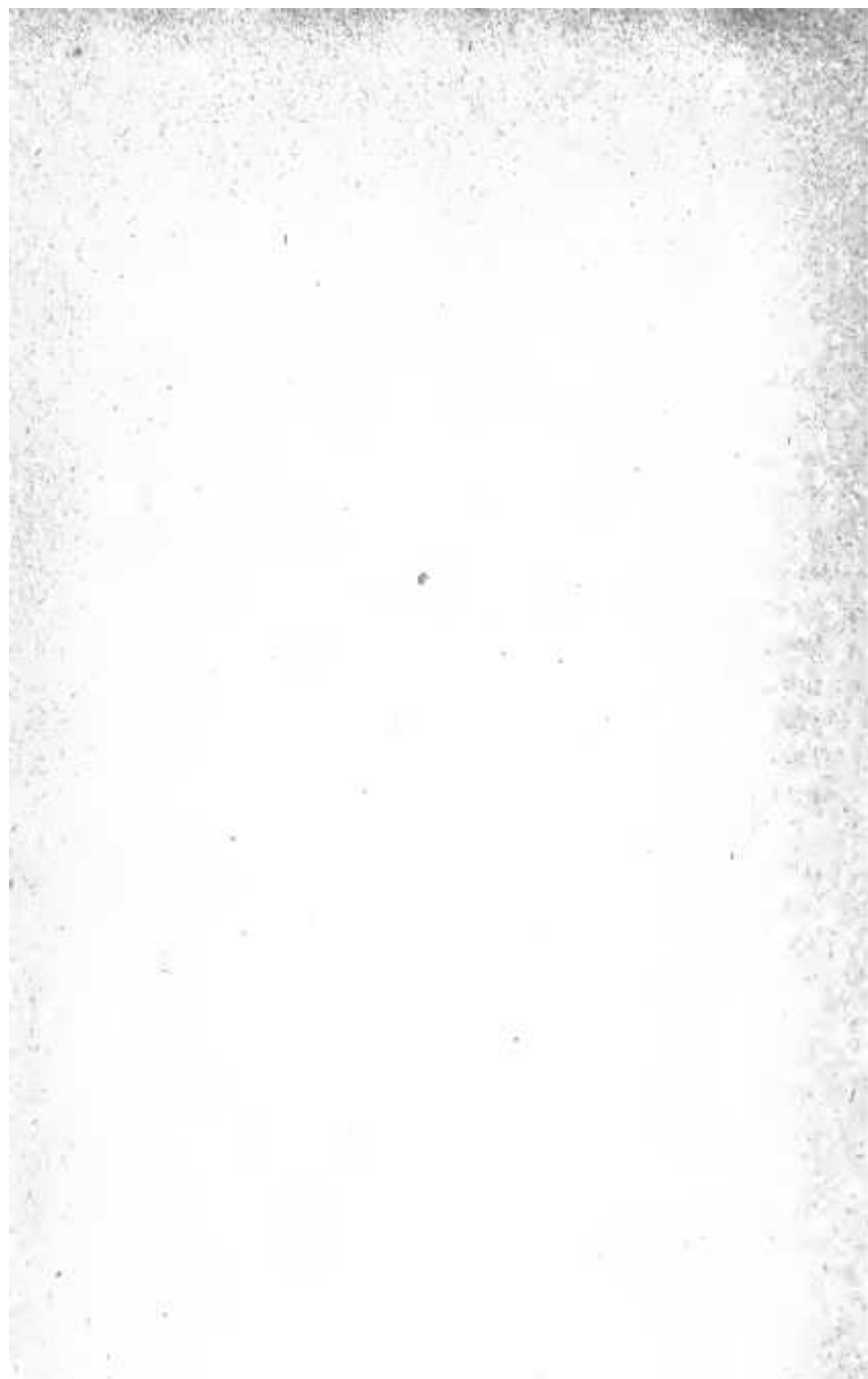
Professor of Philosophy in Ohio Wesleyan University.



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TO MY CHILDREN,
WHO IN THE REALIZATIONS OF LIFE HAVE
ILLUSTRATED THE THEORIES
OF THIS BOOK.



INTRODUCTION

It was a saying of Borden Parker Bowne that, although a sound philosophy might conceivably be of no benefit to the world, there could be no doubt of the real damage done by an unsound philosophy. With even greater emphasis might one say this of theological dogma; for in no other field has the lust for system at the expense of life borne more bitter fruit. And good men have seldom strayed further than when, under the tyranny of the *a priori*, they have essayed to extend their deductions to the moral and religious status of the child.

Not the least of the merits of the following discussion, while the author makes no claim of being a specialist in psychology, is his appreciation of the bearing of psychology upon his subject. The point of view and the method of approach adopted by the psychologist bring to light material that may be obtained in no other way. And no safe theological structure can be built without this material. The child-mind and the child-life have their own secrets to tell, and they only learn these who patiently ask what the facts are, and not what the facts ought to be.

But in these chapters there is more serious

business than exploding unsound dogmas of childhood. The stress seems not so much to be laid upon the *child* as upon *children*, and the main plea is the children's plea for a higher standard of parentage and a recognition of the parents' place in the world. And this plea deserves to be heard. The child, summoned into existence by no will of his own, has every right to expect that his parents will undertake the moral burdens of fatherhood and motherhood. He has the right to expect them to maintain the wholesome idealism of the home: for it is the home that gives set and direction to his appreciations and shapes his unconscious tendencies and reasons for doing things. His opportunity for achieving a character—a perfectly fashioned will—depends, in the main, upon the fidelity of mother and father in meeting these conditions. To give the world a healthy-minded, generous youth, one who respects others as he respects himself, who has learned the lessons of self-control and unselfish service, means mothering and fathering the growing soul for almost a score of years, and is the greatest undertaking, as it is the true business of life. The world needs men and women of this sort, and it can not have too many of them. To give it any other sort is to sin grievously against society. Parents who fail at this point, whatever they may have amassed or achieved, have failed in the one thing where failure is irretrievable.

In these later years the psychologist has pro-

duced abundant material which the theologian has as yet not appropriated. Much of this material bears directly on the problem of the moral and religious education of the child. And the student of social conditions has been daily tracing the vices and crimes of society back to their beginnings in the morally bankrupt home. There is a timeliness in this discussion, therefore, which ought to insure for it the wide interest and thoughtful consideration which it merits.

TRUMBULL GILLET DUVAL.

Ohio Wesleyan University.