

**FREEDOM AND
CAUSALITY IN THEIR
ETHICAL ASPECTS**

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Freedom and Causality in Their Ethical Aspects by James R. Howerton

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JAMES R. HOWERTON

**FREEDOM AND
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FREEDOM AND CAUSALITY

In Their Ethical Aspects

Being the lectures delivered on the Reinecker Foundation at the
Protestant Episcopal Theological Seminary of
Virginia, December 1914.

BY

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

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JUN 1954

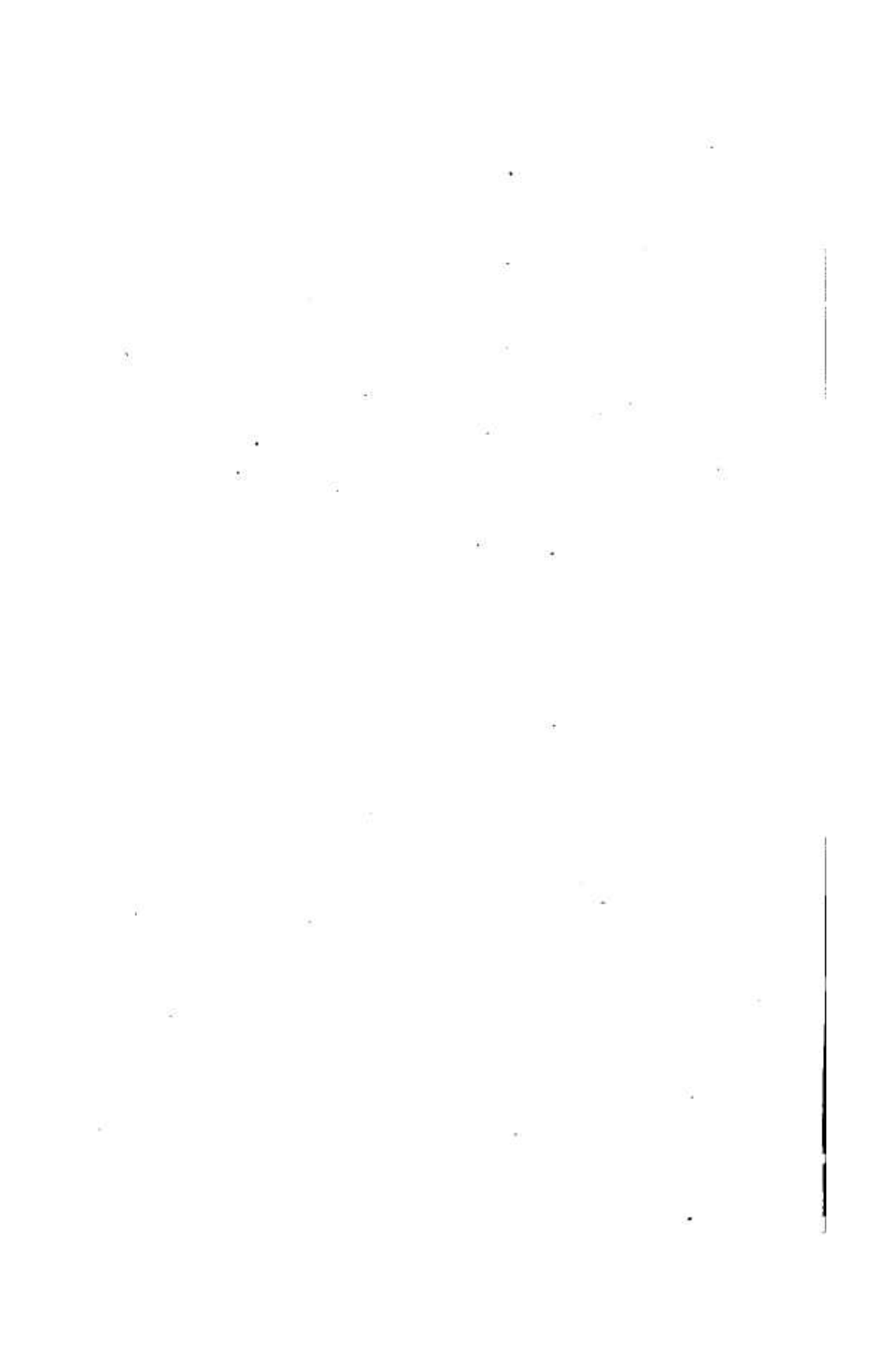
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INTRODUCTION

"You can shut up nothing within the scholar's study door. For good or for mischief, all that the wisest are thinking becomes the basis on which the ignorant live." So wrote Phillips Brooks in his Yale Lectures on Preaching, and he wrote with wisdom and insight. You can, indeed, shut up nothing within the scholar's study-door. Ideas, conceived in speculative mood, sift downward and reappear as conduct; Materialism, a philosophy in the study, becomes a habit of life in the street; and Pessimism, a speculative theory in the hands of Schopenhauer and von Hartmann, becomes a pistol in the hands of the suicide. And it is only by recognizing this fact that we can get an adequate standpoint for estimating doctrines. We cannot judge them on a merely speculative basis, for they are not merely speculative; we cannot divorce a system from its practical consequences, for the consequences are an integral part of the system. We may begin by investigating the logical coherency of a point of view; but we must ever end by asking what it will look like when embodied in character. "By their fruits ye shall know them" is after all the final test.

The full recognition of this principle gives a peculiar value to the discussion of Freedom embodied in this volume. That subject has suffered more than most from unrestrained and wearisome dialectics. And, therefore, the correlation of reasoned theory and practical insight in this discussion is the more satisfying. The lectures possess, indeed, a combination of qualities too rare not to be appreciated. On the one side,

we have extremely close and accurate thinking backed by adequate scholarship and by a native philosophic grasp that especially impressed the lecturer's audience. On the other side, we have a faculty for apt illustration, a dexterity in the use of language, and a practical insight into the social and personal consequences of the two contrasted points of view with which the lectures deal. And this combination makes interesting reading out of the most severe and strenuous thinking. The author shows us the old struggle between Freedom and Determinism, too often regarded as merely academic, reappearing as a burning issue in the social movements of our time; in his hands the problem of the schools becomes a problem of the work-shops and the department stores.

The lectures were delivered on the Reinecker Foundation at the Theological Seminary in Virginia during the session of 1914-1915. Those whose good fortune it was to hear them are looking forward to giving them the thoughtful reading that they deserve. And, as one of that number, I am glad to have this share in presenting them to a wider circle. They will be of use alike to the technical student and to all those who are interested in approaching the social questions of our time on their profounder side. The lectures are the outcome of thought of a high order; they will provoke thought in those into whose hands they come; to the thoughtful they are commended.

W. COSBY BELL.

February 15, 1915.

PREFACE.

The first two of the lectures in this little volume are taken from my unpublished lectures on the Theory and Method of Ethics, with such arrangement and condensation as was necessary to adapt them to the occasion of their delivery and to separate publication. I reserve to myself the liberty of republishing them in their proper connection, should the whole course of lectures ever be published.

There is, of course, nothing new in these lectures; and advanced students of philosophy will easily recognize the sources. I have tried to do nothing more, at best, than to bring this discussion within the reach of less advanced students. The subject, however, is so difficult that it is impossible to make it popular in any broad sense of the term.

I wish to express my thanks to the faculty of the Theological Seminary of Virginia for the opportunity to deliver these lectures before their students, and to Dr. Bell for his kindness in writing the introduction.

J. R. H.