

A TRIBUTE TO ROBERT MILLIKAN

“ESCORTED by great thought, this star of virtue revealed to us blind mortals the hid eternities.” These words which Michelangelo wrote in tribute to Dante seem to be a worthy tribute to Robert Andrews Millikan. “Escorted by great thought,” he *was* a “star of virtue,” and he did help us to open our eyes, and see “*the hid eternities.*”

No one is unfamiliar with his work as a scientist. Through his researches in the field of physics, he has helped men to know more of the nature of this universe, our home. But his interest was not bounded by the laboratory. His knowledge was encyclopedic; and there was no subject concerning the development of human culture with which he was not familiar.

This universe which he explored he saw as primarily spiritual. He approached it with the reverence of a man of God. To him the universe was but the outer garment of the cosmic Mind. He liked to speak on the harmony of science and religion, for to him science was but one avenue to the God who must also be known through faith. He gave much of his time to helping others see this harmony, and to understand that knowledge and religion can never have a conflict between them.

His faith was expressed in the words of Einstein which he loved to quote: “It is enough for me to contemplate the mystery of conscious life, perpetuating itself through all eternity—to reflect upon the marvelous structure of the universe, which we can but dimly perceive—and to try humbly to comprehend even an infinitesimal part of the Intelligence manifested in nature.”

He continually gave himself for others, in countless ways. The breadth of his concern for other human beings embraced all humanity. It is expressed in the “standard of duty,” which he often quoted from Montesquieu: “If I knew something beneficial to myself, but harmful to my family, I would drive it out of my mind. If I knew something advantageous to my family, but injurious to my country, I would try to forget it. If I knew something profitable to my country, but detrimental to the human race, I would consider it a crime.” To him, the largest duty was to the world.

But to us who knew him well, especially in the little church which he loved, perhaps the chiefest mark of his greatness was his humility. Never ostentatious, he wore his laurels easily, never feeling other than just one among men. Of all virtues, the one which he prized and practiced most fully was sincerity. That was why men so truly loved him.

by

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