



The Perfect Life, 12 Discourses, Ed. by W.H. Channing

Dr William Ellery Channing



This historic book may have numerous typos and missing text. Purchasers can usually download a free scanned copy of the original book (without typos) from the publisher. Not indexed. Not illustrated. 1874 edition. Excerpt: ...is as truly under his control as if he attained it by unassisted will. Power does not consist in our being able to accomplish ends by isolated action, without using the influence of others. Man is strong, not by exercising unaided energy but he grows in strength, in proportion as he can gather and turn to use the energies of other beings. We see an illustration of this in all common affairs. The mightiest operations of man are performed, not by his single arm, but by availing himself of the forces of nature, of wind, fire, steam, and mechanic powers. His strength multiplies itself by applying, and thus making his own, the strength of countless other agents. The same truth is illustrated, in a higher form, in the realm of duty and religion. When I resolve on seeking spiritual improvement, do I accomplish my end by lonely efforts of my own will, however often renewed? Certainly not! I avail myself of incentives, guidance, encouragement, aid, from fellow-beings. I read what saints and sages have written, and strive to infuse their thoughts and spirit into my own soul. I recall the examples of the devout and disinterested, the heroic and humane. I associate with the excellent and wise, who live around me. I add to private intercourse and friendship the public means of religious and moral culture, worship with the congregation, communion at Christs table, concert in deeds of charity. In a word, I strive to grow in goodness, by absorbing and assimilating and so making my own, the goodness and wisdom of my race. What immense help do such influences afford me! How continually, when my mind is dull and languid, do the thoughts, tones, looks of fellow-men, kindle a new flame within! How repeatedly, when my purpose faints and flags, does a...

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