

**CONSTRUCTIVE
NATURAL
THEOLOGY**

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Constructive Natural Theology by Newman Smyth

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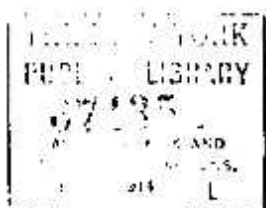
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ARVO VON
JULIEN
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PREFACE

THE number of thoughtful persons is increasing who desire to know in what state a full acceptance of the results of scientific research shall leave our cherished human faiths and hopes. They sometimes ask, Are we indeed to lose our life and the ideals that make it most worth living for the sake of gaining a whole world of material knowledge? Shall nature be divested of its spiritual beauty and meaning as science takes reason behind the scenes and discloses the machinery of the stage on which the passing generations play their transient part?

The writer of these pages has long been convinced that the scientific revelations of the processes of nature, and of our own lives as facts of nature, should all be religiously accepted; and that the working theories also which are generally received in the scientific world, should provisionally, at least, be recog-

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nized in theological thinking. With this conviction the assurance has grown that the modern sciences not only reopen old problems of philosophy, but also afford fresh and rich material for religious thought to gather and to use as vitalizing means of its own spirit. The sciences have gained full enough new knowledge to prepare the way for a new spiritual interpretation of nature. Yet in these fields, already white for the harvest, the theological laborers are few.

The ultimate problem toward which alike the natural sciences and our spiritual faiths lead up, is the meaning of personality as a fact in nature. While engaged in preparing for future publication a volume relating to this central problem, of final significance, upon which many lines of inquiry converge, the opportunity came to me to deliver a brief course of lectures upon the Taylor Foundation of the Yale School of Religion. Doctor Nathaniel W. Taylor was one of a succession of theologians in New England who accepted and used the science of their times in their reasoning from the works of God. But to follow in this respect their

example would require of us in our day an abandonment of a merely neutral position and suspicious attitude toward science, and a positive reconstruction of philosophical and religious views of nature and ourselves. Religious education from the Sunday-school to the university, and in the trained and reverent freedom of the pulpit, should follow a constructive scientific principle, and keep close to the facts of nature and life, if spiritual faith is to live anew; Lowell's lines, in the "Cathedral," afford an excellent motto for religious education:

"Science was Faith once; Faith were Science
now,
Would she but lay her bow and arrows by
And arm her with the weapons of the time.
Nothing that keeps thought out is safe from
thought.
For there's no virgin-fort but self-respect,
And Truth defensive hath lost hold on God."

It was obviously impossible to condense within these lectures the contemplated systematic presentation of the subjects considered in the following pages, and an adequate review of the extensive " h their discus-