

Marquette University

**e-Publications@Marquette**

---

Theology Faculty Research and Publications

Theology, Department of

---

12-1990

## **Living the Truth: An Introduction to the Theological Method and Witness of William Porcher DuBose**

Robert B. Slocum

Follow this and additional works at: [https://epublications.marquette.edu/theo\\_fac](https://epublications.marquette.edu/theo_fac)



Part of the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

---

## Living the Truth: An Introduction to the Theological Method and Witness of William Porcher DuBose

ROBERT B. SLOCUM

---

### *DuBose Known and Unknown*

William Porcher DuBose is considered by many to be “the most original and creative thinker” ever produced by the Episcopal Church.<sup>1</sup> William Sanday, Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Oxford, noted in 1907 that “I strongly suspect that in his own proper field—which I might perhaps describe as the Philosophy of the Christian Religion—he is the wisest writer on the other side of the Atlantic; indeed it may not be too much to say, the wisest Anglican writer . . . on both sides of the Atlantic.”<sup>2</sup> John Macquarrie, Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Oxford in a later era, stated in 1987 that “very few” of DuBose’s theological successors (“whether process theologians, existentialists, or transcendental Thomists”) “have handled these ideas with the balance and illumination that we find in DuBose.”<sup>3</sup> Ralph E. Luker, a historian, describes DuBose as “the central figure in a southern intellectual tradition extending from 1840 to 1920.”<sup>4</sup> Sydney E. Ahlstrom considers DuBose to be “his church’s greatest theological mind,” and W. Norman Pittenger concludes that DuBose was “the only important original theologian” of the Episcopal Church in the United States.<sup>5</sup> However, DuBose’s theological contribution has not always been well recognized. To some extent, DuBose’s work has been misunderstood or ignored. Reginald H. Fuller’s “Foreword” to Donald S. Armentrout’s *A DuBose Reader* applauds the *DuBose Reader* because “It retrieves from oblivion the writings of Sewanee’s most distinguished teacher in the field of

---

The Reverend Robert B. Slocum is a candidate for the Doctor of Ministry degree in the School of Theology. He lives at 4145 Main Street, Zachary, LA 70791.

<sup>1</sup> *Lesser Feasts and Fasts* (New York: Church Hymnal Corporation, 1979), p. 296.

<sup>2</sup> William Sanday, *The Life of Christ in Recent Research* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1907), p. 281.

<sup>3</sup> John Macquarrie, “William Porcher DuBose and Modern Thought,” *St. Luke’s Journal of Theology*, 31 (December 1987): 24.

<sup>4</sup> Ralph E. Luker, “Liberal Theology and Social Conservatism: A Southern Tradition, 1840-1920,” *Church History*, 50 (June 1981): 193.

<sup>5</sup> Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1975), 2:241; W. Norman Pittenger, “Editor’s Preface,” in William Porcher DuBose, *Unity in the Faith*, ed. W. Norman Pittenger (Greenwich, Connecticut: Seabury Press, 1957), p. ix.

theology. . . .”<sup>6</sup> Armentrout likewise notes that his *DuBose Reader* “is an effort to overcome this neglect of the Episcopal Church’s finest theologian.”<sup>7</sup> With respect to such “oblivion” and “neglect,” Jon Alexander notes that DuBose’s influence as a theologian “has been much more limited than his achievement would lead one to expect.”<sup>8</sup>

Why has DuBose’s theological achievement been neglected? Various answers to this question have been provided. Some readers have found difficulties with DuBose’s writing style. For example, Alexander notes in the “Introduction” to his selection of DuBose’s writings that “The selections in this volume were chosen to illustrate DuBose’s spirituality and to spare readers as much as possible from the repetitions involved in DuBose’s spiral style of exposition.”<sup>9</sup> Other commentators have blamed the neglect of DuBose’s work on external causes. Ahlstrom suggests that DuBose’s “moderate, tradition-oriented liberalism was not widely noted, possibly because Catholic-Evangelical conflict consumed so much Episcopal energy.”<sup>10</sup> Alexander suggests that the religious climate after World War I contributed to a lack of appreciation for DuBose: “After the First World War, when discontinuity and transcendence loomed large in religious thought, DuBose’s experience of divine immanence and his acceptance of divine immanence as a fact seemed to America’s Neo-orthodox thinkers to see something that wasn’t there.”<sup>11</sup>

An important clue concerning the neglect of DuBose is found in a footnote in Alexander’s work: “In his magisterial study ‘Cultural Strain and Protestant Liberalism,’ . . . William R. Hutchison notes that one criterion for inclusion in that study was ‘explicit commitment for or against that movement in Protestantism known initially as the New Theology and later as Protestant Liberalism.’” Alexander adds, “Professor Hutchison informs me that DuBose was not included in his study because ‘he had a foot in liberalism and a foot in more conservative traditions.’ This is just the way DuBose appears in my opinion.”<sup>12</sup> That is precisely the point: DuBose’s thought is characterized by the synthesis of opposing tendencies. It does

<sup>6</sup>Reginald H. Fuller, “Foreword,” in *A DuBose Reader*, (Sewanee: The University of the South, 1984), p. ix.

<sup>7</sup>Donald S. Armentrout, “William Porcher DuBose: An Introduction to the Man,” in *A DuBose Reader*, p. xxiii.

<sup>8</sup>Jon Alexander, O.P., “Introduction,” in *William Porcher DuBose Selected Writings*, ed. Jon Alexander, O.P., (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), p. 42.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup>Ahlstrom, *Religious History*, 2:241.

<sup>11</sup>Alexander, “Introduction,” p. 41.

<sup>12</sup>Alexander, “Introduction,” p. 50, n. 90, citing William R. Hutchison, “Cultural Strain and Protestant Liberalism,” *American Historical Review*, 76 (1971): 410.

not fit very well into stylized categories such as “conservative” or “liberal,” “catholic” or “protestant.”

Attempts to understand DuBose in terms of one side of an “either/or” polarity will lead to misunderstanding. DuBose’s dialectical approach makes for a very dynamic theology. It allows a balanced understanding of many perspectives, without rendering absolute any one view or perspective. DuBose’s method also challenges theological labels and the need to label. Until the reader lets go of such terms as “liberal,” “conservative,” “catholic,” and “protestant” in their sectarian and pejorative senses, the reader will have some difficulty with DuBose. If the reader insists on such labels, DuBose will seem to fall outside all the proper categories because he does not quite “fit” into any of the opposing camps.

### *Understanding DuBose’s Theology: Experience and Major Themes*

DuBose’s theology is best understood as the result of his lived human experience, out of which arose four main themes or patterns in DuBose’s theological method. Those areas, and some of DuBose’s experiences that shaped them, are stated below and then discussed more fully in light of his autobiographical work, *Turning Points in My Life*.

#### *DuBose’s liberal and catholic approach to theology.*

DuBose’s theology was characterized by its simultaneous appreciation for the continuity of the Church’s traditions and its openness to new manifestations and discoveries of truth. This included DuBose’s appreciation for both authority and freedom in theology. In its most “advanced” form, this was a universalizing faith that transcended conventional labels and categories.

#### *DuBose’s openness to continuing revelation.*

DuBose believed that truth is discovered anew in the present circumstances and in new forms. Similarly, he believed in conversion as a life-long process of sanctification in which the faithful person continues to receive God’s grace. God’s presence (fully implicit from the beginning) can then be increasingly explicit in the life of the Church and in the life of the individual believer.

#### *DuBose’s use of the open forum to discover truth.*

DuBose believed that truth does not have to be “preserved.” He believed that open discussion and free courteous disagreement must be allowed. Through this process, the truth will emerge; errors and eccentricities will

be exposed. Truth will often appear not in "either/or" terms, but in a dialectical or dynamic relation of opposites. Two or more tendencies can then be held in a creative tension or balance without absolutely endorsing or rejecting any of them. Since discovery occurs through a dynamic process, continuing discussion in an open forum is crucial for finding truth.

*DuBose's belief in the sanctifying of human nature through enduring the hardships of life.*

DuBose believed that it is especially through facing our human limitations that we are most open to God's grace active in us. The hardships of life can shatter our illusions of self-reliance and help us begin to put serious trust in God. The times of pain and suffering in life can also be the occasion of our offering, emptying, and sacrificing ourselves. This self-offering can be joined with our Lord's sacrifice and offering, and be a means of spiritual growth and holiness in us.

*DuBose's Liberal and Catholic Approach to Theology.*

DuBose's classroom teaching method was the basis for his published theological method, and his experience as a classroom teacher was formative for his theology. DuBose noted that "the peculiarly close and personal relations which from the beginning grew up between myself and my immediate students" was a critical factor in *his* development: "I was in fact more one of them than one merely over them. I was finding and making myself in and with and through and by, as well as upon, them."<sup>13</sup> DuBose remembered his teaching experience at a 1911 gathering of his former students for a reunion in his honor. He noted that the reunion of his students was

made up, not of those of one way, but of all the ways of thinking and believing in the Church. No one thinks of asking which way is most or least in evidence among us, because with whatever of differences, we have learned here to think and live together without sense or recognition of parties or partisanship. All honest and reasonable difficulties have been met and treated with equal interest, sympathy, and mutual respect and understanding. There are men now at home and happy in the Church who could not have entered or remained in it outside of such a welcoming atmosphere of large-mindedness and large-heartedness.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup>William Forcher DuBose, *Turning Points in My Life* (New York: Longman's, Green & Co., 1912), p. 4.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

DuBose experienced the success and value of his liberal catholic method through years of teaching at Sewanee.

DuBose's liberal catholic theology was expressed in many ways. He saw himself, his theology, and the Church as both under authority and having liberty to explore the meaning of faith. DuBose said: "When I speak of my life as catholic, I use the adjective as expressive of freedom or liberty of thought and conviction in religious matters. My aim is to determine what is the true freedom or liberty. . . . It is not freedom from any authority whatever, for if there be any real authority, freedom will consist in and be measured by the ability to recognize, regard, and obey it."<sup>15</sup> DuBose's liberal catholic theology was "universalizing" in the sense that he reached out to discover truth wherever it could be found. He criticized "The principle of competition, of antagonistic, divisive competition, of hateful, hating" that "has been prevailing in Christianity just as much as in our earthly life and business."<sup>16</sup> This universalizing tendency in DuBose's theology led him to be a proponent of religious toleration and ecumenical unity. He was well aware of the limits of partisan conflict:

All the new things, all the modern *isms*, of Christianity that have life in them, as many of them have, are but broken fragments of the Truth that is One and is ever the Same. While our sects and our parties live by the truth that is in them and that is vital in them, they are but too apt to live also in a deadly competition with other truths as true as they, and so in fatal detriment to the whole and the wholeness of truth.<sup>17</sup>

DuBose also saw a dynamic and potentially limiting relationship between religious toleration and ecumenical unity. DuBose's deep commitment to ecumenical unity was clear; but he did not want unity at any price. DuBose explained his apparent equivocation in this area: "unity is so essential and so necessary a thing in Christianity that it must not be sacrificed to the demands of an impossible uniformity. . . ."<sup>18</sup> The liberal/catholic aspect of this dynamic is readily apparent. Unity of the Church would be the most complete expression of the Church's catholicity. The Church would then be organically comprehensive and inclusive. Yet the quest for catholicity through unity must live in balance with the Church's toleration for differing expressions of truth, differing processes for the discovery of truth, and even errors that occur in those fallible processes. DuBose noted:

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 126.

while the Church must ever maintain and represent the unity and continuity of truth and life, must resist change until it can win her own catholic consent, and must stand for the highest tribunal and authority possible for us, it must for its own life do this alongside, and in a real tolerance of, the utmost liberty and diversity, the always possible and often actual mistakes and contradictions of her individual members.<sup>19</sup>

An enforced, restrictive, "impossible uniformity" in the Church will ultimately be self-defeating—even if motivated by the quest for unity.

DuBose was not seeking a bland middle ground or "lowest common denominator" of different approaches. DuBose wanted to find real and dynamic unity out of divergence. He sought to draw out and draw together what would be partial aspects of truth if left in isolation. DuBose's method was truly liberal and catholic.

DuBose's commitment to this liberal and catholic method was based in his own classroom teaching experience. He believed in this approach because he had *seen* it work with his students. DuBose reflected on this experience at the Sewanee reunion in his honor:

We who are gathered here are of every sort and of all sorts as to our natural and acquired attitudes toward truth and life; we represent all the sides and aspects of faith and opinion; we have all the allowable differences among ourselves. In all this conference and in all our personal association I have not heard one note, I have not detected one tone that did not, or could not, carry me back behind all our differences to the one theme that has occupied all our thoughts, filled all our hearts, to the exclusion of everything else—The Life—the Life that was lived, that lived, for us—that lives in us, and in which alone we live. In that truest sense we have gone back to Christ, back behind everything else, to Christ, Who is our Life.<sup>20</sup>

DuBose's liberal catholic method of theology was rooted in his experience as a teacher. For DuBose, the liberal catholic dynamic of the classroom became the liberal catholic dynamic of a theology. It was a lesson of experience for him.

#### *DuBose's Openness to Continuing Revelation*

DuBose saw conversion as a life-long *process* by which the faithful person receives the Holy Spirit and grows in grace. This process is dynam-

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 122-123.

ic: the gift of the Holy Spirit continues, and the believer seeks to continue receiving and appropriating the Spirit's gift. Of course, this dynamic is true for the whole Church as it is true for the individual believer. DuBose's appreciation of this revelatory process was rooted in his own conversion experience. He *knew* conversion to be a continuing process by which God's presence and activity in the life of the believer becomes increasingly overt and explicit. DuBose had a rather dramatic conversion experience when he was a young cadet at The Citadel in 1854. He later recalled:

Perfectly unconscious and unsuspecting of anything unusual, I knelt to go through the form [of prayers], when of a sudden there swept over me a feeling of the emptiness and unmeaningness of the act and of my whole life and self. I leapt to my feet trembling, and then that happened which I can only describe by saying that a light shone about me and a Presence filled the room. At the same time an ineffable joy and peace took possession of me which it is impossible either to express or explain.<sup>21</sup>

DuBose knew well that his faith was not fully developed at the time of his conversion experience. The experience was not explicit, and neither was his faith. His "conscious sense of sin," his felt need for repentance, his "realization of the meaning of the Cross, or of the Resurrection, or of the Church or the Sacraments" were still unformed. But the experience was real, and transforming. It meant a "New World" and a "New Self" for DuBose. And in this New World and New Self, "God was."<sup>22</sup>

DuBose's conversion experience was for him a beginning of a process—not a conclusion or an ending. His faith and potential growth in the faith were fully implicit in him at the time of his conversion. DuBose explained that his conversion was the beginning of his "awakened and actualized spiritual life," and "must be supposed to have contained in it the potencies and promise of all that was to be."<sup>23</sup> He later observed that "in even so inchoate a conversion and faith as that I am describing, there was, however implicit, the reality of a distinctively Christian life."<sup>24</sup> DuBose understood conversion as a process in which "inchoate" and "implicit" faith became increasingly mature and explicit.

DuBose's understanding of the Church was also shaped by his appreciation of conversion as a process. He noted that "Christianity, the Unity of humanity with and in God, is an ideal which is not *ipso facto* an actuality;

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 18-19.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 20-21.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 24.



but it is an ideal which it is our whole Christian business in this world, as much as we can and as fast as we can, to bring to actuality."<sup>25</sup> The Church's process of conversion (like the individual believer's process of conversion) is an "already but not yet" condition of faithfulness that is fully implicit but not yet fully explicit.

DuBose's understanding of the need for religious humility and toleration was shaped by his view of the Church's process of conversion: "the full actualization of Christianity will come only with the fruition of the world's destiny, in the end of the ages. When a man learns that, he will be modest either about his own truth or about impugning other people's truth."<sup>26</sup> This understanding of the Church in process also informed a pastoral "moral" for DuBose concerning Church dogma and the newly converted (and not so newly converted). He noted the "spiritual irrationality and impossibility of extorting from converts or beginners, or indeed of Christians all, any true or real confession of the sum total or detailed contents of Christianity."<sup>27</sup> This pastoral advice was based on DuBose's understanding of the difference between implicit and explicit faith in the conversion process. Once again, DuBose's theological understanding was formed by his own experience. He explained:

I have all my life been coming to what of truth I hold, and there is truth to which I have not yet come. All the truth of the Church is not yet mine: there are points of it that I know to be true, because I have been all the time approximating to them; but I am still waiting, and shall probably die waiting, for them to become true to me.<sup>28</sup>

Sanctification is a process by which the fully implicit faith of the Church (or the individual believer) becomes increasingly explicit through continuing revelation. This is a dynamic process by which God keeps on giving and the believer keeps on appropriating God's gift and growing in grace. And, by the grace of God, the implicit becomes increasingly explicit in the life of the believer. This process of growth in faith begins with God's initiative. DuBose explained that "Baptism is not an act of man which his faith goes before and accomplishes, it is an act of God which his faith comes after and accepts and appropriates and realizes and actualizes in himself."<sup>29</sup>

Clearly, DuBose's theology of sanctification as a process was rooted in his

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 98.

life experience. He recalled his spiritual condition at the time of his conversion experience: "The task of materializing or actualizing that as yet only ideal, of embodying the sentiment of it into habit and character and life, I was indeed far from realizing. But were not the principle and potency of the whole already present and operative in me?"<sup>30</sup> DuBose's experience of the "already but not yet" in his own faith was critical in forming his theology of sanctification as a process.

### *DuBose's Use of the Open Forum to Discover Truth*

DuBose believed the truth will stand on its own. There is no need for truth to be preserved, stuffed, or frozen to protect it. As the gift of the Holy Spirit continues in daily process, truth can be discovered anew in each situation. This process of discovery is catholic and liberal: the truth we discover today will be in ultimate continuity with the truth discovered yesterday and tomorrow, because the source of truth is also continuous. There is no need to fear truth as we discover it, whatever its time or source. There is no need to limit free and open discussion in the name of truth. The errors, weaknesses, and inconsistencies of our propositions can then be exposed in an open forum for discussion. The open forum also means that opposing "sides" need to communicate with each other, listen to each other, and take each other seriously. Dialogue will otherwise become monologue.

DuBose's belief in the open forum for theology was based in his personal experience as a student and teacher. He recalled that, as a seminarian, he encountered an "intelligent and aggressive theological student" of the "Calvinistic, low churchmanship school."<sup>31</sup> Discussions with this student caused DuBose "difficulties and perplexities" that went beyond the areas of their disagreements. DuBose explained:

It soon passed with me beyond the mere issue or question of Calvinism, to which . . . I have never reverted. . . . But at the time I encountered and had to overcome this temptation: We are often enough tempted to believe what antecedent prejudice or inclination makes us wish to believe. . . . I asked myself, Am I prepared to make the necessary sacrifice in order to follow the truth wherever it may lead me?<sup>32</sup>

DuBose's own integrity was at issue. He could not judge Calvinism until he could hear it out and see what truth it might convey. Anything less would

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. 22-23.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 31-32.

be an uninformed reaction on the basis of prejudice. DuBose opened himself to the possibility of truth in Calvinism, and sacrificed his prejudices in order to “follow the truth” wherever it would lead him. DuBose could then knowingly distinguish his position from Calvinism—to which he “never reverted.”

DuBose believed in the open forum as a means for the Church to continue to discover truth. Truth, error, and extremes of thought would all be known through the critical process of the Church’s open forum. DuBose said:

Extremes always work themselves off best by freedom to work themselves out. The best expulsion of error is through the freedom permitted to it of self-exposure. Our end in view is not the licensing of error, but the ultimate best, if not only, method of eliminating error by suffering it to meet and be overcome by truth. By all means let the Church guard and preserve her faith, order, and discipline, her creeds, her ministry, and her worship. But let her neither indulge the weak fear that these are really endangered or compromised by the fullest freedom conceded to and exercised by her members, nor imagine that danger or harm can be averted by the suppression or by the expulsion of that freedom.<sup>33</sup>

In this regard, DuBose noted that it is ultimately much safer for the Church to tolerate extremes and disagreement in an open forum than to suppress apparent error in the name of truth.

DuBose’s commitment to the open forum was also expressed in his classroom teaching method at Sewanee. He recalled:

As my system and method of Exegesis grew and took shape in the thought and life of the class, questions naturally arose, and the newness of the presentation was often an irritant as well as a stimulant. I held that my place and part was in the mine, not in the mint, of the truth of Christianity, that free enquiry and investigation, not dogma (which would have its proper place after), was in order with us. Everything was to be tested and verified, according to our Lord’s prescription, in the light and in the terms of human nature, human life, and human destiny.<sup>34</sup>

It seems that all theological propositions were fair game for critical discussion in DuBose’s classroom. DuBose’s use of the open forum in his teaching

---

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

became a characteristic of the theological method in his writing. He saw the open forum as the standard for his time: "This is an age in which everything must stand or fall by its own internal virtue of reality. Professions and pretensions must go down before the true and wholesome spirit of scepticism, criticism, and verification which will spare nothing as too sacred for it, and which is most needed just in the things that are the most sacred."<sup>35</sup>

The open forum was many things for DuBose: a matter of personal integrity, the heart of his classroom teaching method, and the basis of his published theology. DuBose's consistency of thought and experience was integral to his understanding of the process of discovering truth: "The only and whole test and proving of the truth is in the doing. This is not unreasonable; it is a question of what life is, and there is no way of verifying and knowing life but by living it."<sup>36</sup> DuBose was a man dedicated to living the truth.

*DuBose's Belief in the Sanctifying of Human Nature Through Enduring the Hardships of Life.*

DuBose encountered suffering and painful losses during his life. As a Confederate soldier during the Civil War, he was wounded in action on three occasions and later taken as a prisoner of war. The greatest loss for DuBose at this time, however, was the destruction of his world as he knew it. In his *Reminiscences*, DuBose recalled that his brigade in the Confederate Army had never "slept behind a field of battle" until their sudden defeat at Cedar Creek in the Valley of Virginia in 1864. That night, the brigade slept 15 miles behind the day's field of battle, and it was "the turning point of the war" for DuBose.<sup>37</sup> DuBose recalled this incident in *Turning Points*: "When we finally rested about midnight, I could not sleep; the end of the world was upon me as completely as upon the Romans when the barbarians had overrun them. Never once before had it dawned upon me the possibility of final defeat for the Confederate cause. That night it came over me like a shock of death that the Confederacy was beginning to break. . . ."<sup>38</sup> The imminent loss of the Confederacy meant the loss of DuBose's world as he knew it, and this was a shock for him; the experience of shock and loss led DuBose to a deeper faith commitment. DuBose noted that, at Cedar Creek, "the actual issue was all upon me that fateful night in which, under the stars, alone upon the planet, without home or country or

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>37</sup>William Porcher DuBose, "The Reminiscences of William Porcher DuBose, D.D., S.T.D.," Comp. William Haskell DuBose, typescript copy, Seminary Library, The University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee, p. 133.

<sup>38</sup>DuBose, *Turning Points*, p. 49.

any earthly interest or object before me, my very world at an end, I redevoted myself wholly and only to God, and to the work and life of His Kingdom, whatever and wherever that might be."<sup>39</sup> DuBose qualified his understanding of this experience in retrospect, but its powerful impact remained with him. He added, "Of course all was not so lost as that night it seemed to me to be. . . . But such an experience can never be altogether lost, and I go back to it at times for such a sense of utter extinction of the world, and presence of only the Eternal and the Abiding, as is seldom vouchsafed to one."<sup>40</sup>

DuBose faced other major losses in his life. After the Civil War, he found his family "utterly impoverished" and the country "stript of the barest means of subsistence."<sup>41</sup> In later life, DuBose faced personal tragedies. His wife died in 1872, and his young son Samuel died in 1874. These were terribly painful losses for DuBose. But he came through the losses to know God's saving presence in his life. DuBose's theology was based in his experience, and his theology was most powerfully shaped by his most powerful life experiences—including especially the losses he endured. DuBose explained that God

will not change nature for us, but He will, if we love Him and enter into His purpose, make everything in nature, the good and the evil, good to us, work together for our good. I do not mean that He will do this merely by fitting or adjusting us to things as they are, but that He will make the things, whatever they are, actual instruments and ministers of our good—as He made Judas and Herod and Pontius Pilate, and Satan and death and hell all minister to the human glorification, because spiritual perfection, of Jesus Christ.<sup>42</sup>

This theology was based in the lessons of DuBose's life experience. As we face the limitations of our situation and empty ourselves through endurance, service, and sacrifice, we can be more completely filled by God's love. DuBose noted that

The principle of prayer is rooted in the fact of need, want, poverty. Our Lord makes poverty the first condition of spiritual blessedness, because in it begins all the dependence upon God the end of which is oneness with Him. Out of that poverty come

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp. 49-50.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., pp. 88-89.

all godly sorrow, all noble meekness and humility, all hunger and thirst for rightness and fullness of life, all faith in God, all hope in self, all true self-realization and soul satisfaction.<sup>43</sup>

DuBose knew poverty and loss in his life, as he knew the grace of God that can be found for endurance. The power of that discovery became a cornerstone of DuBose's theology, and his life offering.

---

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

### **License and Permissible Use Notice**

These materials are provided to you by the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) in accordance with the terms of ATLA's agreements with the copyright holder or authorized distributor of the materials, as applicable. In some cases, ATLA may be the copyright holder of these materials.

You may download, print, and share these materials for your individual use as may be permitted by the applicable agreements among the copyright holder, distributors, licensors, licensees, and users of these materials (including, for example, any agreements entered into by the institution or other organization from which you obtained these materials) and in accordance with the fair use principles of United States and international copyright and other applicable laws. You may not, for example, copy or email these materials to multiple web sites or publicly post, distribute for commercial purposes, modify, or create derivative works of these materials without the copyright holder's express prior written permission.

Please contact the copyright holder if you would like to request permission to use these materials, or any part of these materials, in any manner or for any use not permitted by the agreements described above or the fair use provisions of United States and international copyright and other applicable laws. For information regarding the identity of the copyright holder, refer to the copyright information in these materials, if available, or contact ATLA at [products@atla.com](mailto:products@atla.com).

Except as otherwise specified, Copyright © 2016 American Theological Library Association.