

I think we must all admit that at birth we possess the germs of our characters to such a degree that the boy is the father of the man that is to be, and the girl the mother of the future woman.

That is, certain characteristics which are the prophecy of the future being, will predominate, be they good or evil, and will to a great extent form the true self of the person. We must also admit that circumstances and environment are prominent factors in the development of character; just as if we take a grain of wheat and plant it under favorable conditions of soil and climate it is much more likely to develop into a perfect specimen of grain than it is under unfavorable conditions. But the vital principle which makes it a superior or a worthless *kind* of wheat is there; and so it is in human life. The *inner germ*, the invisible essence of our being, shapes our true selves. Like the wheat some natures are pure and sound, and readily respond to cultivation, while other natures are so thoroughly worthless that no amount of care and development can wholly eradicate the evil germs, which exercise so large an influence on the life.

But outside of those who represent the highest and the lowest conditions of the soul, there lies the great mass of human beings, whose instincts for good and evil are so evenly balanced, that it seems to be a matter of choice, whether the true self will, by culture be developed into the statue of the perfect man, or by lack of such culture go downward instead of upward.

Should we not then seek for that spiritual culture and growth toward the divine, which Christ, the great Master so fully exemplified.

And how can we accomplish this except by taking Him as our guide, our teacher, our friend. By so doing, by becoming Christians, indeed we may discover the true self that lies within every one of us, and which is not the self of the material, but that other and diviner self, which shall exist through all eternity.

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THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST.

It has been truly said that religion is the mightiest element of power among men, whether that religion be true or false. Let us take a glance at the world a few centuries before Christ.

Egypt, the proud nation of antiquity, who in the palmiest days of her power supported a religion which gave to the common people gods most contemptible, has begun already to experience from the hands of her conquerors the fulfillment of the prophecy, "They shall be a base kingdom." In the eastern countries we see the people offering up their prayers to idols of every description. In Persia, where Paganism had assumed the purest form of any eastern country, religion had degenerated among the masses to a mere fire worship. We see the Hindoo mother teaching her child to pray to the god of wisdom, an idol so hideous the child draws back in terror. The nations of Europe, while looking with contempt upon the east, yet adopt the religions found there, and worship the same gods under different names. But let us come down to a few years before the Christian era, and what do we see? "At the birth of Christ the striking spectacle presented itself in a degree unknown before or since, of the world united under one septre. From the Euphrates to the Atlantic, from the mouths of the Rhine to the slopes of the Atlas, the Roman Emperor was the sole Lord. The Mediterranean was in the truest sense a Roman lake. From the pillars of Hercules to the mouths of the Nile, on its southern shore, from the farthest coasts of Spain to Syria, on the northern, and thence around to the Nile again, the multitude of men now divided into separate nations, often hostile, always distinct, reposed in peace under the shadow of the Roman eagles. There might be war on the far eastern frontier beyond the