



The Sinews of the Spirit: The Ideal of Christian Manliness in Victorian Literature and Religious Thought

Norman Vance

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This book provides a fresh perspective on nineteenth-century life by examining the nature and context of 'Christian manliness' or 'muscular Christianity', an ideal of conduct that was widely popular with Victorian preachers and writers. It pays particular attention to Charles Kingsley (author of *The Water-Babies*) and Thomas Hughes (author of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*). Dr Vance traces the origins of Christian manliness in the traditions of English sporting prowess, in notions of chivalry and gentlemanliness, and in the preaching of vigorous virtue from St Paul to Victorian evangelists. He also considers the social and religious thought of Coleridge, Carlyle, F. D. Maurice and Thomas Arnold, showing how Kingsley and Hughes developed their own ideals of Christian manliness against this background, and in keen response to the troubles of their time: social unrest, religious rancour, war and disease. A final chapter traces the fragmentation and debasement of the ideal in the twentieth century.

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