

**THE WAY TOWARDS THE
BLESSED LIFE; OR, THE
DOCTRINE OF RELIGION**

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The Way Towards the Blessed Life; Or, The Doctrine of Religion by Johann Gottlieb Fichte & William Smith

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JOHANN GOTTLIEB FICHTE & WILLIAM SMITH

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The Catholic Series.

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THE WAY
TOWARDS
THE BLESSED LIFE;
OR,
THE DOCTRINE OF RELIGION.

BY
JOHANN GOTTLIEB FICHTE.

Translated from the German.

BY
WILLIAM SMITH.

"The Light shineth in Darkness, and the Darkness comprehendeth it not."

St. John.

LONDON:
JOHN CHAPMAN, 142, STRAND.

M.D.CCC.XLIX.



THE following work is the completion of that series of FICHTE'S popular-philosophical writings, the previous portions of which are already before the English Public under the titles of "The Vocation of the Scholar,"—"The Nature of the Scholar,"—"The Vocation of Man,"—and "The Characteristics of the Present Age;" and it is directly connected with the last-mentioned work as being the continuation, in the immediately succeeding year, of the lectures of 1805, of which that other is composed. The point of view taken in most of these previous writings is likewise that of the present; but in the former the design of the Author was limited to a survey of particular phases of human development, either in the Individual or the Race,—although indeed even this cannot be accomplished without a true knowledge and recognition of what is Permanent and Universal in Man,—while in the present he contemplates and describes the Essential Nature of all Being, and the relations which must eternally subsist between the Human and the Divine. The work therefore presents the highest aspect of the Fichteian Philosophy, in so far as that can be exhibited in a popular form; and it thus also furnishes the most conclusive refutation of those imperfect and erroneous conceptions of this doctrine which have arisen from an incomplete study of the writings of the philosopher, and

which prevail, even among professed historians of Philosophy, down to the present day.

The relation between Philosophy, properly so called, and Religion, has not as yet attracted that attention in this country which is due to its vast importance. This, however, is not to be wondered at; for, in the absence of anything worthy of the name of a philosophical school or a philosophical training among us, it was next to impossible that the philosophical spirit should attain sufficient maturity to to apply itself to the elucidation of its highest theme. In a valuable and eloquent work lately published under the title of "The Philosophy of Religion," Mr. Morell has made a first step towards supplying this deficiency in our literature, although, as he himself admits, he is very far from having exhausted this great subject. Indeed the combination of the Scotch philosophy of Reid and his followers with the Eclecticism of Cousin and Jouffroy which has been adopted by this able and popular writer, while it naturally produces an attractive clearness and brilliancy of exposition, has not as yet given birth to any of the pro-founder efforts of intelligence;—nor was this to be anticipated. Embracing the leading features of two systems,—the one of psychological analysis and methodology, and the other of historical generalization,—both of which have confessedly brought about many important and instructive results in their respective fields of inquiry, while neither has far transcended its own department, nor exhibited much depth or originality of speculation,—it was not likely that this their combination should evolve that intense creative element of Thought which stands, as it were, face to face with the great mystery of Being, and proclaims

to man the oracles of the Highest Truth. The present work, although laying no claim to the rank of a scientific treatise, but being on the contrary expressly addressed to the popular mind, contains the deliberate thoughts of one of the most powerful and gifted men that have ever appeared in the world, on this highest theme of human interest and aspiration.

It is in no spirit of affectation or of arrogance that this work is entitled "The Way towards the Blessed Life;" for in setting forth, with all his accustomed power and luminousness, the Truth at which he had arrived on the highest theme to which Humanity can aspire, the Author necessarily indicates, at the same time, the springs of the highest Blessedness which Humanity can attain. That these lie wholly within ourselves,—that in Thought alone we have the pure fountain whence issue the kindred streams of Knowledge and Life, on whose undiverging current the Intellectual and the Moral nature of man are borne onward through Eternity,—that this only True Thought has its beginning, continuing, and ending in God,—and that thus there is neither True Knowledge, True Life, nor True Blessedness anywhere but in God and from God:—this FAITH in which the greatest of men—yea, even the Greatest of all—have lived, died, and been blessed, is here set forth, not as a mere dead historical tradition of the Past, but as the living fountain of spiritual life in the Present, and the only true source from which a Future can arise. That the view here taken of man, and of the highest form of his Life—the Religious—that which alone contains True Blessedness—should seem as strange and unintelligible to the majority of our Age as it did in the Author's own day,

—may well happen ; nor will it appear a matter of surprise to any one who beholds and considers the amazing and daily increasing amount of cant and formalism in Religion which is the deep disgrace of our times. It may well be that such an Age should be blind to its own true wants ; but it is even on that account the more incumbent on those who can probe its errors to the bottom, and see their essential falsity, and who thus possess an assured conviction that, like all Error, they are fleeting and perishable, and who, with this conviction, likewise maintain an unshaken Faith in the power and eternity of Truth,—on such it is on that account the more incumbent to do all that in them lies in order that the mask may be torn from such Error, and that the Truth of God may have free course and be glorified. May this little volume perform its part in this great work of preparing the way of the Lord over the strongholds of fanaticism and sin, and making straight, even in the desert of pharisaism and worldliness, a highway for our God!

W. SMITH.

Edinburgh, April 1849.