John fourteen, the greatest chapter of the greatest book

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THE GREATEST CHAPTER
OF THE GREATEST BOOK

BY

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PREFACE

THE aim of this book is twofold; first to present in conspective form the spiritual principles developed by Jesus in what many readers regard as the most impressive of His discourses; and secondly to interpret these principles so far as convenient under the shadow of the method made familiar by the inquir- ies of modern psychology. That a work of this kind might meet a need as yet unfilled became evident to the writer the moment he set himself to the systematic study of the Chapter with a view to public exposition. Valuable homiletic helps, critical vignettes of rare insight, representing every conceivable type of mind, careful historical estimates, occasional sermons of great fascination abound on every hand and are sup- plemented by the religious zeal of every generation. No preacher or teacher or quiet student of the verses can go to his task without them. They give the drift of feeling, the divisional points which the Speaker emphasized in His farewell appeal. But they do not pretend to exhaust the rich lode of truth here con- cealed. The claim is made that a sustained treatment of the dominant theme in the Chapter calls for a volume complete in itself. Dr. Bernard in his “Central Teaching of Jesus Christ” massed the valedictory addresses and prayers in one continuous study. His book has never failed of readers. It is the author’s hope that the present volume, constructed in part for those who sat in person before him, in part for an audience which only the imagination could desire, may serve in some measure to do for a single group
of verses what the other did effectively for a larger passage—exalt and clarify the words of the divine Preacher.

The first aim was as to form, the second concerns content. It is not for a moment suggested that students of St. John’s Gospel have not been men of expert method. Robertson of Brighton, a name, says Matthew Arnold, which we are bound always to mention with respect, has passed the spell of his analytic genius over its concepts and characters, and made obscure facts leap to new meaning before our eyes. Psychology was a real and conscious instrument in his hands even before its new technique was born. In a homelier way, perhaps without appreciating the trend of contemporary science, Marcus Dods grappled with the problem of personality and did his bit towards its solution. This problem emerges in every section of the current work because it is the supreme subject of the Lord’s discourse. Fundamental impulses, the value and insidious charm of the sensory image, the various aspects of association, the play of memory, the forming of judgment, the sense of order, the ebullition of feeling, the power of will, the autocracy of Self—these flash in ever-changing figures before bewildered observers, as Jesus pictures eternal Manhood, first in His own Person and then in the lives of His emulators. “He knew what was in man.” To react to the deeper symbolism of His words we must penetrate the secretcies of the common mind. Psychology has opened the gate. Therefore the formulas of this science, now the property of students in every field, may with right be summoned to explain the issues of the Chapter.

J. H. D.

PHILADELPHIA, PA.
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