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THE CHURCHMAN

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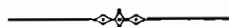
LONDON
ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW
1885

Cowper breaks out into such expressions as these: "Infinite despair is a sad prompter. . . . Oh, wretch! to whom life and death are alike impossible! Most miserable at present in this, that being thus miserable, I have my senses continued to me only that I may look forward to the worst." Again, he calls himself "the most miserable of all beings." Such letters, it must be remembered, were written when the poet's mind was under eclipse—when it was "like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh." Yet never for long did his confidence in the goodness of God fail, and even through his thick spiritual darkness, gleams of light break forth which prove that hope lay at the heart of his despair. Though "cast down, he was not destroyed." Often and often in letters that breathe of spiritual distress, he gives such consolation to others that we feel he must have been a partaker in the comfort he conveys.

But the space at our disposal warns us to bring this paper to a close. To give all the letters we should wish to give would be to transfer the whole of Cowper's correspondence to these pages. We can only refer those who wish for some hours of rational enjoyment to Mr. Benham's portable little volume, and we can promise them, that much as they may admire Cowper's poetry, they will find his prose no less agreeable.

It is positively refreshing in these days of sensational novels and stories, and of trivial gossip published under the title of "Recollections," and "Memorials," and "Diaries," the greater part of which is composed of worse than unprofitable scandal, to turn to a correspondence so delightful, so natural, and so pure. His correspondence overflows now with humour, now with that love of nature, and now with that deeply religious feeling which lay at the very root of his being. We may say of his letters, what he said to Hayley of some verses which his friend and biographer had written to Austen, and sent with a present of honey: "Your verses to Austen are as sweet as the honey that accompanies them—kind, friendly, witty, and elegant."

CHARLES D. BELL, D.D.



ART. V. — SOME ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS UPON "NATURAL LAW IN THE SPIRITUAL WORLD."

CANON HOARE has done well in calling attention to Professor Drummond's fascinating book; for I believe (notwithstanding its singular attractiveness) that there are principles underlying it which ought only to be accepted with very considerable modification and reserve.

The book, as the author informs us, was not intended for "those who already find themselves fully nourished on the older forms of truth." To such he "does not commend his pages; they will find them superfluous: nor is there any reason why they should mingle *with light which is already clear, the distorting rays of a foreign expression.*" Consequently he offers his thoughts rather to "those who are feeling their way to a Christian life, but who are haunted by a sense of instability in the foundation of their faith." Now, though this was the writer's intention, it is plain that in the wide circulation the book has attained, no such discrimination could possibly be exercised. It has been extensively read by the Christian public, and, when compared with publications of a like kind, has attained an almost unique popularity. The causes for this are not difficult to understand. The purity of diction, the ease and grace of expression, and the almost entire freedom from technical phrases, coupled with much that is richly suggestive in thought and illustration, have naturally secured for it an exceptionally large circle of readers. In the subject-matter, also, of the book, it has met a condition of thought which is at present widely prevalent. During the last decade, natural science has been brought within the reach of the multitude. Admirable handbooks have been written, and a desire to become acquainted with the rudiments of science has been gradually fostered. But this is not all. The Churches are active; the pulse of religious life beats strongly; and publications upon spiritual subjects have an enormous sale. Formerly, religion and science stood apart—they were looked upon as necessarily antagonistic; now they have been brought together, and men are beginning to perceive that God's Word and God's work must be in harmony. But the books which have been written, hitherto expressing this harmony, have been for the most part very dry, abstruse, and technical; whereas Mr. Drummond's publication is eminently free from all such obscurity. The writing is luminous, and the scientific facts and allusions are fresh and happily chosen. A becoming reverence for religious truth pervades the book. Conversion, life as the gift of God, growth in grace, and the knowledge of God through Christ, are all more or less freely discussed. We can, therefore, scarcely wonder that a work which combines so much should be immensely popular. But just in proportion as it is so, does it concern the thoughtful student of God's Word to inquire whether the principles which lie at the basis of this exquisite superstructure are in every respect reliable.

Before, however, entering upon an examination of these fundamental principles, let me call attention to the way in

which the spiritual condition of this country is described. Our "religious opinions" are said to be "in a state of flux;" "the intellect of the age is slowly divorcing itself from Christianity." "The natural world," under the discoveries of science and the introduction of the reign of law, is a "*cosmos*," a world of order; but the spiritual world is a "*chaos*"! And "in a transition period like the present, holding authority with one hand, and with the other feeling all round in the darkness for some strong new support, theology is surely to be pitied!" This is certainly a very melancholy picture; but I am inclined to think that fair judging minds will pronounce it to be not a little exaggerated. No doubt there is much irreligion existing; and it is quite true that some scientific and literary men, by the very intensity of their application to their special fields of study, have well-nigh shut out all beside. To such, God and the spiritual world may be non-existent; but to say that intellect is being divorced from piety, and that theology is in a decrepit chaotic condition, is to shut the eyes to some of the plainest facts and tendencies of our time. However this may be, Mr. Drummond has a sovereign remedy, which he feels, if skilfully applied, will rehabilitate theology, and ultimately transform the "*chaos*" which exists in the spiritual sphere into a state of harmony and order.

Now it is this remedy which forms the great central feature of the work, and it is with it we proceed to deal. At page 6 of the preface we read the following statement:

Is there not reason to believe that many of the laws of the spiritual world, hitherto regarded as occupying an entirely separate province, are simply the laws of the natural world? Can we identify the natural laws, or any one of them, in the spiritual sphere? That vague lines everywhere run through the spiritual world is already beginning to be recognised. Is it possible to link them with those great lines running through the visible universe, which we call the natural laws, or are they fundamentally distinct? In a word, is the supernatural natural or unnatural?

Again, at page 11, "The position we have been led to take up is not that the spiritual laws are analogous to the natural laws, but that they are the same laws; it is not a question of analogy but of identity." "The laws of the invisible are the same laws, projections of the natural, not supernatural;" "which at one end, as it were, may be dealing with matter, at the other end with spirit." Again. "If the natural laws" (p. 27) "were run through the spiritual world we might see the great lines of religious truth as clearly and simply as the broad lines of science." Natural law, were (p. ix.) "it traced in the spiritual world, would have an important scientific value, it would offer religion a *new credential*," and when this is effected, "we shall offer to thinking men a truly scientific theology." The gift of science to theology (p. 32) "will illuminate what the inspiration

of revelation has left obscure, heresy in certain whole departments shall become impossible," and "scepticism even may come to be regarded as unscientific."

Here, then, we have the scientific method proposed. The natural is to illuminate the supernatural, and the results promised, if only they could be realized, are certainly of inestimable value. But in order to test the real worth of this method, it is necessary to ask (*first*) whether it is quite accurate to say that we may push up the natural laws into the spiritual sphere, and when they are so extended, that they still remain exactly the same laws? or are they not, from the very necessities of the case, very materially modified? And (*secondly*) do these laws when thus traced upwards really constitute a new proof of truth in the spiritual world of such strength and efficacy that all doubt and vagueness will cease, and theology at length rest upon an immutable scientific basis?

Now it is well known that the generality of a law decreases as the complexity of the subject in which it moves increases. The *results of a physical* law can only be modified in a very small degree, compared with the larger modification which takes place in that law when extended to the higher region (let us say) of biology; for in the former case we know all the governing and guiding forces, but in the latter, new powers and forces are introduced which may partly be known and partly unknown. Push that law a step still higher up, introduce it into the region of human life, and we at once call into action again a new and fresh set of influences and powers which must still further modify its working. And if we take one stage higher and extend it to the spiritual, it passes into a region where the forces and powers are again different, and such as cannot be determined in any way from nature, but only from the page of revelation; in fact, at each step in the progress upwards the indeterminate elements have become continuously greater until we reach the spiritual sphere where they are the greatest, and the consequent modification of the law resulting therefrom must manifestly here attain its maximum.

With these facts before us, we venture to ask whether it is quite accurate to say that the law which we recognised in the physical is exactly the same law when it has reached the spiritual? May not—nay, must not—much of the original law have been overruled and counteracted in its upward journey? and does it not therefore pass into the spiritual, in a form very different from that in which it originally existed? and is it not from the increase of the unknown and indeterminate powers in its passage upwards, surrounded by a vagueness which should make us hesitate (having regard to these altered surroundings) to pronounce it—at all events

from the standpoint of nature—to be the same law we noted as acting in the physical and material? We do not say (let it be observed), that the law has actually ceased to exist, for to do so would be to forego the principle of continuity, and to forget the connection which one department of science has with another. All we say is, that in its passage from beneath it has been indefinitely modified, and reaches the unseen in a widely different form from that in which it was originally recognised. Each department through which the law passes takes up, indeed, those elements and principles which have gone before, but adds to them certain other elements which are peculiar to itself; and so when the region of theology is attained, the old is not lost, but it is changed and transfigured in the new, and the law in its final condition is best interpreted not by that which preceded—for this, as we have seen, has been progressively modified—but by the facts and truths of the spiritual kingdom itself, which have been made known to us not by nature, but by certain revelation.

And here let me add that one of the most fruitful sources of error in theology at the present time, is the persistent application by scientific authorities of the modes of thought and language derived from physical science to the interpretation of spiritual truth, for these, from the very necessities of the case, must be inadequate; and the lower the department in nature from whence they are derived, the greater will this inadequacy be found. It is in the region of mind—in the mental, moral, and spiritual nature of man, and not in that of physical phenomena, that we obtain our worthiest conceptions of the Being and character of the Almighty. But even these require to be constantly and carefully corrected by the express statements of revelation to make them, even for practical purposes, adequate to the representation of the great realities of the spiritual world. It is admitted that all language, however carefully employed upon such subjects, will retain a certain amount of inaccuracy, which, perhaps, in our present finite condition is unavoidable; but the deliberate employment of a terminology derived from the lower departments of nature is to adopt a mode of expression, which we know, when so employed, must be inaccurate; and consequently the attempt to express spiritual truths in terms of physical science, which is one of the root-ideas of the book, is very far from satisfactory, and will (we feel persuaded), if extensively employed, lead to conclusions fundamentally erroneous.

The principle therefore of extending direct laws of the natural world to the spiritual, and supposing that thereby we shall illuminate that sphere, will not bear examination. Moreover, it is proceeding on a method which is at variance with all previous

experience. How do we discover the laws of nature? Is it not by careful observation and classification of phenomena within the special sphere to which they belong? Even so in the spiritual world a similar inquiry should be conducted within its fitting limits, that so we may formulate the laws which are applicable to it. But we cannot expect, by simply pushing up natural laws, which at every stage in their progress are being constantly modified, to discover the laws of the spiritual, and so to reduce that realm, as the Professor suggests, to order. If when the laws of the spiritual are formulated by a proper induction, we can trace a correspondence with the natural law beneath, well and good; but to push up the natural, and to force that correspondence, is clearly unscientific. The light which we can derive from nature, therefore, is not likely to illumine the spiritual, and introduce into it the promised law and order. This must be done (and has been done) by other means. If that region is to be illuminated, it will be accomplished in the same way in which this has been effected for the natural sphere, namely, by patient investigation and careful combination of the facts to be gathered within *its own* limits, and which consequently in this case will be from the pages of revelation. The new light therefore eludes us, just when we reach the region where it was promised that it would be specially effective, and we are left (if we desire to obtain light at all), to follow the track which the theologian has ever pursued, even the patient study of God's Word; but with this proviso, that since theology as the crowning science embraces within it the whole complete sphere of being, we should be ready to gather hints and helps from every quarter. But these hints and helps should be wisely used, and ever subjected to the final test of God's revealed Will.

We are now in a position to give an answer to our second inquiry as to whether these natural laws, when extended to the spiritual, afford a new and effective proof of the latter, of such a character that under its influence all doubt and perplexity will be done away, and theology at length rest upon a really scientific basis. Surely such a hope, if it has been ever cherished, must, if the considerations we have ventured to submit are valid, have already entirely vanished. Doubtless analogy and correspondence must ever exist between the natural and the spiritual, and in some cases even identity; but that identity is surrounded and interpenetrated with so much that is new, that any additional proof beyond the usual arguments from analogy must be of the slenderest character, and so far from exercising the influence Professor Drummond seems to expect, will, we are inclined to think, leave matters very much as they are at present. It should also be borne in mind that natural

law, which is simply the tabulated expression of human observation at a given period, is not the final embodiment of truth, but from its very nature a variable and progressive quantity, subject to continuous correction as observation and experiment are still further prosecuted. And it is not too much to say that many of the scientific conclusions of to-day will before many years are passed be set aside, or very materially altered. Physical laws which at first sight appear simple are often found upon deeper investigation to be exceedingly complex, and this complexity is one of the causes which renders alteration afterwards necessary. If Professor Drummond's principles were admitted, it would follow that with each change in the apprehension of natural law, we must be prepared to make a corresponding change in its spiritual equivalent; and so, instead of introducing stability, fixedness and order into the spiritual world, there would be constant variation and uncertainty such as the believer in God's Word could not concede for a moment. In truth, *natural* law is the human and therefore imperfect interpretation of the facts of nature, which were they to be fully known would embody the Divine Will; but *spiritual* law as given in the Word of God is the Divine and therefore complete and final expression of that Will. The one admits of change, but the other excludes it.

Still it may be said, is there not room for human error in our apprehension of God's revealed Will, just as there is scope for a similar misapprehension in nature? Yes, there is. But the possibility of error is infinitely less in the former case, because the facts of Scripture are all known, whereas the facts of nature are only beginning to be unravelled.

We may illustrate these remarks by referring to the chapter on "Biogenesis." "All life comes from pre-existent life" is the present law of natural science; and so it is argued that in the spiritual sphere life cannot be self-evolved, but is the gift of God. This is a very beautiful analogy; but it is well known that the hope of certain leaders of scientific thought is, that this law may be set aside, and that nature's "grand progression," from the formless to the formed, from the lifeless to the living, may be realized by powers or forces inherent in nature herself. Now suppose this had taken place, are we prepared to make the corresponding change in the spiritual law, and so accept the principle that spiritual life is self-evolved? Surely not; but for this reason, observe, that we had accepted the truth that life is the gift of God, not upon the basis of a supposed law of nature, but upon the record of His revealed Will in His Word. Again, in accordance with Mr. Herbert Spencer's definition of life, we are told that to be "in correspondence with environment is life," but to be out of cor-

respondence is death, and that a perfect correspondence with a perfect spiritual environment means eternal life. This is very interesting, and some features of the analogy are deeply suggestive; but I scarcely think it throws much light upon the spiritual world. Harmony with environment may be one of the conditions and accompaniments of life, but it certainly does not explain it. It leaves life what it was before, a mystery; and any light to be gleaned on the subject will not be found in the consideration of this or any other law of nature, but in the clear statements of the Word of God.

Degeneration, we must all admit, finds its reproduction in the spiritual world, and the parallel between the two is full of solemn and suggestive thought; but that degeneration is a law of nature does not explain it, much less does it convey all that we mean by it in the spiritual sphere: there may be some active cause yet discovered in nature, beyond the mere negative disuse of function, which will show us why an organism degenerates. Whether this cause be discovered or not, we know that in the moral and spiritual world there is the personal power of the evil one, which is exerted to this end. Here again observe, the knowledge of the fact does not come from nature, but from the Word of God. That growth in nature is "spontaneous" (p. 126) can only be accepted with the reservation that the word must not imply the possession of independent self-evolving power; but when the principle is applied without qualification to the spiritual sphere, it is altogether misleading. To say that here all efforts are useless, is to state something which experience refuses to endorse. Natural growth may be accomplished without trying, but spiritual growth is certainly not to be so attained. All growth, whether it be material or spiritual, is a mystery. That two should become three, and three become four, that the effect should be greater than the cause, cannot be explained upon the principle of mere natural law; but once we admit that God is the Author of life at its commencement, and that God is the continuous Giver as progress is made, then a flood of light is thrown upon the whole; for we have here a cause at once adequate to the production of the results. But where, we again ask, do we get this information? Not from the study of nature, but from the revelation of the Lord.

There is much in this interesting book which is well worthy of patient thought and consideration; but we have said, we trust, sufficient to show that the central principle upon which it rests cannot be accepted without much reserve and very serious qualifications. The conclusion, therefore, seems fairly to follow, that natural laws, when pushed up into the spiritual sphere, are not what they once were when they arrive at their

final destination; nor can we expect, from the application of any such method, that the unseen and the spiritual will be so illuminated that the whole will be reduced to order, theology placed upon a scientific basis, and scepticism almost made a thing of the past.

J. EUSTACE BRENNAN.

ART. VI.—ANNE BOLEYN.

Anne Boleyn. A Chapter of English History, 1527-1536. By PAUL FRIEDMANN. Two volumes. Macmillan and Co. 1884.

WE have been agreeably surprised by a study of these volumes. We were prepared for those details of laborious industry which characterize Teutonic research; but we thought that the task Mr. Friedmann had set before him was a work of supererogation. What could our author, we asked, have to tell us which Mr. Brewer¹ and his accomplished co-editors had not already told, which had escaped the inquiries of Mr. Froude, or which even was not to be found in the superficial erudition of Mr. Hepworth Dixon's "Two Queens"?

The pages before us give an answer in the affirmative. The field indeed, thanks to State Paper investigations, to transcripts from foreign archives and to examinations of the private manuscripts of our own county gentry, had been well gleaned. But Mr. Friedmann, though the last to go over the familiar ground, has collected material well worthy of being garnered. His work is based upon the correspondence of Eustace Chapuis, the ambassador of Charles V. to England; and it throws some new light upon the period. Let us add that Mr. Friedmann writes with the ease and elegance of the cultured scholar, and that he is as lucid in his arrangement of facts as though he had not hailed from the Fatherland. We are bound to add also, that, in our opinion, he attaches undue weight to the letters of Chapuis (to a large extent partizan gossip), and as to several matters follows the Imperialist ambassador too closely.² The great blot of Mr. Friedmann's

¹ See CHURCHMAN, vol. x., p. 183. The two volumes of Professor Brewer's Prefaces, edited by Mr. Gairdner, are a treasure-trove of information. (The "Reign of Henry VIII.," by Professor Brewer, published by Mr. Murray.) We gladly repeat our recommendation.

² To many of our readers, perhaps, it is known that an abstract of the correspondence of Chapuis in regard to Anne Boleyn was given by Mr. Froude in the revised edition of his "History of England" (12 vols. Longman. 1870). In an appendix to vol. ii., entitled "Fresh Evidence