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Man's desire for greatness

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Main Desire For Greatness

The desire for greatness is a natural instinct of human life. In its lowest form it manifests itself in man as a craving for such distinction as will attract the attention of his companions and gain from them some word of acknowledgment or of commendation. In a higher form it manifests itself as an insuppressible ambition for such leadership and mastery as will arrest and hold the attention, win the admiration (and) command the applause, or merit the respect of his superiors. This instinct is seen in the little child as well as in the

mature man, in the humble as well as in the noble, in the ignorant as well as in the learned, in the poor as well as in the rich, in the bad as well as in the good. In the breast of every man civilized or savage, bond or free, throbs the pulse of this natural desire for greatness, it is one of the distinctive characteristics of the race. This instinct is one of the natural working motives of human life. It quickens and energizes every mental and physical faculty; and urges man to efforts such as he would not and could not put forth under a less powerful incentive. Moved by this desire he endures hardships, faces dangers, overcomes difficulties, makes sacrifices, attains to ends such as he would not without it. This is true in private and public life, and among all the ranks and con-

- situations of men. No matter how feeble the desire may be, it is an incentive to action, and far more is accomplished by reason of it than otherwise would be. But this desire is capable of perversion, and is a curse or a blessing according as it is wrongly or rightly directed. As a general thing when man is left to himself, the desire is directed by his own perverse heart, and as a consequence it goes contrary to the Divine order of things and works out evil results. He mistakes the false for the real, and imagines that to be great it is only necessary to obtain certain worldly honors or certain social, civil or intellectual advantages. It is this that has made the Hercules, Hannibals, Alexanders, Caesars and Napoleons who struggled for greatness by over-

- coming their fellowmen, and by working misery and death. It is this that has made the Diver of the World who, stealing their hearts against the tears, sufferings and prayers of the poor, concerned riches on the ideal of greatness, and sought - at whatever cost - of sorrow, of honor or of honesty - to wring out gain from needy humanity. And it has made all the selfish unprincipled politicians, who utterly disregarding the interests of the people and the welfare of the country, schemed for greatness by all manner of crafty measures, whereby they might gain their unholy end. It is this that has made the Voltair, Volney, and Pains, who exalted the intellect and endeavored to obtain greatness by opposition to Divine truth, and the sacred interests of mankind. And it is just this

misdirection of the natural desire for greatness that is the curse of our day. It makes the tyrant, the miser, the defrauder and the demagogue; begets monopoly, oppression, dishonesty and hypocrisy; produces selfishness, hardness of heart and fills the recesses of human life with sin and pain. Capable of the highest good, it works the deepest misery. We should not therefore condemn the desire. For even Christ our great exemplar did not, when his disciples were contending about it, on that solemn night of the Passover, put down his acceptance for its government, that it might be as efficient for good, as it was for evil. He saw how utterly man had mistaken the purpose of his being, and knew that it was the product of a darkened mind.

And of a heart-set-upon the Honor
things of the World. Now Christ did
not want to destroy the distinction
which properly belongs to merit; nor
to take away any of the incentives
which stimulate men to exertion in
the affairs and pursuits of life,
he only wished to regulate and
direct the forces of men's nature
so that all earthly ends might be
made to subserve the true purpose
and end of being. If politics, art,
science, literature, trade or any other
legitimate pursuit commands a man
a man's attention, and engages his
powers, he has a perfect right to
acquire all the distinction possible,
so long as it does not interfere
with the higher interests of his
soul, or infringe upon the well-
being of his fellowmen. There may
rightly enough constitute a subordi-

-nate purpose in his life, but not the supreme purpose, There may very properly confer social and civil advantages, but they do not, and never can make a man truly great. True greatness is not to be found in any of these things, and it must be teach the world this lesson, and to direct man to a true greatness that the Son of God came and labored among men. Christ alone of all the teachers, who have endeavored to enlighten the world, is able to enlighten it. He alone teaches man what true greatness is, and the way to attain it. And if man refuses this instruction and walks in his own way he must forever fail of being great. He may appear great to the worldly minded, but he will lack in himself every essential element of genuine greatness.

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He may by the dazzle of his earthly grandeur wake the pleasures of thoughtless crowds, but he will never win the approbation and honor which cometh from God. To appear great is one thing, and to be great is quite another. One comes to nought, the other ever increases in beauty and power. True greatness and the only greatness worthy of the immortal nature of man, is that which is found in the teachings of Christ. And which as time rolls his chariot wheels forward, deepens, widens, and becomes more and more divine.

This being the case, true greatness must be something which is possible for all men to obtain. It can not be of God if it is only within the reach of a favored few, as are the high places and honors of

the world. God is no respecter of persons. It must be something which makes the greater as the younger, and the chief as he that serves; which enables one to do unto others as he would that they should do unto him, and cause him to love his neighbor as himself; which incites him to visit the fatherless and the widows in their afflictions. Which fills the soul with loyalty to God and makes man meek, pure in heart, merciful and a peace-maker - the salt of the earth, and the light of the world.

Now is there something which includes in itself all this, and which, if once attained by man, will make him truly great in himself, and truly great in the sight of God. If so what is that

Something? It is that divine goodness, which Christ makes the sum and substance of his teachings, and which he exemplifies in his life and conduct.

To be divinely good, is to be truly great. It is to be like God who is good. It is to realize so far as it is possible for the creature to be like the Creator. The thought of Christ where he says "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

It comes of Divine grace by the exercise of repentance, faith, intelligence, will and the affections. It embraces all the divine virtues, restores the order and harmony of human life, fills the heart with love and the spirit of self-sacrifice and thoroughly fits man for fellowship with his fellow-men.

Goodness alone walks man in his own

conscience, exalts him in the moral judgments of mankind, and exalts him before God.

It is the infinite goodness of Christ that has enthroned him in the hearts of men, and has established in this world a kingdom which today covers the fairest parts of the earth — a kingdom that is still advancing and will one day subdue all other kingdoms and become itself world wide.

And it is just this goodness that everywhere, in all times, and under all circumstances constitute the truly great man.

If this is true, goodness must bear all the tests of true greatness. True greatness must satisfy the wants of the soul; must be the servant of all; must promote all the interests of human life.

must be within the reach of all:
 must be an eternal possession:
 and must receive the approbation of
 God. Apply these tests to the
 things that make a man great
 in the eyes of the world — to
 education, genius, position, influ-
 ence, power, wealth, honors, fame,
 and see how utterly they all fail.
 Not one of them can bear even a
 part of the tests. But goodness, as
 we shall see, like fine gold, bears
 them all.

Thus goodness satisfies the wants
 of the soul. Its very nature is
 to produce a deep sense of satis-
 faction.

The highest praise God could bestow
 upon his own work was to call
 it good: and the highest revela-
 tion he could make of himself was
 to cause all his goodness to be

made manifest. It is the quality of goodness and it alone, that give us satisfaction in every thing with which we have to do.

If we buy a farm, a residence, a jewel, a picture, or any thing else to minister to our comfort; our taste, or our bodily wants; or, if we think a thought, perform a deed, make an acquaintance, produce a piece of work, or plan an enterprise, it is satisfying and of value to us only in proportion as it is good.

It must possess the quality of goodness in order to be desirable and adapted to answer the end designed.

The same is true in the sphere of our spiritual life.

It is moral goodness alone that can satisfy the soul. The moral sense will not admit of any thing less

than this. The voice of conscience
ever cries out-against-wrongness,
and will in no case permit-us
to enjoy what-is-bad.

We may do the wrong, and may
gather up the bad in our life
and character, but-conscience which
anticipates the judgment, will never
permit-us to feel satisfaction and
joy in these things. Moral good-
ness, and it-alone, meets the
approval of conscience, satisfies
the soul-hunger, quenches the
soul-thirst.

It-is that living bread which if
a man eat-thereof he shall live
forever; it-is that living water
which if a man drink-thereof he
shall never thirst, but-it shall
be in him a well of water spring-
ing up into everlasting life. --
Godness is living, and it-ever

refreshes and beautifies the soul,
fills it with contentment and
peace, adorns it in every virtue
and crowns it with unfading
glory.

Goodness is the servant of all.

This is one of its chief characteris-
tics. It is also a sure test of
greatness. Nothing which the
world calls great can bear this
test.

All earthly greatness is concerned
about certain material things
and worldly interests, and is
limited in its service.

It has to do with certain classes
of men, and may directly or in-
directly injure certain other
classes; but goodness like sun-
light serves the just and the un-
just, the rich and the poor.

the learned and the ignorant,
 the high and the low. It is
 emphatically the servant of all.
 Capable of the highest service. It
 cheerfully stoops to the humblest,
 irrespective of race, color, faith,
 or condition: not dependent upon
 any of the things of the world,
 and governed not by public opinion
 or the conventionalities of society,
 but dependent upon Divine truth,
 love and wisdom, and governed
 alone by the Divine will, it is
 ever ready to do service for the
 poorest and lowest of all human
 creatures.

Worldly greatness might suffer
 in this kind of service, but
 goodness, instead of suffering in
 this kind of service, is rendered
 more sublime, precious, and
 divinely great.

Then again goodness promotes all the interests of human life. Great wealth may promote a large number of these interests. It can build schools, colleges, churches, asylums; improve towns and villages, beautify homes, refine the tastes, and add to the temporal comfort of a people.

Great power may promote a large number of these interests. It can protect the weak, restrain the wayward, strengthen the foundations of liberty, and secure all in the enjoyment of their social and civil rights. Great learning may promote a large number of these interests. It can discover truth, create literatures, build up the sciences, encourage the arts, enlighten the mind, and greatly increase the general intelligence of man.

Great-geniuses may promote a large number of these interests. It can write immortal poems, make marvelous discoveries, invent wonderful instruments for lessening human labor, and for aiding the human faculties in acquiring knowledge; can tame the forces of nature, and overcome time and space.

But these without goodness do not and can not promote all the interests pertaining to human life.

They, in and of themselves, fail to cultivate charity, compassion, self-sacrifice, brotherly love, purity, reverence for God, and loyal obedience to his immutable will.

Goodness promotes them all. Its very presence in a community helps every interest of man. It quickens the moral sensibilities,

inspires every mind with nobler
ideas of life, appeals to all the
better moods of the heart; calls
forth the higher and holier -
affections, teaches the love and
mercy of God, and demands in
the name of the Divine master
the right use of wealth, power,
learning and the gifts of genius.
It labors with untiring zeal and
with a self-giving spirit to do
good to all, to lead all into the
paths of righteousness and peace,
and to promote every temporal,
spiritual, and sacred interest
of human life.

Still again, goodness is within the
reach of all. Very few can
hope to attain greatness on the
world reckons greatness. Great wealth,
power, honors, learning and ability -

are not within the reach of all men. Only a favored few can attain these things, and often only then, at the fearful sacrifice of other things of far more importance in view of the future existence of man.

Thousands struggle for these worldly prizes. They bend every energy, tax every resource, deny themselves every earthly comfort, sacrifice every hope of the future, and often commit great crimes to gain the object of their ambition; but not one in ten thousand succeed.

After all their desperate efforts and crimes they fail and are left disappointed, poor and hopeless, afflicted with dark memories, an accusing conscience, the agonies of remorse and the fears of coming judgment.

Not so with goodness. Whoever

strives rightly, honestly, patiently
and earnestly for goodness, always
meets with triumphant success.
No one need fail. It is within easy
reach of all, and all are urged
by the highest motives to seek
after it. The poorest and humblest
of men may be good; and to be
good is to be eternally great.

Then again, goodness is an eternal
possession. Those who acquire the
great things of this world, only
retain them for a very brief period.
They all must fail at last. Death
strips them of every earthly
possession. Croesus acquired immense
wealth, but he was as poor and
mean as his slave in the power
of death. Caesar won equal power
and dominion and his name was
a terror to mankind, but no--

one feared Caesar as he lay at the
foot of Pompey's statue, bathed
in his own blood. A night of
drunken revelry stripped Alexander
of all his greatness, and his
Greek empire fell in pieces over
his grave. Waterloo left Napoleon
without dominion or power, and
he died a prisoner on a lonely
island in the Atlantic. Let a
man acquire what he may of this
world, he cannot be assured of
it for any length of time. If he
retains possession while he lives
he must give it all up when he
comes ^{down} to death. Dives took nothing
with him. The rich fool of the
parable left his treasures for an-
other to reap. All things earthly
shall come to nought; "Whether
there be prophecies, they shall fail;
whether there be tongues, they shall

cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away; but goodness abideth for ever. It builds itself into his immortal life, and when he passes through the valley of the shadow of death, his goodness goes with him.

It is an eternal possession, and makes him happy, joyous and great in the sight of all the holy intelligences of the universe. Not only this, but goodness receives the approbation of God.

The great of this world, may win the approbation of the world, but not of him who "is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity." He is not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness; neither shall evil dwell with him. "He is angry with the wicked every day" and they have

nothing to hope from his mercy -
 so long as they continue in their
 wickedness. But the good enjoy
 his approval and are objects of his
 special care. He comforts them
 with his truth and promises, follows
^{them} with his goodness and mercy,
 enriches them with his grace,
 guards them with his spirit, and
 at last crowns them with his
 glory. The approbation of the world
 confers no lasting benefits on man,
 it only flatters his pride, fills him
 with vain conceits, and takes away
 his courage in the hour of death;
 but the approbation of God strength-
 -ens him for all of life's duties,
 upholds him in all of life's trials,
 assures him of eternal blessedness,
 and brings him off more than con-
 -queror over death and the grave -
 a victory far more glorious than all

the splendid triumphs of the world.

Thus goodness bears all the
 traits of true greatness, and it
 alone. To be truly great therefore
 we must seek to be divinely good.
 It is the only greatness that can
 exalt us above the world, adjust
 our life to the Divine purpose,
 mould us into the Divine likeness,
 and make us Kings and Priests unto
 God.