

CT 161

"THE REIGN OF LAW"

IN MIND AS IN MATTER,

AND ITS

BEARING UPON CHRISTIAN DOGMA AND MORAL
RESPONSIBILITY.

PART I.

BY

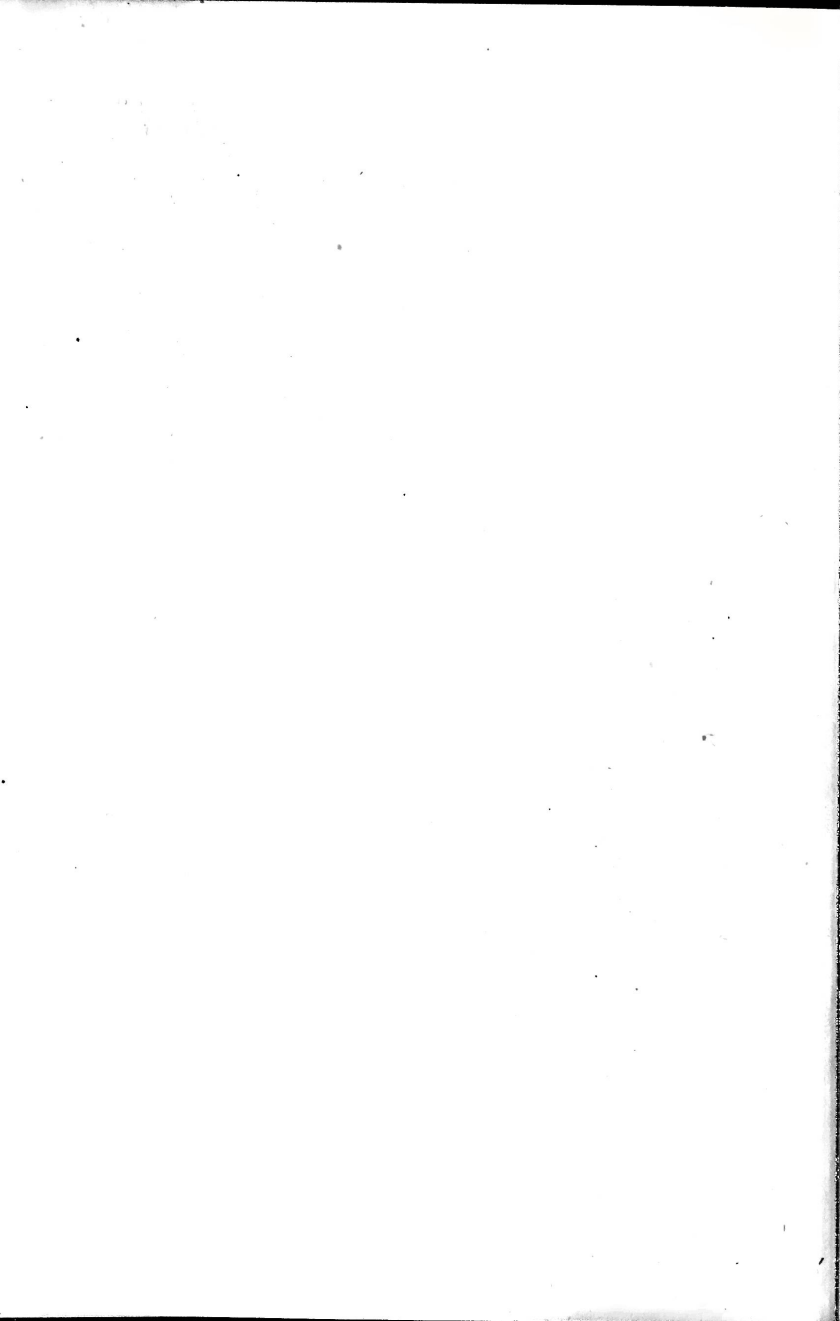
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PUBLISHED BY THOMAS SCOTT,
NO. 11, THE TERRACE, FARQUHAR ROAD,
UPPER NORWOOD, LONDON, S.E.

Price Sixpence.



THE
REIGN OF LAW IN MIND AS IN MATTER,
AND ITS
BEARING UPON CHRISTIAN DOGMA.

“At first laying down, as a fact fundamental,
That nothing with God can be accidental.”

Longfellow.

L ECKY'S admirable histories of Rationalism and European Morals, show most clearly that there is a law of orderly and progressive transformation to which our speculative opinions are subject, the causes of which are to be sought in the general intellectual condition of society. Every great change, therefore, in the popular creed is always preceded by a great change in the intellectual condition of the people, and speculative opinions which are embraced by any large body of men, are accepted, not on account of the arguments upon which they rest, but on account of a predisposition to receive them. Opinion pervades society as water does a sponge, or like yeast-cells growing in a fermented mass. Reasoning, which, in one age, would make no impression whatever, in the next is received with enthusiastic applause. This is owing to the fact, that, as a general rule,—not entirely, however, without exception,—it is our feelings and not the intellect that rule us; it is the feelings that connect us with the prevailing state of public opinion with which we are *en rapport* that shape our conduct, and not our theoretical convictions. It is this that makes

missionary efforts so fruitless, and proselytising almost impossible in old and partially civilized countries which have already a religion of their own. Mr Lecky shows us that the history of the abolition of torture, the history of punishments, the history of the treatment of the conquered in war, the history of slavery, all present us with examples of practices which in one age were accepted as perfectly right and natural, and which in another age were repudiated as palpably and atrociously inhuman. In each case, the change was effected much less by any intellectual process than by a certain quickening of the emotions, and consequently of the moral judgments.

Galileo was condemned because the Scripture says, that "the sun runneth about from one end of the earth to the other," and that "the foundations of the earth are so firmly fixed, that they cannot be moved." Science might show that the earth did move notwithstanding, but then many refused to look through Galileo's telescope, and those who did were disposed to compromise the matter like the young student who, when asked by the examiners whether the earth moved round the sun, or the sun round the earth, said, with a spirit of "reconciliation" worthy of the present age, "Sometimes one, and sometimes the other." Even the great Lord Bacon was sceptical on this question of the earth's motion, although not quite in the same direction; he said, "It is the absurdity of these opinions that has driven men to the diurnal motion of the earth, which I am convinced is most false." It took a century and a-half to reconcile mankind to the Copernican Astronomy, and there are many now who refuse to believe that the earth is round, the fact being contrary to Scripture: for how in such case could people at the antipodes see the Son of God descending in his glory? If there are some who thus suspect their geography to be unorthodox, there are others equally at fault in their natural history. Being religiously

brought up, and therefore in early possession of a Noah's Ark, they know perfectly well the truth of the story about it; but as they get older, they do not see very well how all the animals could be got into it, and in this discrepancy between Science and Scripture, of course, the former has to give way. They are not prepared to accept St Augustine's road out of the difficulty, that the assembling the animals in the ark must have been for the sake of prefiguring the gathering of all nations into the Church, and not in order to secure the replenishing of the world with life.

But if it took so long to introduce the Copernican system, it took much longer to get rid of witchcraft, or the firm conviction which all had, that the Devil, through ugly old women and others, interfered personally in our affairs. The horrors attending this belief it is impossible to describe or even to conceive. The way in which the truth of the accusation was tested, had the logic that peculiarly distinguishes theological controversy; the witch was put into water, and if she was drowned, she was innocent, if not, she was guilty, and burned alive. Chief Baron Sir Matthew Hale's reasoning seems almost equally conclusive. Charging the jury in the trial for witchcraft of Amy Duny and Rose Callender in 1664, he says, "That there are such creatures as witches, I make no doubt at all; for, first, the Scriptures have affirmed as much; and secondly, the wisdom of all nations, particularly of our own, hath provided laws against them." Among others, an Anglican clergyman, named Lower, who was now verging on eighty, and who for fifty years had been an irreproachable minister of his church, fell under suspicion. He was thrown into the water, condemned and hung, and we are told that, "Baxter relates the whole story with evident pleasure." Lecky, *Rationalism*, Vol. i. p. 117. "As late as 1773, the divines of the Associated Presbytery passed a resolution declaring their belief in witchcraft, and deploring

the scepticism that was general," Lecky, Vol. i. p. 147. John Wesley also was a firm believer in witchcraft, and for some time we know inhabited a haunted house. He said that the giving up of witchcraft was in effect giving up the bible. But, notwithstanding the strenuous opposition of the clergy everywhere, the belief in witchcraft died a natural death. It was not argument that killed it, but it could not breathe the spirit of the age, and it was then very naturally discovered that the word translated witch in Leviticus may be translated "poisoner." Both the translation and explanation of the Bible have always admitted of great adaptation and reconciliation.

The belief in the devil's agents and imps having gone out in the light of the age, the belief in the devil himself is fast following; he is getting very faint; in fact, he is not admitted at all into polite society. The belief in the existence of a *personal* embodiment of the principle of evil may be said no longer to exist among educated people, but at one time it was a most vivid reality. To Luther he was a constant presence, and the black stain is still shown in the castle of Wartburg, where he threw his inkstand at him. He gradually, however, got more accustomed to him, and he tells us how, in the monastery of Wittenberg, hearing a noise in the night, he perceived that it was *only* the Devil, and accordingly he went to sleep again.

We now ask, Is public opinion prepared to accept the doctrine that the Reign of Law is universal in Mind as in Matter? That there is no exception to the Reign of Law? That there is no such thing as chance or spontaneity, or a free-will, or a free anything, but that there is a sufficient cause for everything? I fear this question must be answered in the negative. Natural Science has gradually substituted the conception of harmonious and unchanging law, for the conception of a universe governed by perpetual miracle, or capricious will, or chance in the world of matter; but that law, or

necessity, or certainty, equally pervades the world of mind, is at present confined to philosophers, and to those only who have made the Science of Mind their study. Still it is a great truth which must ultimately prevail, and when it does, it will bring as great and beneficial a change in our system of ethics, as the Copernican system has in our Astronomy.

By reference to the first volume of Grote's *Greece*, we find that Socrates treated Physics and Astronomy as departments reserved by the gods for their own actions, and not subject to ascertainable laws, and that human research was even impious. "In China at the present day," says Eitel, "the Chinese sages see a golden chain of spiritual life running through every form of existence, and binding together as in one living body everything that subsists in heaven above, or in earth below. But this truth is with them a mere hypothesis, not a generalization from observed facts. Experimental philosophy is unknown in China. They invented no instruments to aid them in the observation of the heavenly bodies, they never took to hunting beetles and stuffing birds, they shrank from the idea of dissecting animal bodies, nor did they chemically analyse inorganic substances, but with very little actual knowledge of nature they evolved a whole system of natural science from their own inner consciousness, and expanded it according to the dogmatic formulæ of ancient tradition." This is precisely the condition of our clerical sages at the present time in the department, not of physics, but of mental science. Things may or may not happen, not according to any known or calculable law or order, but according to the free will of the actor, which is supposed to obey no law. And this free will is the key-stone of both their morality and religion.

Mr Herbert Spencer truly says, "There can be no complete acceptance of sociology as a science, so long as the belief in a social order not conforming to natural

law, survives. Hence, as already said, considerations touching the study of sociology, not very influential even over the few who recognise a social science, can have scarcely any effects on the great mass to whom a social science is an incredibility."

"I do not mean," he says, "that this prevailing imperviousness to scientific conceptions of social phenomena is to be regretted. . . . The desirable thing is, that a growth of ideas and feelings tending to produce modification, shall be joined with a continuance of ideas and feelings tending to preserve stability . . . That in our day, one in Mr Gladstone's position should think as he does, seems to me very desirable. That we should have for our working-king one in whom a purely scientific conception of things had become dominant, and who was thus out of harmony with our present social state, would probably be detrimental, and might be disastrous."* Mr Gladstone has, however, since explained (*Contemporary*, December 1873), that he was misunderstood; that he does not either affirm or deny either evolution or unchangeable law, but that what he wished to imply was, that, be they either true or false, certain persons have made an unwarrantable use of them. That a law-maker should not be much in advance of his age may be true enough, but that the "prevailing imperviousness" to the great truth, that law and order equally prevail in mind as in matter, is, I think, much to be regretted. The inductive philosophy applied to mind will work as great a revolution as its application to physics has done since Bacon's time.

I shall first consider, then, what this great truth is, and then its application both as to what it would destroy, and what it would build up. The great truth is, that there is no such thing as freedom of will. Men formerly believed that the sun went round the earth: they saw and felt that it did. The supposed freedom of will is equally an illusion and delusion.

* *The Study of Sociology*, p. 365.

J. S. Mill tells us that "The conviction that phenomena have invariable laws, and follow with regularity certain antecedent phenomena, was only acquired gradually, and extended itself as knowledge advanced, from one order of phenomena to another, beginning with those whose laws were most accessible to observation. This progress has not yet attained its ultimate point; there being still one class of phenomena (human volitions) the subjection of which to invariable laws is not yet recognised. . . . At length we are fully warranted in considering that law, *as applied to all phenomena* within the range of human observation, stands on an equal footing in respect to evidence with the axioms of geometry itself." Such, I believe, is the conviction of all the great leaders in science—certainly in mental science—of the present day. I need quote only a few. Let us first go back a generation. Jonathan Edwards, in his work on the freedom of the will, has always been considered as unanswerable, but having proved the *certainty* of all events by reason, he accepts free-will from Scripture. Now, that any thing can be certain but at the same time contingent is a contradiction. He says, "Nothing comes to pass without a cause. What is self-existent must be from eternity, and must be unchangeable; but as to all things that *begin to be*, they are not self-existent, and therefore must have some foundation for their existence without themselves." "In no mind," says Spinoza, "is there an absolute or free volition; but it is determined to choose this or that by a cause, which likewise has been fixed by another, and this again by a third, and so on for ever." He also says, "Human liberty, of which all boast, consists solely in this, that man is conscious of his will, and unconscious of the causes by which it is determined." That is, he is often unconscious of the motives that govern the will, and still more so of the causes that govern his motives—the same action that always accompanies and

precedes every feeling and volition always goes on unconsciously, and the conscious volitions tell him nothing of it.

Consciousness thus deludes us into the conviction that our volitions originate in ourselves, we being unconscious of the train of physical forces in which they originate; by ourselves meaning the aggregate of our mental powers, and if there is no impediment to their action that is what we call "freedom." Locke used to say, "That we should not ask whether the will is free, but whether we are free to follow its dictates," for this is really all that men mean by their boasted freedom.

A free action, as to an accomplished result, can only mean that the agent was not externally forced to do it. This is probably all that Lord Houghton means by freedom, but he confounds this freedom of action with freedom of will. He says, as president of his section on Social Economy (1862), "I think we shall see that there enters into this question an element which is *almost* contradictory of strict scientific principle. That element is human liberty, the free-will of mankind. Without that free-will no man can have individual power of *action*, no man can call himself a man," &c. It is this confounding the freedom from physical constraint which enables us to act in accordance with the will, with the freedom of the will itself, which dictates the action, that produces the confusion on the subject. When it is said freedom of will is a *fact*, that we *feel* we are free to do as we please, &c., all that is meant is this freedom from the constraint that would oblige us to do, or leave undone, one thing rather another, and not that the mind, or will, or what we please to do, is free or independent of causation.

Professor Mansel, however, believed differently; he says (*Prolegomena Logica*, p. 152), "In every act of volition I am fully conscious that I can at this moment act in either of two ways, and that, all the antecedent phenomena being precisely the same, I may determine

one way to-day and another to-morrow." That is, the same causes (all the antecedent phenomena) may produce one effect to-day and another to-morrow, and all who believe in the freedom of the will are obliged logically to accept this conclusion. Choice, or to "act in either of two ways," implies a preference or motive for choosing one rather than the other; if, as is almost impossible, the mind is equally balanced, then some physical cause, not within the field of consciousness, dictates the choice. That the action has no cause is impossible. This power of choice that we feel we possess is simply that, when freed from physical constraint, we can do as we please, but what we *please* to do depends upon our nature, which, in both mind and body, is governed by its own laws.

It is upon this freedom from external constraint by which we can do as we please, *i.e.*, act in accordance with our will, that the *intuition*, which with the many is stronger than reason, is founded. Kant says, "No beginning *which occurs of itself* is possible," and yet he believed in the freedom of the will, thinking that the intuition, based upon a delusive experience, was more reliable than the reason.

Dr Laycock (Mind and Brain) says, "There is, in fact, no more a spontaneous act of will than there is spontaneous generation. Strictly, such an act is a creation, and belongs only to creative power." There are those who think that the creative power of God is, or may be, exercised without cause or motive, and that He has bestowed upon man, in a minor degree, the same power, and that this is man's distinguishing characteristic from the brutes; but if so, this dignified attribute is only that of a madman, who alone is supposed to act without cause or motive.

Lewes, in his new work, "Problems of Life and Mind," p. 128, also gives his testimony in favour of necessity; thus, he says, "The moralist will be found passionately arguing that the conduct of men, which is

simply the expression of their impulses and habits, can be at once altered by giving them new ideas of right conduct. The psychologist, accustomed to consider the mind as something apart from the organism, individual and collective, is peculiarly liable to this error of overlooking the fact that all mental manifestations are simply the resultants of the conditions external and internal."

Professor Huxley's utterances are a little more obscure. He is represented by C. B. Upton, B.A., as "rejecting almost contemptuously the freedom of the will," and he himself says (*On the Physical Basis of Life*), "Matter and law have devoured spirit and spontaneity. And as sure as every future grows out of every past and present, so will the physiology of the future gradually extend the realm of matter and law until it is co-extensive with knowledge, with feeling, and with action." But he elsewhere says (*Fortnightly Review*), "philosophers gird themselves for battle upon the last and greatest of all speculative problems. Does human nature possess any free volition or truly anthropomorphic element, or is it only the cunningest of all nature's clocks? Some, among whom I count myself, think that the battle will for ever remain a drawn one, and that, for all practical purposes, this result is as good as anthropomorphism winning the day." Would not "sometimes one and sometimes the other," do quite as well as a drawn battle? The Doctor evidently agrees with Kant, that "no beginning that occurs of itself is possible;" he appears to be also of opinion:—

"That what's impossible can't be,
And never, never comes to pass."

Colman's "Broad Grins."

that is, *very seldom* comes to pass!

There is nothing perhaps more remarkable in the whole history of thought, than the intellectual shuffling of all our great thinkers, to avoid meeting this fact of

“certainty” face to face. I hope, however, to be able to show that for all practical purposes it is most important that “the realm of law should be co-extensive with knowledge, with feeling, and with action.” But the comparative recent discovery of the persistence of force or the conservation of energy, furnishes the modern practical proof that law is present everywhere; as Herbert Spencer concisely puts it, “Force can neither come into existence nor cease to exist. Each manifestation of force can be interpreted only as the effect of some antecedent force; no matter whether it be an inorganic action, or animal movement, a thought, or a feeling. Either this must be conceded, or else it must be asserted that our successive states of consciousness are self-created.” Which, of course, they must be if the will is free: to determine is to use force, which can “be interpreted only as the effect of some antecedent force.” Mr Spencer also says, “If such co-existences and sequences as those of biology and sociology, are not yet reduced to law, the presumption is, not that they are irreducible to law, but that their laws elude our present means of analysis;” for as Buckle shows, “the actions of man have the same uniformity of connection which physical events have; and the law or laws of these uniformities can be inductively ascertained in the same way as the laws of the material world.”

The causational theory of the Will has hitherto been called Philosophical Necessity, but just exception has been taken to this, as we know of no necessity, we know only of certainty. Mr J. S. Mill says, “A volition is a moral effect, which follows the corresponding moral causes as certainly and invariably as physical effects follow their physical causes. Whether it *must* do so, I acknowledge myself to be entirely ignorant, be the phenomenon moral or physical; and I condemn, accordingly, the word necessity as applied to either case. All I know is, that it always *does*.” For myself,

I regard all power or cause as will-power, and every cause and effect as at one time consciously and voluntarily established to serve a set purpose; this mental relation has passed in the ages into what we call physical laws, that is, the unconscious or automatic mental state, but the connection is not *necessary*, and might be dissolved when the purpose was no longer served. We have some curious illustrations, however, of the habit being continued where the purpose is no longer served; where organs that were useful lower down in the scale are passed on to higher grades when they are no longer of any use,—Nature, for instance, having got into the habit of making teeth, makes them sometimes—as in the guinea pig, who sheds them before it is born—when they are not wanted. These apparent exceptions to design are made the most of for atheistical purposes.

This view of things at present, I suppose, may be said to be exclusively my own, but I do not see why we may not fairly infer that what takes place at present in man on a small scale, has previously been the law of mind in Nature. If an action serves its purpose we repeat it, and the action becomes habitual, then structural, and is transmitted and becomes what we call instinct, and what is instinct in men and animals becomes invariable law in nature. We know of no mind in the universe unconnected with body, and therefore not liable to follow the same law. As Pope well expresses it:—

“ All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body nature is, and God the soul.”

That the order of nature was originally voluntary to serve a purpose, and that its uniformity and invariability is consequent upon its being the nature of all mind connected with structure to become automatic, I think we may regard as highly probable. The principal purpose that this invariability now serves is that

it enables men and animals to regulate their actions and to adapt their conduct to the fact that what has been will be. Of course, if the will, or anything, were free, this invariability would not exist, and men could not look forward or reason at all.

This certainty is very different to the iron-bound necessity of the mere physicist and positivist, and leaves room for special intervention if such should be required; and as animal instincts adapt themselves to new conditions, so according, at least, to our present knowledge, there appears to be many a gap in evolution, and many a space in Natural Selection and the Origin of Species to be filled up, that do so require it. The missing link, after all, may be found in the direct will-power of conscious intelligence, which has been called special providence. There is a whole field of mesmerism, of clairvoyance, and of animal instinct at present altogether inexplicable on what is known of the natural laws of mind. It is said God cannot interfere with his own laws, but as their permanence—the present connection between cause and effect—depends entirely upon its utility, I do not regard this as a rule without exception.

But this great truth of the philosophical certainty of human volitions is at present a mere abstraction, existing only in the brains of mental philosophers, thought to be impractical and even dangerous by those who acknowledge its truth; but is it for ever thus to lie buried, and is it altogether at present incapable of a practical application? Popular prejudice and clamour may be expected for some time to be against it, but is it not a truth that even now ought to form the basis of our legislation? There are two writers and lecturers who have lately taken up this subject on the orthodox religious side: the Rev. Daniel Moore on the part of the Christian Evidence Committee of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and the Rev. Dr Irons. The first, one of the clearest writers and reasoners on

the orthodox side, and the other, as it seems to me, with the especial gift of "darkening counsel by words without knowledge." The Rev. D. Moore says, "Take the theory of philosophical necessity. As an abstract truth we accept it. As a fact of life-experience we ignore it altogether." (*The Credibility of Mysteries*, p. 14.) Again he says, "The will, of course, is determined by motives, and so far the will is not free. But, then, what governs the motives? Why, the life, the habits, the cherished states of mind and feeling, all that enters into the liberty and spontaneity of the personal man." Of course, those things were as much determined by motives as the present, so that it only throws the difficulty, if there be one, a few stages back, and there is evidently no more freedom or spontaneity in one case than the other. He says, "With the freedom of the will, therefore, we have nothing to do. We have only to do with the liberty of acting according to the determination of the will,—a liberty which, as Hume observes, is universally allowed to belong to every one who is not a prisoner and in chains." (*Man's Accountableness for his Religious Belief*, p. 15.) It is evident that in theory there is no difference between Mr Moore and ourselves,—freedom from external constraint is all he contends for, and this is all that people generally mean by freedom of will—the freedom, for instance, to walk which way they choose when their legs are not tied.

Dr Irons says (*Analysis of Human Responsibility*, p. 11, in a paper read before the Victoria Institute): "The position supposed in the Duke of Argyll's thoughtful and popular book, *The Reign of Law*,—viz., 'that all human actions are calculable beforehand, may indicate a point now reached in England by the prevailing ethics; and it may well arouse our attention, though it would be wrong to conclude at once that the calculable may not be contingent, *a priori*, as the doctrine of chances may show. . . ."

“That this doctrine of the ‘Reign of Law’ is by no means peculiar to a Scottish philosophy, will be felt indeed by all who mark the ethical assumptions of our best-known literature. The writings of Mr Buckle, Mr Lewes, Mr Tyndall, Mr Mill, and others, are pervaded by a kind of fatalistic tone, which society inclines to accept as ‘scientific,’ though an open denial of responsibility is of course rarely ventured upon. What is absolutely needed now is that men should be compelled to say carefully and distinctly that which they have been assuming vaguely, so that the principles may be known and judged.”

I quite agree with Dr Irons ; it is quite time that men did speak out, and I intend to do so, “carefully and distinctly,” and, I trust, truthfully and intelligibly.

Sir Wm. Hamilton is of opinion that the study of philosophy, or mental science, operates to establish that assurance of human liberty, which is necessary to a rational belief in the dogmas of the church. Free-will was a truth to him, mainly, if not solely, because it is a necessary foundation for theology, *i.e.*, for orthodox theology.

The Rev. Baden Powell is obliged to admit (*Christianity without Judaism*, p. 257) that “nothing in geology bears the smallest resemblance to any part of the Mosaic cosmogony, torture the interpretation to whatever extent we may,” and we may say, with equal truth, that “The Reign of Law,” or the causational or scientific view of human nature, is equally irreconcilable with the Pauline cosmogony of the New Testament, that is, with the popular or orthodox religion. For although it brings us nearer to God, making it a reality “that in Him we live and move and have our being,” yet it completely cuts up by the root the commonly-received religious creed. Science and Religion are here altogether irreconcilable.

Let us translate the scientific truth into more popular language, and say exactly what it means, and then we

shall see better how to apply it. It means that no act under the circumstances—the then present conditions—could possibly have been other than it was. That the same causes must always again produce the same results, and that, consequently, if you wish to alter the effect, you must alter the cause.

God, therefore, in placing our first parents in the garden of Eden, must have known perfectly well what would happen; and if He had wished things to have happened differently, He must have altered the conditions. Either the “forbidden fruit” would not have been forbidden, or He would have made Eve stronger, or He would have kept out the serpent. Knowing perfectly well what must happen, elaborately to prepare a beautiful paradise, from which our parents were immediately to get themselves turned out, was a mere “mockery, delusion, and a snare.” What could Eve know of the consequences, which were death, never having known death? “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,”—this was the threat, but it was never kept. If it had been, we should have had either another mother, or no race of men, a thing *comparatively* of little consequence. But the consequences to Eve were to be, not death to herself on that day, but death and damnation to all her posterity. I should not think it worth while to mention this libel upon our Creator, if this alleged fact of the Fall of Man, now looked upon by intelligent people as a mere allegory,* were not made the foundation of a libel against our Creator still more atrocious. But it is

* “Immediately after the return of the Jews from captivity we find them re-editing their literature, and prefacing their own book of early traditions (Genesis) with the myths of the Persian cosmogony. . . . The first chapter of Genesis, which relates the story of Eve’s temptation and of Adam’s fall, is a plain and unmistakable reproduction of one of the myths or legends of this ancient (Pagan) faith. It is a copy of a tradition, or rather of a poetic allegory, that belonged to the earlier world. But on this narrative all the doctrinal systems of our modern churches depend,—it is the common foundation upon which they have all been built. The

said Eve was free, and might have done otherwise. If the will was free, what she would do was uncertain, contingent, dependent upon chance, upon her spontaneous action, and not upon any rule or law: any specified action might be, or might not be, and therefore God himself could not tell what she would do: for how can that be foreseen which is uncertain and may not come to pass? Dr Irons, however, thinks that it would be wrong to conclude *at once* that the calculable may not be contingent. I should also say, and I think with more reason, that it would be wrong to conclude *at once* that God would have left the beginning of a new world and such awful contingencies to mere chance as to how a woman would act whose will was governed by no motive and no law. This awful gift of free-will, if it were possible to bestow it, which I deny, as every thing or agent must act in accordance with its nature,—the power to use this attribute to damn herself and all her posterity no wise and benevolent being could possibly bestow upon another.

This supposed fact of the Fall of Man is not only opposed to reason and common sense, and all the higher feelings of our nature, but it is equally opposed to all history and experience. Geology, ethnology, anthropology, all show man to have been very gradually rising from the savage to a civilized state. Progress, not retrogression, has been the law. It is true people and states die like individuals, but it is only

fall of man is the only basis on which the doctrine of the atonement can rest. If there was no fall, the atonement is a manifest superfluity, and it *could not* then have been the mission of Jesus of Nazareth to have made one. Our knowledge of the 'Tree and Serpent worship' of the ancient heathen world proves that the Jewish narrative of Adam and Eve, and the forbidden fruit, is but an old heathen fancy—a fable, and not a fact—and, being so, there is but one opinion at which reasonable men can arrive with regard to the doctrine of the atonement which rests so exclusively upon it, and which, apart from it, has no possible basis." (*Tree and Serpent Worship*, by J. W. Lake.)

that, as with individuals, new and increased life and vigour may spring up elsewhere.

If, then, there has been no fall of man ; if, also, man could in no case have acted otherwise than he did act, the elaborate theological system, based upon the opposite suppositions, must fall to the ground.

Nothing has taken place contrary to the will of Omnipotence, and it would be a contradiction even to suppose that it could ever have done so ; for if it were really His will nothing could prevent it.

Neither is God expected to know that which may not take place,—that is, is contingent or free,—that is, may happen or may not happen.

Neither have we to reconcile God as Supreme Ruler, or as governing all things, with man's freedom : also God does not require to be reconciled to a world which He himself has created.

God's justice does not require to be satisfied by the sacrifice of an innocent person for a guilty one, nor that one " who knew no sin should be made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him,"—if any one knows what this means, or how it is possible.

God is not wroth with that which He has ordained, and which could not have been otherwise ; neither are His anger and vengeance to be feared, for they would be unjust.

Atonement is not required, and vicarious atonement is unjust. Neither are we required to believe that an infinitely benevolent God is the creator of hell.

Those things, which are palpable contradictions to all who dare to use their reason, are, in the Christian scheme, only mysteries to be cleared up in another world. This will be evident if we proceed to examine what the orthodox creed requires us to believe about them.

Justification by faith is the fundamental doctrine of the Church ; belief in the atonement—that Christ's

death was necessary as a satisfaction of God's offended justice. But let me, as far as possible, use the words of the creeds themselves, lest I be accused of misconception and misrepresentation. The Athanasian Creed, which the English Church has recently resolved to retain, as truly and clearly expressing the meaning of Scripture, says, among other things—

“Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith.

“Which faith, except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.

“The Son is of the Father alone; not made nor created, but begotten (and therefore, I suppose, began to be, and yet)

“The whole three persons are co-eternal together, and co-equal. He therefore that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity, . . . who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead.

“He ascended into heaven, He sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty; from whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead (His disciples saw Him taken *up*, bodily into heaven; and a cloud received Him out of their sight, and afterwards St Stephen, looking up steadfastly into heaven, saw the glory of God, and Jesus *standing* on the right hand of God).

“At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies, and shall give account of their own work. (The hour is coming, Jesus said, when they that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and they that hear shall live).

“And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil into everlasting fire.

“This is the Catholic faith: which, except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.

“Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

“As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.”

Perhaps no single error has produced more misery in the world than the supposition that a man is “free” to believe what he pleases. It is this that lighted the fires of the Inquisition; and yet a man can only believe what appears to him to be true; he could not believe black to be white, even although he was to be damned for not doing so; and it is the same of all minor degrees of belief. We can only believe what is credible, and love what is loveable. It is true a man may play the hypocrite, and profess to believe what it is made to appear to be his own interest to believe; he may deceive himself; he may hide the truth by refusing to examine, and to this extent only is belief in his own power. And yet salvation depends upon faith, and in the early days of the Church “in every prison the crucifix and the rack stood side by side,” and good men in their “sweet reasonableness” burnt their fellow-men alive by a slow fire, to give them more time to believe what appeared to them to be incredible, and to *repent* that they had not done so. “That the Church of Rome,” Lecky tells us, “has shed more innocent blood than any other institution that has ever existed among mankind, will be questioned by no Protestant who has a competent knowledge of history. . . . The victims who died for heresy were not, like those who died for witchcraft, solitary and doting old women, but were usually men in the midst of active life, and often in the first flush of active enthusiasm, and those who loved them best were firmly convinced that their agonies upon earth were but the prelude of eternal agonies hereafter.”

“What,” said St Augustine, “is more deadly to the soul than the liberty of error,” that is, the liberty which we must all take, whether we will or no, of believing what appears to us to be true. The error was in the system and not in the persecutions which were

only its logical and *humane* result, for what was the burning here to an eternal burning. Consequently, when Protestants got the upper hand, they did just the same things; Catholics are tortured and hung, and as Lecky shows us, "the Presbyterians, through a long succession of reigns, were imprisoned, branded, mutilated, scourged, and exposed in the pillory."

These efforts to make men profess a religion they could not believe, were of course attended with the fruits that might have been expected. The fathers laid down the distinct proposition, that pious frauds were justifiable and even laudable, till the sense of truth and the love of truth were completely obliterated, so far at least as their influence extended. God was represented as He is now in the Athanasian Creed, as inflicting eternal punishment for religious error; as "confining his affection to a small section of his creatures, and inflicting upon all others the most horrible and eternal suffering;" the fathers felt with St Augustine that "the end of religion is to become like the object of worship," and, as Lecky shows, "the sense of divine goodness being thus destroyed, the whole fabric of natural religion crumbled in the dust."

But it is not he that believeth, but he only that believeth and is *baptized* that shall be saved, consequently the belief of the Church is, that infants that have not been baptized cannot be saved, but "be punished, as St Fulgentius says, by the eternal torture of undying fire; for, although they have committed no sin by their own will, they have, nevertheless drawn unto them the condemnation of original sin, by their carnal conception and nativity." As some other equally pious saint expressed it, "he doubted not there were infants not a span long crawling about the floor of hell." The Gorham controversy with the late Bishop of Exeter must remind us that Baptismal Regeneration, or the necessity for infant baptism, is still the doctrine of the Church of England. St Thomas Aquinas suggested the *possibility* of the infant being saved who died.

within the womb. "God," he said, "may have ways of saving it for ought we know," a heresy, for which, doubtless, in his time, he would have been burned if he had not been a saint. In the English Church, Chillingworth and Jeremy Taylor have also thought it possible infants might be saved. The opposite, however, has generally been deemed a mere truism, consequent on original sin and transmitted guilt.

Tertullian was of opinion that the Almighty can never pardon an actor, who, in defiance of the evangelical assertion, endeavours, by high-heeled boots, to add a cubit to his stature (*De Spectaculis*, cap. 23). But as the late Professor Mansel and other eminent theologians believe in "complete fore-knowledge co-existing with human freedom," or, in other words, that God has some means of foreseeing that which is contingent, or may happen, or may not happen, let us hope that he may find some way even of saving poor actors.

The Scotch Calvinists, following Jonathan Edwards, are more logical than the Anglicans. They are quite aware that what has been foreknown must come to pass, with as much certainty as if it had already happened. They, therefore, see clearly, that as God is Almighty, and has created all things with a full knowledge of all that would take place, that what is foreknown must have been also foreordained.

The Westminster Confession of Faith, upon which the Scotch creed is based, tells us here :—

"By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.

"These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.

"Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.

“The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.”

“To the praise of his glorious justice,” is not meant ironically, as may be seen from the sermon of Jonathan Edwards “On the justice of God in the damnation of sinners,” and from the diary of Mr Carey, which tells us of the “pleasure” and “sweetness” he had experienced in reading that sermon. We are told some *must* be saved, others *cannot*, still it is their own fault. There we have free-will and necessity, and as all things seem to have been fixed beforehand, it does not seem to matter much, if, as Huxley says, it should always be a drawn battle between them!

We must not suppose that this belief has become obsolete as some would have us believe. The Rev. Fergus Ferguson, of Dalkeith, in May 1871, was brought to book by the U. P. Church, when, among others, the following proposition was submitted to him:—

“That notwithstanding the inability of the will through sin, as taught in our Confession, unbelievers are fully answerable for their rejection of the offer of salvation which the gospel makes to them.”

Or, as I lately heard it put in a good evangelical discourse in an English Church, “We are all *dead* in trespasses and sins, with literally no more power to help ourselves than a dead man, yet, if we would but get up and go to Christ, he would save us.”

Mr Ferguson intimated his unqualified assent to the proposition submitted to him, and Dr Cairns “offered thanks to God for the harmonious and happy result.” Thus, here also as in the Garden of Eden, we have another “mockery, delusion, and a snare.”

We are called upon to believe, that God, “for the

manifestation of His glory," and "for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures," and "to the praise of His glorious justice," doomed the great majority of mankind from eternity to damnation, and then sent His Son into the world to mock them with the false promise of redemption He had previously decreed for them should never be. Here we have the logical outcome of the "drawn battle" between free-will and necessity, or rather of accepting both doctrines, but is there any one who really believes it, whatever they may profess? If any one tells me that I *must* believe it, and "without apology," that I shall be damned if I don't, all I can say is, I'll be damned if I do.

Surely, as Lord Bacon says, "It were better to have no opinion of God at all, than such an opinion as is unworthy of Him."

And yet this is the religion which a large party think it necessary to have taught at the public expense in our public schools. For instance in the New Board Schools in Scotland, supported by a public rate, on December 8th, 1873, a motion by Dr Buchanan, that instruction in the Bible and Catechism should be given, was carried by nine votes to six. The Catechism is the Shorter Catechism, and contains all the above soothing and salutary doctrine.

Neither are we much behind this in England. The chairman of the London School Board, Mr Charles Reed, M.P., speaking recently at the annual soirée of the Leeds Young Men's Christian Association, says he does not see "how it is possible to separate entirely the secular and religious." "How, for instance, he says, could I teach my child geology without referring to Him who, having made all things, pronounced them good? How could I teach my child astronomy without referring to Him of whom the Psalmist says, 'When I consider Thy Heavens, the work of Thy hands, and the moon and the stars which Thou hast created?' I cannot understand why it should be necessary, even if

it were possible, that these things which are so closely and inseparably united should be disunited by any act of man in the instruction of those who are under his care."

But surely Mr Reed would not teach geology and astronomy from the old Jewish Traditions. He must know that "nothing in geology bears the smallest resemblance to any part of the Mosaic Cosmogony, and the astronomy which makes our little world the centre of the universe, is worse than the geology. "Pronounced them good,"—good for what? If Adam was to be immediately turned out of paradise, the earth was to be *cursed* for his sake, and he and his posterity damned *from* all eternity *to* all eternity, I cannot see the good of this, neither could the children, I should think.

"A salvation ordained before the foundation of the world" means, also, according to the popular creed, a damnation equally ordained, and that, too, for the great majority, and yet Diderot is accused of blasphemy for saying, "il n'y a point de bon père qui voulût ressembler à notre Père céleste." And this creed that makes evil absolute, and God the ordainer of it, is to be taught in the common schools and at the public expense. No doubt all *is* good, if men will but see things rightly. The largest amount of enjoyment *possible* for all God's creatures is provided; the greatest happiness of the greatest number is secured. To the Necessitarian good and evil are purely subjective, the mere record of our own pleasures and pains—the pains the stimulant to, and the guardian of, the pleasures.

I recollect, when a young man, being very much impressed by John Foster's Essay "On some of the Causes by which Evangelical Religion has been rendered unacceptable to persons of cultivated taste." Polite literature was proclaimed to be hostile to that religion, and Pope's Essay on Man, which I had for years carried about with me in my pocket, was

peculiarly anti-Christian. I am not now surprised at the distaste, as it is, and as it was by Foster stated to be, opposed to the natural man, that is, to all the higher instincts of our nature. A man must indeed be born again to accept it. Vicarious suffering is opposed to the moral sense, and every *gentleman* would at once object to allow another to suffer for his sins, and we cannot be surprised, therefore, at the exclamation and commentary of the old Scotchwoman, who, bedridden, and living on the borders of a large parish, had never before been visited by a parson, and had the mysteries of redemption explained to her. When she was told how Christ was crucified, not for any fault of his, but to save sinners, that is, *the few who were of the elect*, she replied, "Eh, Sir! but it is so far off, and so long sin' that we'll e'en hope it is not true." *

The *Edinburgh Review*, October 1873, accuses Dr Strauss of "ignorant blasphemy or hypocritical sarcasm" for professing to understand these things literally, and says that he had better go to school once more and learn "what that really is which he blasphemes, and what those precious truths really are which lie enshrined in 'Oriental Metaphor,' and mediæval dogma." . . . "What," the writer asks, "has been discovered, that should really justify any honest

* If the reader wishes to see the opposite view to this well put, let him read the article in the January *Contemporary Review*, "Motives to Righteousness from an Evangelical Point of View," by the Rev. F. R. Wynne. Of course, the elect regard the damnation, from which they are exempt, very differently, but how any one can be so joyous and grateful over *his own* salvation, when only one, much more the great majority, were left to an eternity of misery, I cannot understand, and therefore cannot appreciate. It appears to me to be the very essence of selfishness. The Evangelical creed is only possible by our completely ignoring the fact that God is the author and disposer of all things—the evil (as it is called) as well as the good. If it is to be regarded as a fight between God and the Devil, in which the devil, in spite of all God's efforts, gets by far the best of it, then it is just possible to understand the thankfulness and the enthusiasm of the reverend gentleman that "a crown of glory" has been reserved for him through his Saviour's merits. Still we might wonder why it should

man in breaking with the church as it is presented in England?" I think we might ask him that question, and also whether the English Church admits, as he affirms, that its "precious truths lie enshrined in Oriental Metaphor and mediæval dogma," or whether it is yet willing to throw over the Old Testament altogether, which he recommends. "We are not Jews," he says, "and there is no reason in the world why we should be weighted with this burden of understanding, and defending at all risks, the Jewish Scriptures." Certainly there is increasing difficulty in "reconciling" the Old Testament either with science or the modern conscience, but what becomes of the fall of man and the whole scheme of redemption if we give it up? He also says, "Is it right, is it truthful, is it any longer possible in the face of all that is now known upon the subject, to pretend that legendary matter has not intruded itself into the New Testament, as well as into the Old." I should think not, but will the church admit as much? Dr Strauss is accused of having been "so long absent from his place in church that he is unaware of the great change which has come over the minds of our 'pious folk' during the last twenty years." The Doctor is evidently unacquainted with the new truth dug out of "Oriental Metaphor and mediæval dogma," but, no doubt, great progress has been made

be laid up for him in particular, as he admits it was from no merit on his part. Mr Wynne says, "What can bring hope for time and eternity to the saddened heart, what can touch it with the sense of God's loving-kindness, like the simple faith that God forgives all sin the moment the sinner takes refuge in Jesus Christ?" But what of those who are left out and who do not take refuge? And how are we to reconcile God's loving-kindness with his omnipotence if any are left out? Surely *the fact* that all punishment is for our good, to warn us from evil and to effect our reformation, and that forgiveness, therefore, would be an injury, and to show this direct connection between sin and suffering, would be far higher and more salutary doctrine. I do not doubt, however, all that is said of the effect of Evangelical teaching among the lower class of minds, for I have often witnessed it, but it is not "the pure and noble feeling that is fanned into a flame," but the selfish fear of punishment or hope of reward—the fires of hell or the crown of glory."

in reconciling the spirit of the age to theological doctrines. "They may not," as the writer in the *Edinburgh* says, "hitherto have been quite rightly explained, they may not yet have been wholly divested of their graceful drapery of fancy."

Principal Tulloch, in an article in this month's *Contemporary Review* (January 3, 1874), entitled "Dogmatic Extremes," seems to be little less angry with Mr James Mill than the *Edinburgh* is with Strauss. He complains of a "passionate and contentious dogmatism on the side of unbelief," that literary and philosophic unbelievers do not do justice to Christian dogmas. They state them "in their harshest and most vulgar form," instead of looking at them from the spiritually appreciative point of view. J. S. Mill, for instance, reports his father as speaking with great moral indignation of "a being who would make a hell, who would create the human race with the infallible fore-knowledge, and, therefore, with the intention, that the great majority of them were to be consigned to horrible and everlasting torment." "Surely we are entitled," he says, "in the case of such men as James Mill, to look for some wider thoughtfulness and power of discrimination than such a passage implies." Principal Tulloch tells us that "all creeds and confessions, from the apostles downwards, are nothing else than men's thoughts about the Christian religion. . . . In so far, as it is supposed possible or right to bind men's faith in the present age absolutely to the form of Christian thought of the seventeenth century, or the fourth century—in so far such a church is opposing itself to an inevitable law of human life and history. . . . Creed subscription, in so far as it interferes with this freedom, is a wrong at once to the people and the clergy. . . . The question which is really interesting and pressing is not how to get outside of the church, but how to enlarge and make room inside it for varieties of Christian intelligence and culture. . . . To call in (with our scientific dogmatists) the

coarser conceptions of popular religion, those forms of thought as to heaven or hell, or any other aspect of the spiritual world, to which the religious mind naturally falls, from sheer inability in most cases to preserve any ideal of thought—to call in such coarser types of the religious imagination as the normal dogmas of Christianity, entering into its very life and substance, is as poor and unworthy a device of controversy as was ever attempted. Popular Christianity is no product of religious thought. It is a mere accretion of religious tradition. And “the whole function of thought is to purify and idealize inherited traditions here as in every other region of knowledge.”

Consequently, any allusion to “the naughty place” and its occupants is never made now in the week days; it is thought coarse and vulgar, and only a “purified and idealized” version of it is hinted at on Sundays, while devils “with darkness, fire, and chains” are only kept to frighten children within our common schools, and without which religious instruction, it is thought, it would never do to trust them with secular knowledge.

The fact is, the tendency of a large party in the church is to judge all doctrines by their intuitive sense of right, and when Bible doctrines do not accord, they re-translate them to make them fit. Still admitting to the full the usefulness of the church and the present necessity for its continued existence, the question will recur to every honest man, as it has done to Dr Strauss and to others, Are we Christians? The ethics of the New Testament we must reject as not based on science, as we have already done the physics of the Old, and the question is, Is it true, as a critic affirms, that the religion which calls itself revealed, contains, in the way of what is good, nothing which is not the incoherent and ill-digested residue of the wisdom of the ancients? Still it is affirmed, and very generally believed, that the difference between the Caucasian and the inferior races of men is entirely

owing to Christianity, as also is the whole difference between civilization and barbarism. Our progress, it is said, is not owing to science and induction, but to the Christian religion.

The tendency of the age, of the Broad Church party especially, is not now to insist on dogma, but to fall back on the morality of the New Testament. But the Rev. J. M. Capes says that even "The Sermon on the Mount altogether must be interpreted by what people popularly call common sense, or else it becomes impracticable or even mischievous, and what is common sense but the application of the test of general utility?"—(*Contemporary*, December 1873).

Barrington (*On the Statutes*, p. 461) proves the superiority of Englishmen, because, as he says, more men were hanged in England in one year than in France in seven, and writers on the "Evidences" show that the discrepancies and contradictions in the gospels prove their inspiration and genuineness, and Butler is of opinion that even the doubting about religion implies that it *may* be true; but if the creed of either the Catholic or Protestant Churches is really to be found in Scripture, then we must agree with Matthew Arnold "that the more we convince ourselves of the liability of the New Testament writers to mistake, the more we really bring out the greatness and worth of the New Testament. . . . That Jesus himself may, at the same time have had quite other notions as to what he was doing and intending That he was far above the heads of his reporters, still farther above the head of our popular theology, which has added its own misunderstanding of the reporters to the reporters' misunderstanding of Jesus." (*Literature and Dogma*, pp. 149, 150, 160).

With these admissions, which are becoming more common every day, much may yet be made of the Bible by way of popular instruction, and which may help to carry us on to the general acceptance of the Reign of Law in Mind as in Matter.