

Books and Authors

The Reign of Law¹

We have here the concluding volume of a series, whose first installment, "The Reign of Law," obtained such favorable regard a quarter-century ago. The title of that work indicated the character of the series, and the thesis involved in it is strongly emphasized in the present volume. So far from theology being an inquiry into merely subjective phenomena, it deals with objective realities, which in their essence are the supreme facts of the Universe. "It everywhere rests on Nature as a word for one all-pervading kingdom."

This "Philosophy of Belief" is, therefore, a work of different scope from Mr. Balfour's "Foundations of Belief," which was an inquiry into the theory of knowledge. It has more affinity with Dr. Matheson's "The Psalmist and the Scientist." But while that undertook to show a fundamental concord between the principles lying at the heart of the sacred oracles and those at the base of modern science, the Duke's work is to exhibit the main positions of Christian theology, as everywhere based on natural and necessary laws. So much of these is recognizable as to give us a certainty that they reign even where untraceable. Aiming to avoid whatever points are in controversy between theologians themselves, the writer shows how the truths of theology, as facts, reveal natural law as prevailing in the spiritual no less than in the physical world, *e. g.*: "We have brought a large part of the Christian system under the domain of Law, when we have recognized as necessary, or natural, such conceptions as . . . that the human mind is in some real measure and degree an image of the mind which is supreme in Nature; that a fuller and higher incarnation of it cannot be regarded as difficult of belief; that inspiration, in an infinite variety of degrees, is quite according to the existing constitution and course of things; that the nature and efficacy of sacrifice admits of some reasonable explanation;" etc., etc. The author then goes on to show how Christian ethics, as an inseparable part of Christian theology, is grounded in the natural constitution of things, and how prayer also has its sphere of objective efficiency under the all-including reign of law.

The eminent social position of the writer adds to whatever interest belongs to his treatment of the subject. When statesmen of the British Empire like Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Balfour, and the Duke of Argyll take the field in behalf of Christian theology, we see a great change from the middle of the last century, when Montesquieu said that in the higher circles of English society "every one laughs if one talks of religion." Whatever the present skepticism may count for, we see a rising, not a reflux, tide.

But while freely conceding the ability of the Duke as a theological writer, comparing well with some distinguished doctors of divinity, we have been perhaps most interested in his present work as typical of this time of transition—a time when many stalwart thinkers, who possess the modern spirit, show themselves as yet not so possessed by it as to escape vacillation between the ideas from which they are parting and those which they are laying hold of. The Duke makes a clean sweep of the distinction, still held so tenaciously by many of his fellow-Presbyterians, between the natural and the supernatural. He tells us that it is "purely modern," and "irrational." All that is natural is in fact divine. Human instincts are divinely inspired. Christ appeals to the natural reason and conscience as "the inspired element in man," which will respond to him. "It is significant," he says, "of the sense which Christian theology attaches to the nature of authority, that St. Paul should speak so strongly and so absolutely on the independence of the individual reason in the last resort." He does not hesitate to eliminate the miracle of the dividing of Jordan for the Israelites by referring to a similar event in the thirteenth century, due to a landslip which dammed the river.

On the other hand, he adduces "the conceptions of Christian theology on what are called the 'Persons of the Godhead,'" as specimens of a class of ideas "which we are expected to accept on authority alone," since "they all lie in a region which our own consciousness tells us is absolutely inaccessible to any knowledge of our own depending on reason." The word "authority," as here used, is elsewhere defined as that guidance by "the instrumentality of other minds, higher and richer than our own," which we adopt in all daily affairs. But who are those "other minds," on whose authority we are "expected to accept" conceptions of the "three Persons" which no internal light of our own can reveal? To say that they are the divinely

gifted evangelists and apostles is to beg the question, now at issue between Christian thinkers, whether the New Testament writers are really sponsors for the verity of the so-called Athanasian creed, whose propositions the Duke has well described as lying in a region inaccessible to the reach of our own reason.

This is a marked case, but not the only case, of incongruity between the old and the new stands in the author's thought, a characteristic which gives such a piebald color to much theologizing of our time. For this the amateur has no cause to be ashamed in the company of the professional. It does, however, seem strange that a writer so well read in contemporary criticism should say of the titles given in Isaiah ix., 6, to the newborn child, that they "are not conceivably applicable to any mere man."

We were about to remark on the noble and inspiring chapter which ends the book, on "Christian Belief in its Relation to Philosophy," but our limits forbid. In view of what we have said, it should be added that in this long and trying period of theological reconstruction the books most helpful to the largest number of inquiring minds are books of this sort, however marked by incongruities. Their unloosened grasp on some conceptions that are passing away inspires confidence to lay hold with them on other conceptions that are destined to prevail. Nature is Spirit. Life is the self-existent, aboriginal Reality. Human life is an included fragment within the divine. Human wills enter as an element into the divine will. Such are the ultimate truths, of which glimpses appear on our author's pages as in his prospect, if not in his possession. He is on the road; he knows the way; he is still in touch with many that are further behind, and therefore the more trusted and helpful as their guide out of the mist to the mount of vision.

An Instructive Review²

We all know Froude; we admire his genius, we respect his purpose, even if we do not always laud his success in rewriting history more closely to truth. The interest which cannot fail to attach to this posthumous publication is saddened by our regret that he is with us no more. It is a familiar story that it is concerned with. Its special claim upon our attention, apart from the fact that it is his, is in the attempt which it makes, so characteristic of him, to eliminate misconceptions in the interest of historical reality. The illusions which inevitably haunt us in studying the past arise from our habit of viewing it through the medium of the ideas of our own time. Thus, unhistorical conceptions of the Protestant Reformation arise and prevail. Protestant and Catholic divide now upon dogmas, and we are wont to think it was so at the first. Catholicism and the supremacy of an infallible Pontiff are now synonymous, and to rebel against the latter is to break with the former. But it was not so in Luther's time, when, as Froude says, half of Catholic Europe "regarded the Papacy as a usurpation and an impertinence." According to Cardinal Contarini, at that time, the conversion of Luther and all his followers would not have hindered the rebellion against the Roman hierarchy from going forward with undiminished vigor.

When we speak of the Reformation, we think of the theological and ecclesiastical consequences which it ran into. Our historian puts these aside to show us what it originally was—a revolt of the laity against the clergy—against the most enormous and immoral tyranny that the world has ever endured. In the demonstration of this fact he is content to set aside Protestant testimony at Cardinal Newman's disparaging estimate of it, as based on "bold, wholesale, unscrupulous lying." He rests his case wholly on Catholic witnesses, and "Catholic documents of undoubted authenticity."

The Council of Constance in 1415 had given a warning which the corrupt hierarchy had disregarded. The infamous Pope John XXIII., whom it deposed, was the precursor of the still more infamous Alexander VI. at the end of that century. To him the name of "Antichrist," which only a Protestant fanatic would now apply to Leo XIII., was given by a Catholic at Rome in a letter inviting the interference of the Emperor Maximilian. The fuel of revolution had been thickly piled throughout northern Europe when it was kindled by the spark that Luther struck.

Just then the King of Spain, Charles V., became Emperor of Germany. We usually think of him as the baffled foe of Luther. In Mr. Froude's pages we see him also as the baffled reformer of the Church, whose loyal son he was from first to last. From his accession in 1520 to the Council which met at Trent in 1545, his hope was to maintain the unity of Christendom by reforming the abuses which threatened to disrupt it. The cry

¹ *The Philosophy of Belief; or, Law in Christian Theology.* By the Duke of Argyll. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. \$5.

² *Lectures on the Council of Trent.* Delivered at Oxford, 1892-3, by James Anthony Froude, late Regius Professor of Modern History. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. \$2.

of Germany was for a General Council composed of the laity as well as the clergy, presided over by the Emperor, and on German, not Italian, soil. The doctrinal questions of a later period were as yet undeveloped. The demand was for moral reform, for simple righteousness. This demand the Emperor respected, and did what in him lay to make it prevail at Rome. He failed, and it was the disappointment of his life.

The successive Popes with whom Charles had to deal insisted that the Council should be held in Italy, composed of the clergy only, and presided over by the Pope or his legate; that is, that the chief offenders should be judges in their own case. To this it finally had to come, either this or no Council at all, with the single concession that it should be at Trent, in the Tyrol, not far from the Italian frontier. But when Charles had got his Council together, it took the bit in its teeth, it defied control, it was bent on making schism permanent, it became farcical, and was finally broken up by fear of a raid by Maurice of Saxony, acting, as Mr. Froude thinks, in secret collusion with the Emperor. And so the last hope of the peace of Christendom vanished.

The question on which the Church divided in the Reformation was the right of the laity to have a voice in spiritual matters. Rome fought against this as involving her destruction, and she prevailed. Ten years later another Council met at Trent, but only to recognize the fatal consequences of the first, and to equip the Church for reconquest of her lost ground.

As to the often alleged failure of the Reformation, two things may be said: First, and conformably to Mr. Froude's conception of the Reformation, as originally a revolt of the laity against the clergy, we may say with him that every one of the "hundred grievances," in protest against which Germany demanded a General Council, has ceased to exist, many of them even to be remembered. "Everywhere, in Catholic countries as in Protestant, the practices have been abandoned which the laity rose then to protest against. The principles on which the laity insisted have become the rule of the modern world."

Secondly, however disappointed were the hopes of the Reformers concerning the immediate future, their work was no more a failure than the labor of the farmer in the frosty spring. They introduced two germinant principles of illimitable expansive power—the freedom of the individual conscience in immediate responsibility to God, and the authority for conscience of the light enshrined in the records of divine revelation. Poorly as they themselves comprehended or applied them, these principles form the life-blood of whatever sound or stable progress the world is making now. These principles, moreover, when realized, issue in that true toleration, earnest, not indifferent, which respects the right of judgment even of those whose judgment it most opposes. Mr. Froude's remark, "We only tolerate what we think unimportant," therefore leaves us with the doubt whether he has fully discerned the heart of the Reformation movement, whose superficial character he has so accurately described.



Bishop W. Boyd Carpenter, of Ripon, makes a careful and extended study of the Sermon on the Mount in *The Great Charter of Christ*. What he says is not as important as what he has left unsaid. The real difficulty that religious teachers of the present day are feeling is in the adjustment of modern civilization, with what seem to be its necessary forms and conditions, to the beatitudes. We cannot but feel that Bishop Carpenter has failed to answer this demand. With all the excellences of his diction and with all the ingenuity of his thought, we fail to find in this volume what we most want. It is suggestive of many things; it is in some directions devout and spiritual; but it is not applied to the demands that modern society is pressing upon us; the Bishop does not tread the earth. We do not say that his interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount cannot be applied, only Dr. Carpenter does not show us the way in which it is to be applied. (Thomas Whittaker, New York.) His other recent book, *Some Thoughts on Christian Reunion*, published by Macmillan & Co., has as its fundamental idea that the causes which have led to the rise of sects in Christendom have been the desire to make some special or new doctrine a condition of Christian communion. In consequence of this premise he believes that the way to Christian union is to suppress these special or new doctrines. He is quite right in saying that we want more of the spirit of religion and less of the letter; because intellectual agreement cannot reasonably be expected. He sees much hope for reunion in the decline of interest in special theological ideas, and he believes that Christendom will ultimately unite upon the basis of the historic creeds. It is not easy to see how to reconcile this position with the other, about the spirit and not the letter. Upon the whole, we lay down the book with a feeling of disappointment. The author appears to desire most of all a union of the Episcopal Churches. The non-Episcopal Churches he practically ignores, and while he hopes for a union of the Anglican and the Eastern Churches, he has no reason to hope for a union of the Anglican and the Latin Churches.

The question has arisen, especially within the past year, whether Chaucer and Spenser ever held the position of poet laureate; indeed, if it ever existed before the time of Ben Jonson. This question has

been answered generally in the negative, but never so completely as by the author who writes under the pseudonym of "Kenyon West" in *The Laureates*. (F. A. Stokes Company, New York.) In this book we learn that the laureateship was made a regular office in 1630, Ben Jonson being the first to hold it, and that the annuities given by Edward III. to Chaucer, and by Elizabeth to Spenser, were the sole causes for the tradition of their being laureates. The volume gives us in concise form a condensed account of the lives and works of all the English laureates, together with extracts from their works. The sketches are condensed yet comprehensive, and the selections are admirable—many of them must have been weeded out from a mass of poems unfit to be read in this age. We must give special praise to the classification of the selection from Wordsworth. More than in any other classification his biography is reflected in his verse. This is emphasized by the dates which are appended to each poem. This book brings out clearly what ought to be as clearly understood nowadays, namely, that the laureateship does not mean the appointment of the greatest poet, but of the person whose personality is most pleasing to the Court, and who is most in sympathy with the monarch. It is surprising, therefore, that so many great poets have been included in the category, for greatness presupposes independence. However, we have in the cases of both Wordsworth and Tennyson independence united to a genuine regard for the crown and for the royal family. This statement makes plain the fact that the appointment of Shelley or Byron would have been as impossible as the appointment of Mr. Swinburne or of Mr. William Morris in our own day; while the appointment of Mr. Alfred Austin was strictly in accord with the traditions of the place.

In the volume on the *Book of Deuteronomy*, by Andrew Harper, Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Exegesis, Ormond College, Melbourne, we have one of the best of that valuable series, "The Expositor's Bible." Professor Harper accepts in the main the general results of recent higher criticism, at least as far as Deuteronomy is concerned, declining, however, to accept the extreme conclusions of some critics. He is independent, cautious, reverent, earnest, and always fresh and suggestive. He believes heartily in the inspiration of the Scriptures, and accepts them as the Word of God; and he also believes in the continuous presence of God with his people. His book is pervaded by a delightful spirit. His treatment of the various religious and ethical questions connected with Deuteronomy will prove of great and material assistance to many—we think all—who desire to be true to all real light, and yet do not see how to reconcile the positions of recent criticism with a genuine faith in the inspiration of the Bible. It is too much to say that they will find all their difficulties removed, as it is too much to expect that the most "advanced" students will be satisfied; but all will find the treatment of the questions involved able and candid and devout—the product of a mind notably alert and vigorous, open and generous, richly stored, combining care for the best in the past with readiness for the ever new disclosures of God's spirit. The book is notable also for the writer's sense of the wholeness of human life, his discernment of the fundamental needs and laws common to all people. It thus gives a distinct impression of the practical wisdom of the Deuteronomic code. But especially is the book eminent and constantly quickening to the spiritual life in the writer's apprehension of the fatherly love of God as prompting, and as enshrined in, the Mosaic law. (A. C. Armstrong & Son, New York.)

He is a brave man who dares to attempt that "easie running verse with tendere feet" of which Edmund Spenser was the master, yet so great courage has Mr. George Musgrave, M.A., of St. John's College, Oxford, and now Barrister at Law. What is still more remarkable is that Mr. Musgrave has thought good to use the Spenserian stanza as a medium to translate the *Divine Comedy of Dante* into English. We do not like the result of the attempt. The author is evidently able to translate Dante as well as the English tongue will permit. But his form of verse is a hindrance. It seems to us foreign to the Terza Rime. The stanza breaks the strain of the narrative where it should not be interrupted, and it necessitates the use of words that are archaic. This latter feature would not be objectionable were the archaic wording suitable to the dignity of Dante's thought, but it is not always so. In fact, at times the diction has the air of burlesque. Besides, the author is frequently driven to coin words, which, while their meaning may be obvious, by reason of their oddity distract the attention. It is not good to coin words to help out verse. With all this license, the verse itself often halts. Consequently, notwithstanding some felicitous renderings, we cannot pronounce this translation, which covers only the Inferno, a success. (Macmillan & Co., New York.)

There is a delightfully unconventional flavor to the sermons of A. K. H. Boyd in the volume *Occasional and Immemorial Days*. (Longmans, Green & Co., New York.) They are long sermons, genial, mellow, and discursive as the essays of a "Country Parson." In point of fact, some of them are essays rather than sermons; but they all tend to edification. We have been particularly interested in the sermon "Church Life in Scotland: Retrospect and Prospect," which was preached before the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1890. In a tender and kindly way Dr. Boyd contrasts the present of Scotch Presbyterianism with the past, and the contrast is striking. Our readers know that Dr. Boyd is a Broad Church Presbyterian, and the knowledge of this will give the key to all these sermons.

We have received from the Open Court Publishing Company a new edition, enlarged and revised, of the *Religion of Science*; also a new edition of Professor Max Müller's *Three Lectures on the Science of Language*; also a fourth edition, exactly, so far as one can discover,