

**THE DOCTRINES OF
GRACE, PP. 1-292**

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The Doctrines of Grace, pp. 1-292 by John Watson

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JOHN WATSON

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GRACE, PP. 1-292**

The DOCTRINES *of* GRACE

By

JOHN WATSON, M.A., D.D.

(*Ian Maclaren*)

N E W Y O R K

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TO the Memory of My
Father, a Faithful Ser-
vant of Christ and the Queen.

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The GRACE of GOD

I

The GRACE of GOD

IT was the mission of St. Paul to declare the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to the nations, and none of his successors in this high office has spoken with such persuasive power. Any one differs from St. Paul at his intellectual peril, and every one may imitate him with spiritual profit. One therefore compares together the dominant note of the Apostle and of the modern preacher with interest, and one observes with concern that the characteristic modern strikes a lower key. St. Paul carried himself as an ambassador, charged with a commission by God and addressing subjects who had rebelled against their king; the preacher of to-day is rather a barrister pleading his case with an impartial and critical jury from whom he hopes to win a favorable verdict on Jesus Christ. The Apostle believed that he had received from God, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, a divine message containing the terms of reconciliation and appealing to every man's conscience as a sinner; the modern has found in the religion of Jesus a reasonable discipline for the soul, and endeavors to convince his fellow-men of its excellent beauty. The Apostle was firmly convinced that if any man, Jew or Gentile, received

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his word and believed in Jesus Christ he would see the salvation of God,—such things as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man—and that if he deliberately refused the obedience of Christ, he had missed the way of life everlasting. From the standpoint of our age there is possibly an advantage with the believing Christian; he has a wider vision and a more inspiring ideal; there is certainly some disadvantage in being an unbeliever, he has denied himself the support of the most majestic of all religious traditions and the delicate enjoyment of the most graceful æsthetic emotions. The Apostle was intense, commanding, uncompromising, and he preached with overwhelming authority; the modern is diffident, suggestive, conciliatory, and he has no authority.

When we ask how the most modest of men personally—did he not declare himself less than the least of all saints?—and the most reverent of thinkers—did he not confess that the love of God passeth knowledge?—carried himself with such confidence, the answer is to be found in his high idea of the Christian faith of which he was an Apostle. With him Christianity was not simply the most lofty of living faiths, as it has become the fashion of to-day to regard it, in our devotion to the study of comparative religion. St. Paul certainly had too generous a doctrine of God, and too profound a doctrine of humanity, to suppose that the nations had been left since the beginning with no light, and that their religions were only systems of devil worship. Not only was the faith of his fathers a distinct

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revelation of the Eternal, but throughout the race there was diffused a knowledge of God and of righteousness sufficient to guide honest men in their life and conduct. Between Gentile religions, however, and Christianity the difference was not in degree, but in nature. They were instructive and prophetic—the preparation for the final faith; but they were natural, with no element in them which was not within the range of human attainment. Christianity has been throughout, as regards its historical facts, within the province of human life: and, as regards its organized action, Christianity must work through human agents; but Christianity, in its inherent force, is beyond the natural and has its source in God. It draws its strength from the eternal springs; its sanctions come from Deity; and when St. Paul invited men to hear and obey the Gospel, he stood upon the rock of ages, and he spoke against a background of the supernatural.

With him the supernatural was not the mere idea of superior physical force—a matter of material miracles, to which indeed St. Paul attached no importance—but the nobler idea of constraining spiritual influence, on which he delighted to insist. St. Paul had an altogether persuasive and beautiful word for the supernatural, which he was never weary of using, and which the Church should count one of her chief treasures—the Grace of God. Supernatural is a scientific word, and moves in the sphere of the physical; grace is a religious word, and moves in the sphere of the spiritual. As St. Paul con-