

have written his Physio-philosophy "in a kind of inspiration"—from what world the religious man might be in doubt.

These extravagant notions show what is the natural tendency of the law hypothesis. Yet it does not necessarily convert a man into an atheist. And if any of its advocates declare themselves Theists, and even Christians, we need not regard them as hypocrites, though we may consider them as in an eminently dangerous position; and that, when they shall act consistently, they will swing off into utter irreligion. But my arguments against the hypothesis will be based on the position, that *It is not sustained by facts*; and this is the second position of my lecture.

The nebular hypothesis is a part of the foundation on which the doctrine of creation by law rests. And the high scientific reputation of its author, as well as its apparent coincidence with some of the deductions of geology respecting the earliest condition of the earth, have made philosophers look upon it with considerable favour. Yet very few have been ready to give it implicit credence. And of late the most plausible evidence in its favour seems to be fast vanishing away. The ablest mechanicians are unable to see how a rotary motion should be produced in nebulous matter by refrigeration; or, if this be assumed, how the successive portions, detached by superior centrifugal force, should form spherical masses. But a still more formidable objection lies in the fact that, as improvements are made in telescopes, one and another of the *nebulæ*, on which the hypothesis rests, have been resolved into stars; and the presumption hence arising is very strong that all are resolvable. In the present aspect of the subject no sagacious philosopher would dare to rest even an hypothesis upon the unresolved *nebulæ*. If, however, the nebular hypothesis were shown to be true, it would prove nothing in regard to the production of animals and plants by mere law, without the special agency of the Deity.

The essential and inherent vitality of some kinds of matter is another doctrine on which this hypothesis rests. "In vain," says Bory St. Vincent, "has matter been considered as eminently brute. Many observations prove that, if it is not all active, by its very nature, a part of it is essentially so; and the presence of this operating according to certain laws, is able