

**MODERN MATERIALISM IN ITS RELATIONS
TO RELIGION AND THEOLOGY;
COMPRISING AN ADDRESS DELIVERED IN
MANCHESTER NEW COLLEGE, OCTOBER
6TH, 1874, AND TWO PAPERS REPRINTED
FROM "THE CONTEMPORARY REVIEW"**

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Modern materialism in its relations to religion and theology; Comprising an address delivered in Manchester new college, October 6th, 1874, and two papers reprinted from "The Contemporary review" by James Martineau

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JAMES MARTINEAU

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MODERN MATERIALISM

IN ITS RELATIONS TO

RELIGION AND THEOLOGY

COMPRISING AN ADDRESS DELIVERED IN MANCHESTER NEW COLLEGE, OCTOBER 6TH, 1874, AND TWO PAPERS REPRINTED FROM "THE CONTEMPORARY REVIEW"

BY
JAMES MARTINEAU, LL.D.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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NEW YORK
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PREFACE.

THE following Address, published by desire of my College, was much curtailed in oral delivery. As somewhat more patience may be hoped for in a reader than in a hearer, it now appears in full. The position assumed in it, of resistance to some speculative tendencies of modern physical research, is far from congenial to me: for it seems to place me in the wrong camp. But the exclusive pretension, long set up by Theology, to dominate the whole field of knowledge, seems now to have simply passed over to the material Sciences;—with the effect of inverting, rather than removing, a mischievous intellectual confusion, and shifting the darkness from outward Nature to Morals and Religion. I cannot admit that these are conquered provinces: and to re-affirm their independence, and protest against their absorption in a universal material empire, appears to me a pressing need alike for true philosophy and for the future of human character and society.

LONDON, Oct. 12, 1874.

INTRODUCTION.

Is the mind of man only the last product of the matter and force of our system of Nature, having its origin in the blind or purposeless chance which drifts into order and intelligence under a self-executing mandate or necessity, called the survival of the fittest? The alleged discovery and partial verification of the *method* by which Nature works, has aroused suspicions in many leading scientific minds that Nature is the only and the final reality; that we cannot get behind her phenomena—or rather, that there is nothing behind them; that matter and force are all we know or need to know, and that they have answered so many of our questions in regard to the origin of animal existence and instincts, and even human intelligence, that they need only to be persistently pressed in the same direction to tell us

all we can ever know and all we ought to believe.

It is certain that a spirit older than matter, an intelligence other than human, a will freer than necessity, does not enter into the causes of things contemplated by the new science. It studies a mindless universe with the sharpened instincts of brutes who have slowly graduated into men—themselves the most intelligent essences in existence. Consciousness, reason, purpose, will, are results of blind, undesigning, unfeeling forces, inherent in matter. God is an unknown and unknowable Being, if He exists; but He is a needless hypothesis, and really only the reflection of man's own God-like thoughts and feelings. In its childhood humanity invented Him as the hiding-place of its own ignorance! It is against this hypothesis that Mr. Martineau directs his battery in the discourse which follows.

It is refreshing, in the midst of the crude replies which alarmed religionists are hastily hurling at the scientific assailants of faith in a

living God, to hear one thoroughly furnished scholar, profound metaphysician, and earnest Christian, entering his thoughtful and deeply-considered protest against the tendencies or conclusions of modern Materialism. Throughout the whole discussion of the last ten years, between utilitarian philosophers and scientific materialists, on one side, and believers in intuitive morals and spiritual realities on the other, Mr. Martineau has confessedly been the leading champion of faith. No writer has rendered, in this generation, such service to Religion, assailed in its vital assumptions by the arrogance of science, drunk with the new wine of its recent victories. Happily unhampered with theological anachronisms or ecclesiastical entanglements; free to acknowledge all that science and experience can justly allege against dogmatic inventions or out-lived traditions; a frank confessor of whatever new facts in the genesis of Nature modern science has established; tied to no creed and confessing no intellectual accountableness to any power less than the Eternal Reason—Mr.

Martineau, by his nature, culture, age, position, and character, is, of all living men, the best fitted to speak with the scientific mind of the day in the interests of religious faith, and more likely to be listened to by it with respect than any other voice. It is not as an enemy of science, much less as a friend of superstition; not as a disputer of the method of the Evolutionists, far less as a defender of bibliolatry or popular theology, that Mr. Martineau appears, but as one who hails and blesses all new truth derived from scientific sources, and especially in its influence in dispelling theological assumptions and time-hardened errors, himself a firm believer in spiritual realities and in a personal God.

It is instructive to find the disowned leaders in theological reform among the stoutest defenders of the essential postulates of religious faith, and to recognize in the foremost champions of spiritual realities against the assaults of modern Materialism, the knights who have swung the most ponderous battle-axes at the errors and exaggerations of what