

Comment by the Editor

THE SOURCE OF LIBERTY

Self-preservation is the first law of nature. Every sign points toward the universal principle that each element in creation is meant to endure. That is the plan. In the world of things, matter is never destroyed, though it may be changed. Rooted deeply in the instincts of animals, the rule of survival forms the pattern of behavior. To most creatures the object of conduct is to eat and escape being eaten. Whatever the effects of circumstance may be, the basic fact is ever apparent: the nature of the universe centers in individual welfare.

Some men are more successful than others in the ruthless struggle for food and the certainty of future satisfaction. They tend to preserve their abundance and devise institutions to crystalize their gains in social habits. Privilege speaks in the name of a group, and so the interests of a class or a nation or a sect are placed above the needs of persons.

Against this doctrine of subservience, Christ taught the essential truth of individual worth. To every one, no matter how humble, the teachings

of Jesus offer the hope of human equality. If, in the sight of God, all men are noble, who then shall be consigned to servitude? The inspiration that flows from the promise of personal distinction is the source of liberty. As people strive to measure up to the dignity that is rightfully theirs, they rise above the level of humiliation and despair.

Inspired by the idea that every soul is precious, Christians like Ozro French have devoted their lives to teaching their neighbors to have faith in themselves. While saving others they sacrificed their own material welfare. Through sickness, poverty, and misfortune the spiritual pioneers kept their own integrity of purpose and lent generously from their fund of encouragement. If their particular influence sometimes seemed futile, the sum of their efforts nevertheless imparted a religious character of permanent value to our commonwealth. In the sermons of the missionary preachers may be found the roots of many social and political habits. They helped to create the will to be free.

J. E. B.