

**LECTURES ON
SYSTEMATIC
MORALITY DELIVERED
IN LENT TERM, 1846**

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Lectures on Systematic Morality Delivered in Lent Term, 1846 by William Whewell

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WILLIAM WHEWELL

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Lent 1846

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SYSTEMATIC MORALITY

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BY

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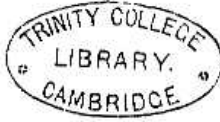
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PREFACE.

I HAVE stated at the outset of the following Lectures that though I hope they may have an independent interest for some readers, they contain a kind of commentary on some parts of the two volumes on *The Elements of Morality* which I lately published. I gladly take advantage of this opportunity of offering explanations on some of the points treated of in the former volumes; for a further attention to the subject has made me aware of very serious defects which are to be found in the work. I have also endeavoured to remove some objections which may be made to the *Elements of Morality*, but which are, I think, unfounded. Many of the objections thus noticed have appeared in print; but I have not thought it necessary to refer more particularly to the quarters from which they have been urged. It appears to me that in all subjects, the more *impersonal* our controversies can be made, the better they will answer all good ends; and certainly controversies on Morality are most likely in this way to be really moral.

The present volume contains only a part of the Course of Lectures delivered to the University last Term. I hope the Reader will bear in mind that they are to be judged of as Lectures.

TRINITY COLLEGE,
April 30, 1846.

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LECTURE I.

DEFINITION OF A SYSTEM OF MORALITY.

I WILL enter upon the Course of Lectures which I have announced, by stating the point which I conceive that I have reached in the treatment of the subject, through my previous courses of lectures, and other tasks connected with those. I was elected in 1838 to the Professorship in virtue of which I now address you. It is described by the founder, Dr. Knightbridge, who founded it by his Will in 1683, as a Professorship of Moral Theology or Casuistry; but on commencing my lectures in 1839, I declared that I should deal with my office, and speak of it, as a Professorship of Moral Philosophy, in order to accommodate my labours to the needs and the language of our own times. In my first course of lectures, I took, for the most part, an historical view of the subject, directing my survey mainly to the series of English writers on the foundations of Morality; and I endeavoured to keep especially before my hearers the broad distinction between *independent* and *dependent* systems of Morality;—independent systems, which look upon moral goodness and rightness as in themselves sufficient and supreme ends of human action; and dependent systems, which make moral goodness and rightness derive their value and force from their subserviency to some other ulterior end;—as pleasure, or gain of some kind; or usefulness for some further purpose. I remarked that among ourselves, from Hobbes to Paley, the latter system has been familiarly current, and has been worked out into detail in a skilful and