

**A LECTURE ON  
SCIENCE AND  
REVELATION**

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A lecture on science and revelation by James Stuart

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**JAMES STUART**

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A LECTURE  
ON  
SCIENCE AND REVELATION

DELIVERED IN THE ROOMS OF

*The Royal Institution, Liverpool, and the Philosophical Society, Leeds,  
in concluding a Course of Lectures on Meteorology for the  
North of England Council for the Education of Women.*

BY

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PREFACE  
TO  
THE SECOND EDITION.

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THE COPIES of the following Lecture, which was printed under the circumstances indicated in the Preface to the First Edition, having become exhausted, it is now reprinted with the addition of one or two paragraphs.

TRINITY COLLEGE:  
*May 1872.*

PREFACE  
to  
THE FIRST EDITION.

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THE SET of Lectures to which reference is made in the opening paragraph of the following pages consisted of a series of Educational Lectures on Meteorology, delivered by me for the North of England Council for the Education of Women, in connection with the Ladies' Educational Associations of Leeds and Liverpool. The course was attended by between 250 and 300 ladies in these two towns, and from the majority of these I received written answers to the questions set weekly on the subject of the Lectures.

The following Lecture, which formed the conclusion of the strictly scientific series which preceded it, has been printed at the request and for the use of some of those who attended the course.

JAMES STUART.

TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE  
*December 1871.*



## LECTURE.

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I DESIRE in this lecture to take up a somewhat larger and more general question than those which I have been hitherto considering, and to deal, although to some extent it must be very insufficiently, with some portions of the general effect of science on the human mind. In such a set of lectures as the present, this is especially the more desirable, inasmuch as many of you here have been introduced for the first time to the study of science properly so called. It is usual in introducing persons to any study to begin by giving some sort of *resumé* of the leading points in which that study is connected, not only with the special things with which it has to deal, but with the other and various branches of human knowledge or speculation. Following this time-honoured custom I might have begun my set of lectures by one of that introductory nature, but I have rather postponed it to the end, because I believe that mere general conclusions and abstract reasonings are apt to come with but little weight, and the general principles of science and its bearings on other things may be best understood when we have acquired some familiarity with the methods according to which science proceeds.

In the syllabus which I issued before the beginning of these lectures I especially mentioned this as one of the subjects to which I should call your attention, and I

did so inasmuch as the subject of meteorology exhibits science in a very important point in which it influences the human mind. The general progress of science has been to introduce law and order into ideas in which they at first did not seem to prevail; and perhaps its most fundamental effect on the human mind has been to encourage the idea of law and order, although, in some respects, it has encouraged it erroneously—or, I should rather say, has encouraged an erroneous idea of what law and order mean. In the matter of meteorology science perhaps aims as high as in any other instance, and encourages this idea of the prevalence of law and order in regions where it is of all least visible. That human beings should dare to approach the phenomena of the winds and thunder with a consciousness that the want of perception of the law which prevails in them is due only to their want of capacity, and not to any real absence of law, is a great proof of the strong hold which this idea has now taken on the human mind. Nor can it be said to be of little importance, inasmuch as, on the one hand, an erroneous view of what is meant by law has been made the foundation of a most oppressive fatalism, while, on the other hand, the arguments drawn from its application have been used to prove the benevolence and wisdom of the Divinity. And, of all the questions in which science affects the human mind, the most important consists in its bearing on the deeper questions of religious faith, which all of us feel to be so nearly allied to each of us.

I am not one of those who believe that the truths of religion can be demonstrated from any investigation of nature. I can see no process of natural philosophy which is capable of demonstrating the goodness, justice, or mercy of God, or the truth of a future life—*all of which form the necessary groundwork of any*

religious faith. If this be so, far less can I find from the teaching of nature any proof of those truths more essentially Christian.

All demonstrations, then, of the truths of religion, and of those great moral and spiritual truths which so nearly concern us all—all such demonstrations founded upon what is called naturally theology—seem to me to be vain and useless, if they are to be viewed at all in the light of demonstrations. Revelation is, I believe, as necessary to convince us of God's goodness as it is to convince us of His scheme of redemption through Christ. I am aware, when I speak thus, that I speak in opposition to many popular authors of recent times. Lord Brougham, for instance, in his edition of 'Paley's Natural Theology,' puts especial weight not only on the desirability, but on the necessity of such demonstrations.

Yet the weight of authority in any human matter can never be a reason for our accepting what may otherwise appear to be untrue. Truth is older than the views of any one concerning it; and if we adopt truth in contradiction to the views of our predecessors, we but go there, where these predecessors themselves should have gone.

Certainly, arguments from nature may be, and are, of great use to those who already believe in God and in His goodness, as we shall attempt to see; but reason and experience alike tell us that for the conversion of the unbelieving such arguments are unavailing. Nay, indeed, the whole Bible points to us that it is so. It is said, 'The world by wisdom knew not God.' The knowledge of God is not a matter of demonstration from external observation, but comes through the heart. It is by the sense of faith, not that of sight, that God is apprehended. And since every man's reasoning is the same, and will from the same premises