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ORDINARY MEETING, JANUARY 18, 1869.

THE REV. DR. THORNTON, VICE-PRESIDENT, IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed, and the Hon. Secretary announced the election of the following :—

MEMBERS :—G. W. Allen, Esq., Sydney, New South Wales ; A. H. Macafee, Esq., Sydney ; J. S. Budgett, Esq., Ealing Park ; J. J. Shillington, Esq., Belfast ; J. Howard, Esq., M.P., Bedford.

ASSOCIATES, 2nd Class :—C. Dibden, Esq., and R. W. Dibden, Esq., 62, Torrington Square.

The following Paper was then read by the Author :—

ON THE RELATION OF REASON TO PHILOSOPHY, THEOLOGY, AND REVELATION. *By the* Rev. C. A. Row, M.A., *Mem. Vict. Inst.*

IN surveying the modern world of thought, one is much struck by the general tendency towards the formation of two opposing camps. One of these has arranged itself under the Theological standard ; the other, the Rationalistic. Hostilities have broken out, and they are engaged in the work of mutual destruction. Like other wars, this is certain to terminate in the great injury of one, if not of both the combatants.

The question at once arises, Is this war inevitable ? Can it be only terminated by the injury or the destruction of one of the parties ? Cannot each be induced to cultivate the arts of peace within its own dominions ? Has not modern experience shown that near neighbourhood between nations does not necessarily imply a state of natural warfare, and that it is more conducive to happiness that each should be great within its own dominions, and exchange its superfluities by mutual commerce, than engage in the destruction of the other's wealth ? What in this sense is true of nations is true of inquirers after truth. Mutual intercourse rather than inter-

necine war would be far more conducive to their good, whether they are called theologians, philosophers, or men of science. One of the conditions of such a peace is, that they must agree to divide the world of thought in proportion to the rights of the respective parties.

The object of this paper is, to institute an inquiry on what terms such a peace is possible; what are the proper dominions which belong to reason and theology; how the border land may be occupied without acts of mutual rapine; and what are the products of each country, which may become the subjects of mutual commerce.

I object to conceding to the opponents of revelation the exclusive right to the designation of rationalists. It leads to great confusion of thought, and induces numbers to think that there is a natural opposition between reason and theology. It is a term which is properly applicable to all those inquirers after truth who use reason as their instrument of investigation; and besides reason, the human mind has no other instrument for investigating truth, whether it prosecutes its inquiries in the regions of theology, philosophy, science, or critical inquiry. I am deeply sensible that I am surrounded by ambiguities, from which it will be difficult to keep clear. Our language has not the advantage of the Greek, in having several different terms to designate different functions of that principle which we call reason. We use the word without definite meaning, either in a philosophical or popular sense. Coleridge endeavoured to draw a distinction between the reason and the understanding; others speak of a distinction between reason and pure reason; but neither of these has succeeded in impressing itself on language. A numerous class of writers use the terms reason and faith as though they were mutually exclusive of each other. After giving deep consideration to the subject, I am unable to recognize the truth of this distinction. The only one which I am capable of understanding is that which exists between man's unassisted reason and a supernatural illumination imparted to that reason. The phenomena which, in common parlance, are designated Rationalism, are chiefly characterized by an unlimited use of the faculty of conjecture.

It is obvious that our first inquiry must be, Are there any limits to the competency of reason in the discovery of truth, understanding by that term the legitimate exercise of all the faculties of man in their due subordination? Do the limitations of our minds assign bounds beyond which even the communication of a supernatural revelation is no longer possible, owing to conditions imposed on itself by the action of creative

power? The limits of the one will be found to be coincident with those of the other.

Here let me draw attention to the distinction, often overlooked, between our powers of comprehension and discovery. We may be perfectly able to comprehend a thing after it has been discovered, but may be wholly or partially unable to make the discovery itself. For example, I may be quite able to comprehend Euclid now that all its various truths have been reasoned out, but quite unable, from the definitions, postulates, and axioms alone, to have reasoned out the entire system of geometry which it contains. The disregard of this obvious distinction is one of the grounds on which F. Newman has asserted the impossibility of a moral revelation.

In bringing this subject to your notice, I cannot help alluding to the controversy between Sir W. Hamilton, Mansel, and Mill, on the limits of thought. I shall enter on the subject only as far as is required by the exigencies of the present inquiry. I am aware that Professor Kirk has already partially discussed this subject, but with a wholly different purpose from my own, in a former paper. With some of his conclusions I agree; with others I am unable to concur; while some of them have nothing to do with my present inquiry. My general conclusion, on a review of the whole controversy, is, that the limits of rational and religious thought are the same.

The subject of debate has been much darkened by its having been discussed in an abstract rather than in a concrete form. The question in debate is, Can we form a true conception of the Infinite? Throwing aside the abstract form of the question, if I understand Dean Mansel rightly, he maintains that our conceptions of the infinite perfections of Deity are only true analogously and relatively; and that all attempts to reason on the infinite involve us in hopeless contradictions. Mr. Mill, on the contrary, asserts that our conceptions of the divine attributes must be absolute though imperfect truth; and that our finite conceptions, as far as they go, are correct though imperfect measures of the infinite. He argues that to require a man to believe in an attribute of Deity, the true nature of which he cannot comprehend, is a hopeless absurdity.

My own opinion is that there is a considerable amount of truth on both sides of the controversy. That portion of Mansel's argument is quite sufficient for my purpose which shows that all our attempts to reason on a number of high, transcendental conceptions, involve us in hopeless contra-

diction. When we have reached this point, we have attained the region where it is impossible for human reason to advance, and where a theology or a philosophy resting on a reliable foundation is impossible. In pushing his conclusions beyond this limit, Mansel has given Mill very considerable advantages, which the latter, as a logician, has not been slow to use. If this conclusion is right, that which is denominated the Transcendental philosophy, whether Greek, Scholastic, or German, or whether it exhibits itself in the form of mysticism, as is usually the case when it assumes a religious aspect, is a study where certainty is unattainable.

The ground which I take is, the vagueness and uncertainty of the conceptions on which large portions of the transcendental philosophy rest. This renders us unable to predicate agreement or disagreement between them with any certainty that we are dealing with the substantial realities of thought. As far as a conception in any proposition is indefinite, we are unable to predicate respecting it either truth or falsehood. Such a proposition is a simple nullity. Consequently it is incapable of becoming a fit subject of reasoning; for as all reasonings consist of comparisons of ideas, it is impossible to affirm the agreement or disagreement of those of which we are incapable of forming a clear and distinct conception.

The human mind being finite, it follows that all its conceptions must be finite also. The infinite in its infinity is therefore incapable of becoming a subject for the cognisance of reason. Whenever we attempt to deal with it, I contend that we tacitly assume its finity, and agree with Mansel, that whatever we conceive of, is, by the very act of conception, regarded as finite. The fact that Professor Kirk and Dean Mansel are diametrically opposed on this point proves that we are on the confines of those regions where accurate thought is impossible.

To determine the amount of truth which belongs to either side, we must inquire what is the accurate meaning which we attach to the term infinite. Its use is ambiguous. Sometimes we attach to it a negative, and at others a positive signification. In its negative sense we mean by it simply the non-finite. The actual conception in our minds is a positive finite idea plus the mere negation of its finity. So far we have done nothing to assume the existence of this negation even as a matter of thought. The only conception in the mind is a positive finite one plus a simple negation, which has not yet attained the dignity of an algebraic x.

But when we postulate the existence of infinity, we change this negative term into a positive one. The non-finite, which

was previously pure negation, is assumed to be something carried on without limits, or for ever. We assume its actual existence, although we can never realize it. Thus our infinite becomes our highest conceivable finite conception plus *x ad infinitum*. The constitution of our minds compels us to assume that infinity exists, as in number, duration, and extension. Still, however, we are unable to create any distinct image or conception in our minds. If we call it by the term conception, we can only correctly designate it an indefinite one, which the mind is unable to realize. Are mathematicians able to make their infinites a subject of reasoning as a positive idea? They can only reason about infinity by representing it by a finite symbol. It has been replied that when we thus conceive of an object without limits, we are guilty of the absurdity of asserting that we conceive of it as having limits. The truth is we have no definite conception in our minds at all. What other minds can do I cannot say, but I am wholly unable to form a positive conception of an unlimited thing.

Let us illustrate the subject in the concrete. What do I mean when I apply the term infinity to number, duration, or extension? I take the highest conceivable number, and deny that it represents the possible limits of number. I then assume the existence of number beyond it, and that for ever. I call this an infinite number, but I have no direct conception of that portion of it which lies beyond the limits of the finite. All that I can distinctly image to the mind is a direct conception and a negation. All I can do is to postulate the existence of an infinite number. Still I am as far as ever from being able to form a conception of what infinite number is; because all finite number with which I am acquainted has limit. It may be said that it is still number. I reply that the denial of limit to number takes away an essential portion of the original conception. Mathematicians have methods for approximating the value of infinite numbers; but it is well known that such processes can only be carried on by the use of symbols, which represent infinity under the image of finiteness. It follows, therefore, that although we are capable of postulating the existence of an infinite number, in doing which we advance a stage beyond the conception of the non-finite, we view it as something beyond the limits of our power to image it directly to the mind, and that it can only enter as a factor in any rational process, when the unknown quantity is capable of being represented by a finite symbol.

This will be apparent from an analysis of our conception of space. It is that of simple extension. We can only image it to our minds under some form of limitation. Still, while

this is a condition of our being able to form a distinct conception of it, we are compelled to postulate the existence of space beyond any conceivable definite limit we can assign to it. Still we have not reached a positive conception of infinite space. In attempting to frame such a conception, we must turn a negative one into a positive one. Negation as such cannot be conceived of as existing. What then has the mind really effected? It has been compelled to introduce a conception of finiteness into infinity itself, owing to that law of its constitution that finite thoughts and finite conceptions can only image the finite. If what we designate infinite space merely meant our finite conception pushed on in every direction without limits, Mr. Mill would unquestionably be right, that in adding infinity to finite space, we do not destroy our original conception of it. But in denying its finiteness, or in postulating its infinitude, have we not removed one of the factors in that conception? These remarks seem to me to prove that after we have assumed the existence of the infinite, we have arrived at the region beyond which reason fails to supply us with certitude.

There is a passage in Professor Kirk's paper which leads me to the same conclusion. "Can we not imagine," says he, "that beyond a certain range in the universe, there is nothing? Can we not think this? I insist that I can." My own experience is, that although I can imagine this, yet, after having made many hard attempts, before and since I read his paper, I am unable to think it in any form which is not an airy and unsubstantial one, and I believe that the great majority of thinkers will find themselves in a similar position. "I can think of a perfect vacuum," says he, "and that is nothing. You may say that it is space; but it is empty space, and that is nothing." I am unable to acquiesce in these assertions. Absolute non-existence is to me a thing which I am unable to make the subject of thought. The only thing which I am able to make a definite subject of thought is existence. A vacuum and empty space I can distinctly image to the mind. I can predicate of both of them that they exist. But I cannot predicate of nothing that it exists. The German transcendentalists have asserted the absolute existence of non-existence, and that it is the same thing as existence. This I am unable even to conceive. I only adduce this as helping to show that we have no rational powers which are capable of dealing with such subjects in our present state. They may be enlarged hereafter.

We assume the possibility of the existence of infinity, and ascribe it to God. One portion of this conception is purely

negative—that which denies limitation to His Being. But every positive conception of being which we can frame, can only be imaged to our minds under the aspect of finiteness. Can we by any mental process frame any conception of the infinite as it exists in God? I apprehend not. In speaking of God as infinite, all that I can distinctly image to the mind is some finite conception which I deny to form the limits of His Being. My positive conception of Him is, that He is that finite conception plus something more devoid of limits, which I do not know. In the existence of such a being I believe; but it is impossible to say with any degree of correctness that I can frame a distinct conception of His nature. By the term believe, I mean that there are certain laws of mind which compel me to assume that such a being exists. Beyond this I cannot go.

Dean Mansel and Sir W. Hamilton represent that our belief in an infinite Being is the peculiar province of a function of the mind, which they designate faith, as a power distinct from reason. I am unable to acquiesce in this distinction. Every act of faith, nay, the one in question, is essentially rational. Faith is the final result of every one of our mental processes, when we have arrived at the point at which we make a distinct affirmation. Why the principle of faith should be limited to the admission of the existence of that which we cannot conceive I cannot see; and, above all, how such an act can be viewed otherwise than an act of our reason. Faith is not only an act of our reason, but frequently of our highest reason. I ask, Are not our greatest acts of faith in the highest degree rational? Is not the act of the martyr standing voluntarily at the stake a most genuine act of faith? Are not his convictions in the highest sense rational ones? I admit that there is an aspect of faith which may be said to be instinctive. The belief of a child in his mother is such. But there are two others both rational ones. One is that which we designate by the term *trust*. This is an act founded on our reason; as, for example, our trust in God. The second is the final result of the reasonings and rational processes of our minds. The affirmation of the truth of our conclusions is followed by an act of faith. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews designates our belief in the being of a God as an act of faith. This is surely a conclusion of our reason.—In treating of the moral attributes of God, Dean Mansel appears to me to have pressed his premises beyond their legitimate conclusions. I should raise the question with him whether they are rightly conceived of as infinite? He has here given Mr. Mill a considerable advantage over him. The term Infinite can only properly be

applied to things capable of a quantitative measure. It may be sufficiently intelligible in popular language to speak of God's moral attributes as infinite; but when we are treating of them philosophically, their correct designation is not infinite but perfect. It is impossible to conceive of truth or justice as admitting of a quantitative measure. I feel great difficulty in applying one to either His holiness or His benevolence. Dean Mansel, however, says that such attributes are the attributes of an infinite Being. This I admit; and, consequently, that they will be affected in the mode of their operation by the infinity of His wisdom. While the Infinite Being must be inconceivable in His infinity, when I ascribe to Him justice, truth, holiness, or benevolence, I do not see how I change the essential conceptions of those qualities, or why they should differ as they exist in God from the conceptions of them as they exist in man.

Mr. Mill declares, in language certainly not a little profane, his inability to worship and reverence a being of whose moral attributes he is unable to form a true conception, and which in their essential nature exhibit different results from the corresponding moral attributes which exist in man. To Mr. Mill's conclusion, striking out its irreverence, I cannot help yielding my assent. Still it requires qualifications. One consideration he has omitted. Moral attributes, as they exist in man, qualify each other's action. On Mr. Mill's principles, we are certainly bound to assume that such a qualification extends to their action in Deity.

It is evident that if I am to feel love, reverence, or adoration for God, these feelings can only be excited by the presence of positive and not negative conceptions of qualities suited to produce them. I cannot feel those affections towards a being who may possess these qualities plus something which may entirely alter their nature or their mode of action. It is impossible to view that as lovely in God which in me would be utterly unlovely; or that as true which in me would be false. Unless I get a positive conception of the moral attributes of God, I get no conception which can produce a moral result in me. It is incorrect and misleading to say that God is benevolent plus infinity. He is perfectly benevolent. Infinite wisdom directs the action of the attribute, and boundless power effectuates the purposes of His will.

Agreeing, as I do, with many of the reasonings of Dean Mansel, it seems to me that he has taken an untenable position in representing our conceptions of the moral attributes of God as merely regulative, or that we can accept them by revelation, while we cannot embrace them by reason. It is impos-

sible for me to feel anything but a very cold love, reverence, or adoration for a being whose attributes are merely conceived of as regulative. To bring such feelings into active play, I want the positive aspects of those qualities. We love Him because He first loved us, is surely no regulative idea. If such ideas had been presented by Christianity as regulative only, she would never have exhibited a noble army of martyrs; for that it is possible to embrace ideas by faith, while I cannot conceive of them by reason, is to me utterly incomprehensible.

But it is right to face the difficulties of Mr. Mill's view and my own, and I do not think that Mr. Mill has faced them. Admitting that the moral attributes of Deity are the same as those in man, only perfect, we are bound—as in action man's moral attributes are capable of modifying each other—to extend the same principle to the moral attributes of God. If this be correct, it will require a modification of Mr. Mill's conclusions. As God is guided by a higher wisdom than that of man, the outward manifestations of His moral attributes may, within definite limits, appear different from the human. It follows, therefore, that it will be impossible to determine the precise mode of their manifestation on grounds purely abstract.

It is an unquestionable fact, that the universe presents phenomena which our reason, with the limited views which it can take of the moral government of God, is unable to reconcile with the conceptions of benevolence, justice, or holiness, as they exist in man. I shall select only one example,—the existence of evil, both physical and moral. All the efforts which have been made to reconcile this with the infinitude or the perfection of the Divine attributes have proved complete failures. Nor have the attempts to explain away its existence as a fact been more successful. One practical answer is worth a thousand abstract arguments.—We feel it.

If we assume that God could have prevented it, and has not, we assign imperfection to His moral attributes; if, that He was unable to prevent it, we limit either His power or His wisdom. Some have assumed that it involves a contradiction to assert the possibility of creating free agency, and not along with it the necessity of creating the possibility, nay, the certainty of the existence of moral evil. I cannot see that these two ideas fulfil the conditions of a logical contradiction, which is the only ground on which we can certainly predicate impossibility of Omnipotence. How then are we to meet the difficulty in question? The facts of the created universe are our only source of knowledge as to the line of action which the moral attributes of the Creator dictate. Beyond what they

disclose, we must assign a limit to the powers of reason, not on the ground that we are unable to attain a clear conception of the nature of the moral attributes of the Creator, but because, as in man, they each limit one another's action, and the infinitude of His wisdom alters the mode of their manifestation, compared with the mode which would be dictated by the finite wisdom of man.—A large mass of the phenomena of the universe afford us unquestionable proofs of the benevolence of the Deity. The only mode of evading the force of these is by denying the existence of design in creation. A subordinate class, viewed by themselves, present us with another aspect. They cannot be ascribed to benevolence, except on the supposition of a deficiency in power. There is only one solution open, but that is a very satisfactory one. We have not the whole case before us, and it is reasonable to suspend our judgments until we have, and abide by that evidence which really preponderates. A child forms a very different conception of what is a truly benevolent action from a full-grown man. To a child a flogging may seem a high act of cruelty. To a wise man it may appear as the highest manifestation of benevolence; still it is impossible that the child can view the act as benevolent, as long as he is only capable of contemplating it as cruel. The answer to the difficulty is, the ignorance of man.—I therefore class the idea of the infinite among the transcendental conceptions of the human mind, which, owing to their indistinctness and indefiniteness, only admit of predication to so limited an extent, that they are incapable of becoming the subjects of reasoning. They may be regarded as belonging to a numerous class of subjects which, in relation to our present faculties, are neither true nor false, but nullities. Of this kind are multitudes of those conceptions by the aid of which certain classes of thinkers have endeavoured to penetrate the regions of ontology, and especially those which are peculiar to the transcendental philosophy, which have been the same in character both in ancient and modern times. The *Timæus* of Plato is a complete magazine of conceptions of this description; so also are the writings of the Alexandrian philosophy, of German transcendentalism and mystical theology. My mind at least is incapable of realizing the conceptions of these philosophers. This may be owing to my stupidity. If so, it is a consolation to know that it is one which I share with all but a very select portion of mankind; and my scepticism leads me to think that those persons who imagine that they are able to grasp these classes of conceptions, so as to make them subjects of positive thought, are under a delusion. They appear to me to have fallen

into the not uncommon error which identifies muddy water with deep water, and the other equally hasty generalization which asserts that whatever is clear must be shallow.

To form an adequate conception of the rottenness of the foundation on which this so-called philosophy rests, it is necessary to have made it a considerable subject of study. My limits will only allow me to illustrate it by one or two brief quotations. I quote from Lewes's *History of Philosophy*. "The blind and unconscious products of nature are nothing but unsuccessful attempts of nature to make itself an object; the so-called dead nature is but an unripe intelligence. The acme of its efforts, *i.e.*, for nature completely to objectize itself, is attained through the highest and ultimate degree of reflection in man,—or what we call reason. Here nature returns into itself, and reveals its identity with that which in us is known as the object and the subject."

"This function of reason is elsewhere more distinctly described as the total-indifference point of the subjective and objective. The absolute he represents by the symbols of the magnet. Thus as it is the same principle which divides itself in the magnet into the north and south poles, the centre of which is the indifference point; so in like manner does the absolute divide itself into the real and ideal, and holds itself in this separation as absolute indifference. And as in the magnet every point is itself a magnet, having a north pole and a south pole, and a point of indifference, so also in the universe the individual varieties are but varieties of the eternal one. Man is a microcosm. Reason is the indifference point. Whoso rises to it, rises to the reality of things, which reality is precisely in the indifference of object and subject. The basis of philosophy is therefore the basis of reason; its knowledge is the knowledge of things as they are, *i. e.* as they are in reason."

Of many of the terms of this quotation, I am not ashamed to confess that I am unable to form any distinct conception. They consist of a mass of indefiniteness, of which, as far as I can see, reason is incapable of predicating anything affirmatively or negatively. The sooner they are excluded both from theology and philosophy, the better. It is surprising that large numbers of men ever could have been deluded into the idea that such muddy waters must be profound depths.

A similar dealing with transcendental conceptions—I dare not call it reasoning—induced Hegel to assert the actual existence of non-existence; that Being and non-Being are the same; that contradictions are identical; that subject was object, and

object subject; that force was the same thing as impotence; that darkness was light, and light darkness. It is hardly possible to believe that such speculations could have been applauded by crowds of admiring disciples. "It appears," says he, "that the world-spirit has at last succeeded in freeing himself from all incumbrances, and is able to conceive himself as absolute intelligence. For he is this only as far as he knows himself to be absolute intelligence; and this he knows only in science, and this knowledge constitutes his true existence." The positive philosophy is really refreshing, compared with such speculations. In philosophy they all ultimately end in Pantheism, and in theology in mysticism.

The first condition of a peace between theologians and philosophers must be a distinct recognition by both that the regions of the transcendental transcend the bounds of the human understanding. Theologians must renounce a large portion of metaphysical theology as lying beyond those limits; and philosophers the whole of their transcendental conceptions, and the greater portion of those which border on them. Each side must be content with the humbler method of induction, deduction prosecuted through the medium of ideas capable of being distinctly imaged to the understanding, and careful investigation. It is incredible what a large portion of so-called philosophy and theology has originated out of stringing together indefinite ideas which exist not in the regions of solid matter but in cloud-land, respecting which the saying of St. Paul is unquestionably true, "Ever learning, but never able to attain to the knowledge of the truth." Such materials were much employed by the controversialists of his day, and ultimately culminated in the Alexandrian philosophy. We may almost pronounce these tendencies to be one of the original sins of the human intellect, as we see it more or less exhibited in the theology and philosophy of almost every nation under heaven.

It seems at first sight marvellous, that, before engaging in such inquiries, it has not occurred to those making them, that it is necessary to ascertain, by a rigid analysis, whether they do or do not lie within the rational powers of man. It is very desirable to measure the profoundest depths of the ocean; but only one demented would attempt to measure them if he were satisfied that his only instrument for doing it was a line one hundred fathoms long. A vast expenditure of useless power might have been saved in the world of mind by adopting such a precaution. My objection to the whole of these processes is one taken *in limine*, that all conceptions which are incapable of being distinctly imaged in our minds lie beyond the boundaries of rational inquiry.

I have been hitherto dealing chiefly with philosophy. I must now consider the relation in which reason stands to theology, and theology to revelation, and of these latter to science.

I lay it down as a fundamental principle that theology stands to revelation in precisely the same relation as science does to God's creation. Creation supplies the facts of science; and the human mind determines the principles of investigation. Our reason elaborates the result. In a similar manner revelation supplies the facts and principles with which theology has to deal. Revelation and creation are only two different modes of the divine manifestations. As such, they are sisters, and must rest on the same basis of reason, because the mind is incapable of supplying any other. This distinction between theology and revelation is of the utmost importance to enable us to frame clear conceptions on the subject.

The form in which the Christian revelation has been given is unquestionably historical. The function of theology is to investigate, elaborate, and systematize its truths, precisely the same as science holds to creation.

It will perhaps be urged that there is a theology existing independently of revelation, commonly designated Natural Theology. This I concede. But it requires no argument to prove that the only possible basis of such a theology must be a rational one. Theology, therefore, in its widest sense embraces the complete study of the data furnished by God's natural and supernatural revelation, in their bearing on the moral and religious character of man.

We must now determine how reason stands related to revelation. If the principles which have been laid down are correct, the only vehicle through which revelation can be communicated is either reason, or an objective fact capable of addressing itself to reason, as the person of Christ.

The cause of this is obvious. God has limited his power as to the mode in which he will communicate truth, by the conditions which he has imposed on himself in the creation of the finite nature of man. All truth must therefore be communicated through the medium of human thoughts, ideas, and conceptions; in one word, through the instrumentality of reason, which is the sum total of the various powers of the mind.

It follows that those subjects which are incapable of becoming the subjects of rational thought can form no subjects of revelation. If it were otherwise, God must create a new faculty and impart it to man, to enable them to be apprehended.

The want of attention to an obvious distinction has been a fruitful parent of confusion of thought. While it is quite

true that the subjects of revelation must lie within the powers of reason to apprehend, it by no means follows that they may not run up into matters which transcend those powers; precisely in the same manner as while the objects of creation are perfectly comprehensible, many of them involve questions, as we have already seen, quite beyond the powers of reason to fathom. A mystery is a truth, which, as far as it is revealed, is comprehensible; as far as it is not revealed, runs into unknown depths.

Another distinction also should not be forgotten. Reason may be quite capable of distinctly understanding a truth when revealed, which it would have been impotent or only imperfectly able to discover. Multitudes can understand the Newtonian philosophy, who would have been unable to have elaborated it. Those who argue that a divine revelation was unnecessary because many of its truths might have been found out without it, forget this, which, when thus stated, seems to be like a simple truism.

It follows, therefore, that the opposition which we so often hear spoken of as existing between reason and revelation, is utterly untenable. So it seemed to the great defender of Christianity in the last century, Bishop Butler. "I express myself with caution," says he, "lest I should be supposed to vilify reason, which is the only faculty we have, wherewith to judge concerning anything, even revelation itself." And again, "Reason ought to judge, not only of the meaning, but also of the morality and the evidence of Revelation." The opposition exists, not between reason and revelation, but between revelation and the imperfect use of reason. To revile reason, because it is liable to error, or because it is capable of abuse, is much the same thing as it would have been to have reviled the supernatural gifts of the Spirit, because, as St. Paul expressly tells us, they were partial in their operation, and admitted of abuse on the part of those who possessed them.

But it will be said, reason has questioned both the truths and the fact of revelation itself; and has pronounced them incredible, on the ground that they disagree with the conclusions of reason. I answer, that this assertion is hopelessly ambiguous: human reason here means the reason of some particular men, which may be very imperfect. My eyes lead me sometimes into mistakes, those of others which are diseased furnish but very imperfect information; but this is no reason why we should follow the example of Œdipus, and extinguish them. If certain things in revelation contradict certain convictions of my reason, this forms a good ground for calling into active

energy other portions of my rational powers, and for investigating the foundation on which both my conclusions and such supposed assertions of revelation rest. A revelation which contradicts reason is at once proved to be incredible.

It is quite possible that a revelation might have been so given as to have contained a theology. As this is obviously not the case with the Christian revelation, we need not discuss an abstract possibility. If we want a system of theology, we must seek it elsewhere than in revelation itself; and the only instrument by which its elaboration is possible, is reason. It must be subject, therefore, to the same conditions as those to which science is subject, use the same *organa* of investigation, and be content to exclude from itself those indistinct conceptions respecting which we can never attain to any definite predication. In our efforts to attain to a true science, philosophy, or theology, it is hardly possible to overrate the importance of instituting such an analysis into the powers of the mind as will determine the definite limits within which its powers are bounded, and which will lead to the exclusion from each of impossible subjects of inquiry.

Many will object, that revelation having been communicated once for all in its fulness, theology must differ from the sciences in being unprogressive. This objection is an extremely popular one, but it is founded on the confusion of thought, by which theology and revelation are identified. I answer, first, that a similar objection lies against the study of creation. Secondly, that it it is contrary to fact, for many dogmas which were once supposed to form essential portions of theological truth, have become utterly superseded, as the once prevalent, nay, all but universal belief in witchcraft, which has slaughtered human beings in greater numbers than many a destructive war; and the disbelief in the possibility of the existence of antipodes, of the truth of which theologians were once as confident, as in modern times many have been of the utter falsehood of geology. The advance of human knowledge and the establishment of a better system of investigation, have cleared up many a dark cloud which once brooded over the surface of theology, and I feel confident that like influences will be attended with similar effects in years to come. Have not multitudes of eminent theologians in bygone ages believed that persecution was a religious duty? The advocates of this are now as few as they once were numerous. Such examples may be almost indefinitely multiplied.

As this subject is one of the greatest importance, and it is impossible in this paper that I should fully argue it, I shall shelter my position that theology ought to take rank among

the progressive sciences behind the authority of that great thinker, Bishop Butler. In part ii., chap. iii., of the *Analogy* he writes: "And as it is owned, that the whole scheme of Scripture is imperfectly understood, so if it ever comes to be understood before the restitution of all things, and without miraculous interpositions, it must be in the same way that natural knowledge is come at; by the continuance and progress of learning and liberty; and by particular persons attending to, comparing, and pursuing intimations scattered up and down, which are overlooked and disregarded by the generality of the world. Nor is it at all incredible that a book which has been so long in possession of mankind should contain many truths as yet undiscovered. For all the same phenomena, and the same faculties of investigation, from which such great discoveries in natural knowledge have been made in the present and last age, were equally in possession of mankind several thousand years before. And, possibly, it might be intended that events as they come to pass should open and ascertain several parts of Scripture."

If all had been like-minded with Bishop Butler, much of the quarrel between men of science and theologians might have been avoided. Modern science can have little more to ask than the above admissions. I need hardly observe, that the bishop places the study of theology on the same basis as the study of nature.

I maintain therefore that it is most dangerous for theologians to declaim against the use of reason in the study of theology, or to assert that philosophical or scientific research is in danger of conducting us to infidelity. Let them, by all means, exhort both themselves and others to the use of reason, under a sense of profound responsibility. Let philosophers and theologians alike, admit that it is an imperfect instrument, and strenuously labour to improve its methods. But the outcry against reason itself, as that it is a dangerous instrument for the investigation of any kind of truth, reminds one of the old story of the woodcutter, who ascended a tree one morning for the purpose of lopping off its limbs. His zeal at the work of demolition was so great that, forgetting that he was standing on one of them, he hit it several sharp blows with his axe, which brought it to the ground, and himself also. Thus he succeeded in bringing down the limb, but his success was attended with the fracture of his own neck. Our reason is fallible. Granted: but that is no reason for refusing to walk by its light, when we have none other to guide us. Rather, it is a good one for zealously trying to correct its defects. If we will not guide ourselves

by the light of reason, we can only direct our steps by the darkness of prejudice.

But we must go a step further. I agree with Bishop Butler that the only faculty which man has by which he can investigate the contents of revelation itself, or its nature and tendencies, is that of reason; and that it is the duty of reason to apply this test to anything which claims to have the character of a divine revelation. The whole process by which those who declaim most against the use of reason in the study of revelation is a rational one, only differing from others of the same kind by the assumption of premises of which no evidence exists. We can only persuade ourselves that we can quench the light of reason by invoking its aid in doing so. If in our despair of truth, we take refuge in the assumption of the existence of an infallible authority, the very constitution of our nature compels us to invoke the aid of our rational powers in this act of intellectual suicide.

When, therefore, the friends of revelation denounce the use of reason, and speak of its profane efforts to pry into matters of revealed truth, they do infinite mischief to their cause. Many theological writers, who should have known better, have given countenance to this delusion. From them men of science have got hold of the false impression that theology does not rest on a rational basis. They forget that the only processes by which they have attained to their own beliefs are rational ones; and that that which they denounce, as far as it is untrue, does not rest on a rational, but an irrational foundation. This state of mind is closely connected with that which leads to the convenient assumption that all orthodoxy is my doxy, and that all heterodoxy is every person else's doxy. Every one who thinks at all must apply his reason, not only in yielding assent to any particular system of theology, but in his study of revelation itself. The question is, not about the instrument which we must use, but its character, and the method of using it. On investigation it will be found, that the limits of our rational thought are those of our religious thought, and that the limits of religious thought are the limits of rational thought; and that the ground of the supposed opposition between reason and revelation is the attempt to push our inquiries beyond the boundaries of rational thought.

As a large portion of the sciences, and many of the deductions of philosophy, rest on a basis which is short of actual demonstration, so a large portion of theology occupies a similar position. Perhaps it will be impossible ever to give to any portion of theology the precision which belongs to the pure

sciences, because these latter have to do only with two conceptions, extension and quantity. These are conceptions which admit of the utmost clearness of predication; and where they do not, they can be represented by symbols, which in their results admit of the greatest certainty of re-translation into the conceptions which they represent. This is not the case with any portion of truth which belongs to theology.

Theologians are often in the habit of laying to the charge of science that all its conclusions are not strictly demonstrative, and therefore uncertain. Scientific men also frequently return the compliment by denying the rational character of theology. This much resembles the old story, which tells us that on an occasion the poker remonstrated with the tongs for its blackness. It is probably true that there is not a science which is in every point absolutely and theoretically demonstrative. Even Euclid must come under that condemnation, owing to the fact that the twelfth axiom, and probably one or two others, are not pure intuitions. But does the imperfection of the last axiom lead any one to question the absolute truth of any of the propositions which rest on it? What, I ask, is the position of theology? Do not the great bulk of its truths rest on a basis less self-evident. And what is the basis on which the Christian revelation rests? I answer with Butler, on a basis not of demonstration, but of various degrees of probability. Those whose beliefs rest on probable evidence have no right to find fault with others whose beliefs rest on the same foundation.

But are these systems, therefore, not sciences? Can nothing be a matter of reasonable certainty, unless it rests on a basis of pure demonstration? If we assert this, we cannot stop short of Pyrrhonism. Some persons think that they can aid the cause of theological truth by throwing discredit on the demonstrative character of the sciences. We are told that even the truths of astronomy do not rest on a basis which is actually demonstrative; and that the conclusions of astronomers in one age have had to be corrected in another. I am at a loss to know what benefit can come from this to theology, such large portions of which rest on evidence which, though highly probable, is not demonstrative. Still less is it becoming in the mouth of the defender of divine revelation. The taunt admits of an effective *tu quoque* reply. We Oxford men believe in the existence of many sciences, which are far from being demonstrative, such as logic, moral philosophy, political economy, even politics and rhetoric. We are ready to concede that their conclusions are not absolutely, but only for the most part, true; still they are suited to be the guides

of human life. As Butler says, "we must be content with that degree of certainty which is attainable by man." If it is urged that the conclusions of scientific men have shifted, may it not be replied that the conclusions of theologians have shifted to a much greater degree? With Butler I speak of religion in general, and of Christianity in particular.

If, therefore, the evidence of religion is only probable, though it amounts to a probability of the highest character, it is far from being an innocent amusement to throw in the teeth of science, that a large portion of its evidence is of a similar character. Here, if any where, the saying is applicable, that those who dwell in glass houses should not throw stones. The result has been, that a large number of valuable windows have been broken on both sides, from the neglect of taking heed to so obvious a precept. To demolish an opponent by the sharpness of our logic is a most pleasant operation; but my pleasure in doing so is greatly modified when I know that I can only obtain this satisfaction at the expense of demolishing myself. A breadth of view, and the taking of all the circumstances of the case into consideration, are far more conducive to the discovery of truth than mere logical power.

I make these observations in reference to one of the great controversies of the day, that between Geology and Scripture, with a view of suggesting caution to the combatants on both sides. Many geologists assert that this science disproves the claim of the Scriptures to be a divine revelation. Many theologians retort and say, "Your science is not demonstrative. Many of its so-called truths have shifted." It is unquestionable, that the geologist can here use the *tu quoque* argument with considerable effect.

Let me put the case fairly. Let it be conceded that geology is not demonstrative; that some of its facts have been shown to be not true; that it is a young science; has had some hasty generalizations; and that some of its theories have shifted. But in what direction does its evidence look, not in this or that particular detail, but taken as a great and comprehensive whole? Towards what point are its little rivulets of truth flowing? After all which can be said against it, it must be conceded, that many of its leading principles rest on evidence of strong probability; and that this evidence points to one fact, that the material planet is more than of the age of from six to eight thousand years. The question therefore at once presents itself,—which is more probable, that our chronology, as supposed to be deduced from Scripture, may be an incorrect deduction, or that this general probability towards which the wide range of geological evidence

points, and which is believed in by many of the acutest intellects, and most laborious investigators, is a delusion?

It seems to me most unwise and unphilosophical to stake our belief of the truth of Christianity on the assertion, that it falls to the ground unless we can maintain along with it that the age of the planet does not exceed from six to eight thousand years. Have we that certainty of our existing modes of interpretation, as to render it necessary that we should take up this position, especially in the face of the science of language, which is, as yet, imperfectly elaborated, but which is making daily progress in the same direction; and tending, when elaborated, to throw additional light on the history of man? The necessity of doing so, arises from the belief in a chronology, which, to say the least of it, has been elaborated by human reason out of the Bible on data which are far from certain; from the acceptance of a particular mode of interpretation as, beyond all possibility of question, the only true one; and from a particular theory of inspiration. Butler on his principles would have pronounced such a position to be one fraught with danger, and would have recommended holding the mind in a state of suspended judgment.

I wish to hold the scales of justice even between scientific men and theologians. It seems to me, that both are far too much in the habit of dogmatizing where they ought to investigate, and that they ought to assert their conclusions with a modesty becoming the imperfection of our instruments for the investigation of truth. One of the chief grounds of the alleged opposition between reason and revelation, is the assumption, both by theologians and philosophers, of a large number of *à priori* principles, which are neither self-evident in themselves, nor capable of being deduced with certitude from those which are; nor are those used by theologians anywhere expressly stated in the pages of Revelation. I must content myself with giving a sample of each; and, first, on the side of the opponents of revelation.

One of the most important of these is the oft-reiterated dogma, that a divine revelation is in its nature impossible prior to all necessity of inquiry into its evidence. When he assigns his reasons the objector has recourse to a number of abstract metaphysical propositions, which either belong to the regions of transcendentalism, or involve a *petitio principii* of the whole controversy. One of the most noted of these is the denial of the possibility of miracles. Probably, everything has been said on this controversy which can be said. After a calm survey of it, it is clear that the attempted proofs of this position involve an assumption of the point at issue. To prove

it, it is necessary to assume that God, if He exists at all, is impersonal, and devoid of freedom; for it requires no demonstration that if a personal God exists, miracles are not abstractedly impossible. The assertion of the absence of personality and will in the universe is a pure dogma, ending in pantheism; for the truth of which reason supplies no proof. If the issue be raised as a matter of fact, whether a miracle has ever been performed, this is a question which is purely historical.

I now select one from theology, the *à priori* dogma of verbal or mechanical inspiration, as the only view of inspiration consistent with the truth of revelation. It is on the assumption of its truth alone, that the ordinary objections alleged by scientific men against revelation have any potency. When scientific men attack revelation, it is not too much to assume that they derive their ideas of what inspiration must have been, from the assertions of theologians.

The arriving at some definite conclusions respecting this question, and the establishment of a rational mode of Scriptural interpretation, are a necessary preliminary to a good understanding between science and theology, as well as a condition of the existence of a scientific theology.

On what does the dogma of verbal or mechanical inspiration and its kindred theories rest? I answer, not on inductive inquiries into the facts and phenomena of Scripture, but on certain *à priori* principles. All those with which I am acquainted have been shown by Bishop Butler to be utterly groundless, when tested by the phenomena and facts of creation; and if we were to erect a universe in conformity with them, we should produce one very different from that of which God is the author. He long ago saw the utter untenableness of this theory on *à priori* grounds. I am quite satisfied to explain my views in his own language, and again to shelter myself behind his authority. The passage is too long for me to quote in its entirety. It is in part ii., chap. iii., of his *Analogy*, and I earnestly commend the whole text and context to your consideration.

"Those observations," says he, "relating to the whole of Christianity, are applicable to inspiration in particular. As we are in no sort judges beforehand, by what laws or rules, in what degree, or by what means it were to be expected that God would naturally instruct us; so on the supposition of His affording us light and instruction and revelation, additional to that which He has afforded us by reason and experience, we are in no sort judges by what methods or in what proportion it were to be expected that this supernatural light and instruc-

tion would be afforded us. . . . In like manner we are wholly ignorant what degree of new knowledge God would give mankind by revelation, or how far, or in what way, He would interpose miraculously to qualify them to whom He should originally make the revelation, for communicating the knowledge of it, or to secure their doing it, to the age in which they should live; and to secure its being transmitted to posterity. . . . Nay, we are not in any sort able to judge whether it were to have been expected that the revelation should have been committed to writing, or left to be handed down, and consequently corrupted by verbal tradition. But it may be said, a revelation in some of the above-mentioned circumstances . . . . would not have answered its purpose. I ask, what purpose? It would not have answered all the purposes which it has now answered, and in the same degree; but it would have answered others or the same in different degrees. And which of these were the purposes of God, and best fell in with His general government, we could not have at all determined beforehand." I only regret the impossibility of transferring the entire passage to this paper.

It follows, therefore, that it is impossible to determine this question on *à priori* principles; and if Scripture is silent on the point, or nearly so, the only mode of investigation is the application of the principle of induction to the facts and phenomena of Scripture. When we have ascertained their true character—*i. e.*, allowed the Bible to speak for itself—the theory which will precisely cover them will be the true theory of inspiration. Such a mode of investigation, *mutatis mutandis*, is the same which is applicable to every branch of human knowledge.

If such a mode of investigation should prove that Scriptural inspiration is confined to the communication of religious truth, and does not extend to points of human science, and such subjects as man's unaided powers can discover for himself, a large number of the difficulties arising out of the controversy immediately disappear.

The general principle which I lay down is, that we are in no sort able to determine, on *à priori* principles, what would be the amount of knowledge which God would communicate in giving a revelation—whether it would be much or little, perfect or imperfect; or what instrumentality He would employ in its communication—whether it would be one purely divine, or one largely mixed up with a human element; or in how large a proportion, or in what manner, that human element might be allowed to enter into its contents.

When we say that it is necessary that every portion of a revelation must be equally the result of a divine operation, as every other portion; that there cannot be degrees of inspiration; that a human element cannot exist there; or that God must have acted in this or that particular manner, it seems to me that we are placing ourselves on precisely the same basis as that of the so-called rationalist.

Next comes the question of interpretation. A large portion of our difficulties arise from the want of a sound canon of interpretation, and from inattention to the real character of Scriptural language. I will illustrate from the opening chapters in Genesis. The supposed opposition between science and these chapters arises from the rigid application of the literal principle of interpretation, and the denial that they can contain anything parabolical or figurative. It is said that a day must mean a literal day of twenty-four hours. If so, why must not the serpent mean a literal serpent, which was more subtle than any beast of the field? It will perhaps be said that we learn from inspiration itself that it was not so. We have such information, or rather a hint of it, in the New Testament; but I am not aware that the Old Testament gives us the smallest intimation that it was the devil, and not a literal serpent. On the strict principles of literalism, the Jew could never have divined this. If it is not necessary to understand by the serpent a literal serpent, the principle of literalism respecting these early chapters must be abandoned, and our only guide to their interpretation must, as Butler intimates, be reason, common-sense, and a gradually increasing knowledge, and not *à priori* theories. I can well understand the opponents of revelation insisting on interpreting these chapters to the letter, but not so its professed friends.

Let it not for one moment be imagined that I am advocating an unlimited, figurative, or mystical interpretation of the Bible. I am deeply sensible of the madness of such a course. To say that all Scripture admits of a mystical sense is equivalent to saying that it has no certain sense whatever. By the application of such a method it is possible to make it mean anything we please. I remember once taking up Krummacher's *Israel's Wanderings in the Wilderness*. I succeeded in getting as far as the part where he assigns a spiritual meaning to the names of the places of their encampment. It so happens, owing to our imperfect knowledge of Hebrew, that a few of these places bear a double meaning. Krummacher finds a spiritual sense, and even a place in the spiritual life, corresponding to this double meaning. The supposition that the names might have a spiritual meaning

is within the regions of the possible; but when I found that a state in the spiritual life could be discovered corresponding to an ambiguous meaning of a Hebrew word—an ambiguity which did not exist in itself, but which simply originates in an uncertain knowledge of the language,—I considered that all further study of a work, based on a principle so fundamentally rotten, was superfluous. If such works are pious, they stand on the same basis as that to which the name rationalism is given as a reproach. Both alike are constructed, not on principles of reason, but of imagination. I advocate neither the literal nor the metaphorical, nor any one single mode of interpreting a book so various as the Bible; but the application of sound sense, sound reason, accurate investigation, and enlightened criticism, with all the aids which can be supplied by collateral knowledge of the subject. The whole subject is one which deserves the most accurate scientific investigation, and is worthy of the most powerful intellects concentrating all their powers for the purpose of constructing a definite organon of interpretation.

It is a matter, therefore, of the highest importance for allaying the feud between theology and science, that an organon should be constructed, laying down sound rational and definite principles of Scriptural interpretation, and that the nature of its inspiration should be ascertained, not on *à priori* principles, but by a painstaking examination of the assertions and the facts of the Bible itself. Until this is done, the dogmatism of the theologian with respect to science is premature; and when it has been accomplished, I doubt not that, as the alleged disagreements between the results of scientific research and revelation which have disturbed former times have disappeared, by the establishment of more rational principles of interpretation as applicable to the Bible, so those of the present time will disappear also.

A little of that caution which is practised by Butler would be highly beneficial to both parties in this controversy. The spirit of premature dogmatism may be extensively charged against both theologians and philosophers. Another fault is an impatience of holding the mind in a state of suspended judgment. The work of theorizing is far easier than that of careful investigation, and from the fact that theology enters on many questions which go to the profoundest depths of the human understanding, it places us under great temptations to the indulgence of this spirit. Besides, theology, as it is popularly understood, labours under another disadvantage. While few men would think themselves competent to pronounce authoritatively on scientific questions

without some pretence of having studied the subject, multitudes judge themselves competent to deal extemporaneously with the most difficult questions of theology.

But before closing this essay, I wish briefly to draw your attention to one most serious aspect of the question, viz., the war which many are waging in the name of reason, not against the outworks of revelation, but against the historical reality of the representations given us in the New Testament of the Divine Author of Christianity Himself.

The principles of historical criticism are gradually working themselves into a scientific form, though it would be premature to assert that they have yet attained to the accuracy of a science. Still it is indisputable that many important canons have been established of unquestionable validity, which have led to the rejection of a great deal of what, in former times, was falsely designated history. Many old historical works were composed with the smallest possible sifting of historical authorities, or any attempt to ascertain their relative value. Writers who had taken a party view, or who in an uncritical age had acquired popularity by the charm of style, had succeeded in stereotyping their views on the history of previous ages. An attention to style rather than to truth is one of the greatest faults of the ancient historians. Their critical powers were small and their credulity large. I know of no more striking illustration of the uncritical mode in which the study of ancient history was pursued, even until times comparatively recent, than Rollin's *Ancient History*. We here find the good and the bad placed together in inextricable confusion.

It is not too much to say that, prior to the present century, the state of history was in a most unsatisfactory condition. The character of ancient history was thoroughly misunderstood. In this country historical investigation is a plant of later growth. Many of us can remember the character of the books which were put into our hands at school as histories of England. Of the larger histories Hume, with all his errors, was the best work in existence. But the times are changed for the better. The work now called "The Student's Hume," as far as I can judge, is not an abridgment, but a rewriting of the original. If the condition of English history was bad, ancient history was worse. Large portions of it consisted of a congeries of improbabilities.

If the birth of a healthier school of historical criticism dates at an earlier period, we may assign the general recognition of its principles as a result of the labours of Niebuhr. Since his days, the belief in the old so-called histories as correct reports of facts, is become impossible.

The principles of this school of historical criticism have a negative and a positive aspect. The negative portion of the system consists in an examination of the authorities on which the received views of historical truth rest, and the rejection of those views which are based on no historical foundation. For example, it was found that the belief in a large portion of the received Roman history rested on the testimony of authors who lived several hundred years after the events which they professed to record; and although some of their authorities might be called ancient, they were quite modern compared with the events themselves. It was also discovered that the fathers of Roman history had but few written sources of information, and that such as existed were of a very meagre character, and that their reports were founded on traditions, poems, and annals of very questionable authority. As it would occupy too much space for me to enter on this portion of the subject, I must refer to what I apprehend is the best manual of historical criticism existing in the language, the works of Sir G. C. Lewis. I can only express my regret that he did not live to give us a complete organon of historical criticism, and to reduce its detached rules and canons to a scientific system.

This negative side of historical criticism, although it is capable of being pushed too far in incautious hands, is one of considerable validity. It has now been carried into every region of historical inquiry; and to it we are indebted that large numbers of incredibilities have now taken their proper place in the regions of the fabulous. Though I have called this the negative side of historical criticism, it has a positive aspect. It has disinterred a large number of important facts, and placed them on a solid basis of evidence as historical truths.

But Niebuhr also thought that he could establish a positive method of a very different character. It seemed very hard to the inquirer to be obliged to abandon to the regions of uncertainty so large a portion of the history of man. Niebuhr thought that he could reconstruct history out of the mass of ruins under which it had been buried, through the crumbling of materials in past ages. It would be impossible for me to give here a full account of the principles on which this attempted reconstruction was based. It will be sufficient to say that one of the chief instruments relied on was to supply the gaps of history by plausible conjecture, which, if I recollect rightly, Niebuhr called the power of historical divination. It will be evident that the number of theories by which these gaps may be covered over, though not actually indefinite, are very numerous. One person could theorize as well as another,

and the number of theories as to what ancient history had been soon became legion. I submit that this method is based on no sound rational foundation. Some of these guesses may be more or less probable, but they never can be made to rest on any certainty of evidence. Science, too, has her theories; these, after they have originated, admit of being again brought to the test of au ever increasing array of facts, but there are no facts by which to test those of which I am speaking beyond those on which they are erected. Niebuhr compared his faculty of divination to the case of a man who had been shut up for a long time in a dark room. In time the eye gets accustomed to the light, and acquires a power of discerning objects which, to a person suddenly introduced into it, would seem incredible. Niebuhr thought that a similar power of intuition could be acquired by the mental eye getting accustomed to the dim light of ancient history.

It seems to me that the analogy is a false one. I do not deny that long meditation on the materials and uncertain lights of ancient history might enable a man to make many more or less plausible conjectures. But that such a power can avail to reconstruct what has actually perished is impossible. The worthlessness of the method has, I think, been established by Lewis beyond all contradiction. Similar principles to those of Niebuhr have been applied by Bunsen and numerous other writers to extensive fields of historical inquiry, and to the history of Egypt in particular; and the result is that where real building materials fail them, they have composed their structures of sand. These have been demolished by the next theorizer, and so on for ever.

Are we, then, to be compelled to abandon the hope of the reconstruction of history? I fear so, except as far as we can do it by the light of positive evidence. Where that fails, we must be content to leave the large gaps in all their naked deformity. Viewed on the negative side, the principles of historical criticism are of the highest value, but, like other human things, some of them are imperfect and liable to abuse. They have delivered us from the danger of mistaking shadows for living men. After the demolitions effected by the negative side of criticism, our hopes of reconstructing the past lie in the discovery of fresh evidence. This must be patiently waited for; it will probably be more or less perfectly supplied by the elaboration of a science of human language. As the organisms of previous races have been preserved in the rocks by being entombed in them, so man's mental activities have been entombed in language, and many of them will be disinterred in their proper season.

As the Christian Scriptures are of an historical character, they are fair subjects for the application of the principles of historical criticism. No well-informed Christian will wish that it should be otherwise. All that we can require is, that nothing but its strict canons should be applied to them; and that considerations wholly alien to its principles, such as a number of *à priori* dogmas and mere conjecture, should not be imported into the controversy. Abstract metaphysics have nothing to do with historical inquiries. These are simply matters of evidence. By the aid of conjecture and imagination we can create novels, but we cannot write histories. It is impossible to dignify this process by the term rational, and its use is no less illicit on the negative than on the positive side of criticism.

There is no piece of history which will better stand the test of the application of the fair principles of criticism than the four Gospels. They also furnish very large data for the exercise of that criticism. I know of no eminent man in ancient or modern times, of whose life and actions we have four accounts, all written, even on the showing of our opponents, so near the times of the events which they profess to describe, and which all historical evidence must place at a much earlier date. But taking the date assigned to them by the German critics, the latest of them comes within the period which Sir G. C. Lewis has assigned to that of authentic history. When we consider that these are supplemented by four letters of St. Paul, of which no one presumes to question the authenticity, written certainly within less than a period of thirty years from the death of the Author of Christianity, we possess data for historical criticism which we shall in vain seek for elsewhere. But this is not all. The form of the four Gospels, which I think belong rather to the class of memoirs than histories, is of the most unique description. They embrace, speaking roughly, the last three years of the life of our Lord. Three of these contain a parallel narrative of the same events, and, what is still more important, a threefold version of the same discourses. Nowhere else within the same limits can there be found equal materials for the application of the established principles of historical criticism. The application of these principles to the Gospels, although the result may not be satisfactory to the believers in verbal or mechanical inspiration, will place them on the highest level in point of evidence as authentic histories.

But the so-called rationalist does not confine himself to the application of the principles of historical criticism. He supplements them by a number of *à priori* dogmas, which are

neither self-evident, nor capable of deductive proof from such as are; unites facts by theories, the truth of which it is impossible to verify; supplements all defects of evidence by an unlimited licence of conjecture; and as all historical evidence is probable, and not demonstrative, he marshals one side of the evidence, and carefully omits all notice of the other. In adopting this mode of procedure, he assumes the functions of judge, jury, plaintiff, counsel, and even that of defendant. If he can succeed in getting these offices all united in his single person, it is a hard matter if he cannot make out a case. We might do so against any fact which ever occurred on similar principles. Two thousand years hence it will be possible to show, on the principles in question, that the ministry of Lord Derby had nothing to do with carrying the Reform Bill of 1867; and that all the reports in Hansard, which state that they were active agents in it, are of a purely mythic origin.

I cannot think it fair to bring a charge against rational inquiry into the character and evidences of the Christian revelation on the ground, that a large body of critics, professing to use reason as their instrument, assert that the Gospels are mythic, and the character of the Divine Author of Christianity unhistorical. It does not follow, that rational inquiry is not the only true way of ascertaining their true nature, or that it necessarily leads to such a conclusion. The critics in question profess to found their views on the principles of pure reason. But the question is, Is this profession borne out by fact? Is the unlimited use of theorizing and conjecture a rational process? Are their abstract principles founded on sufficiently extensive inductions, and do not most of them involve a plain *petitio principii?* Does the existence of discrepancies,—put it, if you like, contradictions,—in historical accounts, discredit the immense mass of positive evidence of their truth? If the Gospels had been free from a miraculous narrative, we should never have heard of the speculations of the Tubingen school. Grant the possibility of miracles, and even these critics must admit that the Gospels stand on a foundation of evidence such as no other events in ancient history can pretend to.

Two well-known works of this description are the lives of Jesus, by Rénan and Strauss. It is not too much to say of these that they are novels, and not histories. Their positive portions are the results of conjecture and historical divination in its most arbitrary form. Their negative portions are founded on the principles I have described, *and none other.*

It is high time that we should recognize the entire rottenness of the principle of conjecture as applied to the reconstruction of history. I have recently read through Bunsen's

Life, as well as his *God in History*. Both these works contain things of the highest value, especially the latter; but it is painful to observe the effect which the endless licence of conjecture, arbitrary theories, and the transcendental philosophy have produced on the mind of that really religious and zealous man. His belief in the transcendental philosophy seems greatly to have dimmed his vision as to the distinction between the subjective creations of the mind and the objective facts of history. His unlimited trust in theory, conjecture, and the certitude of his own supposed mental intuitions, has betrayed him into beliefs which we might under other circumstances have assigned to the most unlimited credulity; such for example, as his belief in the philosophic value of mesmerism, clairvoyance, and second sight, and his discovery from the Evangelists and apostolical writings, that they do not represent that Jesus Christ rose from the dead; but that He partially recovered from the effects of crucifixion, gave Peter His last instructions in a secret interview, left Judea for the purpose of preaching to the Gentiles, and died shortly afterwards from exhaustion in Phœnicia. It is refreshing to know that some men's hearts are sounder than their heads, and this was the case with Bunsen; but to dignify such speculations by the term of Rationalism is to invite confusion of thought. It may be said that many other speculators, including Swedenborg, were men of mighty intellect. I shall not deny it; but their imaginations upset the balance of their other mental powers; and the rational man is he in whom all the powers of the mind are exercised each in its due place and proper subordination. It is absurd to dignify by the term rational, or rationalistic, the transgression of these limits. Transcendentalism, mysticism, and the unlimited use of conjecture for the purpose of creating facts where history fails to supply them, are the brothers of credulity. Let theologians, philosophers, men of science, and historians, beware of these three deadly sins of the human intellect, and we shall hear less of the alleged disagreement between religion and science.

I must now bring this paper to a close, although there are many other points which ought to be included in it, and some notice of which is almost necessary for its distinct elucidation. A paper like this cannot have the distinctness of a treatise. Let it therefore be taken for what it is,—an essay, in Lord Bacon's sense of that word, in which I have taken a very rapid survey of several of the most important subjects of human thought. I trust, therefore, that it will be discussed as such, and not as a work in which I have carefully elaborated those subjects, viewed them in all their manifold complications,

and qualified them by the insertion of other truths, which have been now necessarily omitted. If in the course of the ensuing discussion additional light can be thrown on this subject, which is certainly one of the profoundest interest, none will rejoice more than myself.

The CHAIRMAN.—I am quite sure we shall agree in at once returning our best thanks to Mr. Row for the thoughtful and interesting paper with which he has favoured us this evening.

Mr. POYER.—It will not, I think, be doubted that Mr. Row has presented for our consideration a most interesting and momentous subject; and it is with considerable diffidence that I, as a layman, venture in any way to differ from any of the positions laid down in the paper. Mr. Row, with regard to the present aspect of intellectual society, refers us to the active antagonism which he truly says is now going forward. He says society presents itself in the array of two hostile camps, one of which he designates as theological and the other as rationalistic. He deprecates that antagonism, and seems to think it should be obviated, and that it would be well if a truce could be proclaimed. He says, by way of illustration, that geographical contiguity affords no reason for natural warfare; and in that I quite agree with him. But we find as a matter of fact that when the passions of men are excited, our own antagonistic principles are aroused, and geographical boundaries are put quite out of the question, whether they be near or far. Antagonistic principles will and must assert themselves, and they must come under discussion in order that their true nature may be apprehended and known. I cannot for my own part understand that a true Biblical theology can be at all considered as having any relation to rationalism. As I understand rationalism, it is a defect of reason—reason divorced from faith, and coming under the power of sensuous direction, and under the limits of sensuous interpretation. I think we have a signal illustration of this in a work somewhat famous—I refer to the Essays of Dr. Colenso, Bishop of Natal. How does he arrive at his conclusions? By this very rationalism—by the elimination of the supernatural element in Divine revelation. It is true that he tells us in parts of his essays that he does not object to miracles, and to the supernatural element; but practically we find that he does undoubtedly dispense with the Godhead very largely. He does not see God in history where we find abundant evidence in revelation that He was. Mr. Row at the close of his paper has introduced the names of Rénan and Strauss; and their rationalism is referable to the same cause —reason is divorced from faith. Now it appears to me that if reason is to have play, or to come into action at all in respect of Divine revelation, it is necessary that it should be preceded by faith. He that cometh to God must believe first that He is; and that is the attitude, the necessary attitude, in which we should stand to the Divine revelation. We should first synthetically take it by faith, and then we may analytically examine its relations,

facts, principles, doctrines, and so on. So much for the first point. Then I do not quite apprehend the relations of faith and reason as put by Mr. Row. I find him saying,—

"Faith is the final result of every one of our mental processes, when we have arrived at the point at which we make a distinct affirmation."

Now I should suppose that that sentence required "judgment" or "conclusion" to be substituted for "faith":—faith is a precedent condition. Even mathematical deduction presupposes intuitive evidence; and what is intuitive evidence but the evidence of faith? Take the case of visual conception as applied to St. Paul's Cathedral as an illustration. If we limit ourselves to the original act of conception, do we see St. Paul's in all its amplitude? No. We have a very small picture on the retina, half an inch, more or less, in extent. Yet no one who looks at St. Paul's doubts that he sees that cathedral in all its amplitude, in all its beauty, in all its proportions as it truly appears, just as though he had climbed all over the whole building and measured every inch with a foot-rule. Now if you analyze that, you cannot say that perception is a mere act of the sense of vision—it is much more an act of faith upon that sense. We must not restrict faith, I take it, merely to the apprehension of spiritual objects and their divine relation: there is a much larger meaning than that to be attributed to the word. In order to make good this position, let me ask what is faith? Is it not the unity of sense and reason? Take an illustration of what I mean. You cannot analytically determine the relation of a part to the whole, and say "the whole is greater than a part," until you first synthetically take the whole. That is our attitude in regard to divine revelation. We must first be content to put ourselves reverentially, devoutly, and loyally on the affirmative side, and then we may discursively and analytically examine into the whole depth and length and breadth. And here I would make a passing observation in reference to Coleridge. Mr. Row says,—

"Coleridge endeavoured to draw a distinction between the reason and the understanding."

I assume that Mr. Row differs from that course of procedure——

Rev. C. A. Row.—No, I only used that as an illustration.

Mr. Poyer.—But I think, in justice to Coleridge, it should be stated that he gives great reason for the distinction which he draws; for he uses reason as the intellectual faculty, judging according to sense, while the understanding is limited to sense not so emancipated or allied to the higher faculty of faith or of moral reason. Then I come to the discussion raised with respect to limits—whether we can or cannot know, whether we do or do not know, the infinite. That discussion has been pursued at some length, as Mr. Row tells us, by Dean Mansel in one of the celebrated Bampton Lectures, and also more recently by Mr. J. S. Mill, in his review of Sir W. Hamilton's Philosophy. The subject is full of difficulty; but when we are told by Dean Mansel, who follows Hamilton and applies certain negative

doctrines of Hamilton's Philosophy to theological principles—when we are told by him that we cannot know the infinite, I do not hesitate to say that the doctrines of Dean Mansel tend to beget in us an infinite despair. For I find our great Lord and Master telling us that our life, our eternal life, is actually conditioned upon our knowledge of the infinite:—"And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." But I apprehend there is some confusion here: the infinite of Dean Mansel is not the moral infinite of the Bible; it is a certain mathematical infinite, an abstract conception of his own mind, and such an infinite we do not desire to know. The term "infinite," used as a mathematical term, has only relation to quantity and no relation to the spiritual. Mr. Row says that by the substitution of the word "perfect" instead, we may discharge the difficulty; but I do not see that that will do. Is not God infinite in wisdom and power? Clearly He is. It is said we cannot know that because we are finite; but it must not be forgotten that we are affiliated with the Godhead——

Mr. Row.—You are arguing just what I maintained. I have said the infinite is a quantitative measure.

Mr. Poyer.—I was referring not only to what you said, but to Mansel's and Hamilton's doctrines. I agree with Mr. Row that in this controversy Mr. Mill (though I do not think him an ideal philosopher) has the advantage in regard to the possibility of our knowledge of the infinite; but when he goes beyond that he is very curious, and weak, and foolish. What is his theory with regard to matter? Why, matter is "the possibility of sensation"!—*i. e.*, he says the city of Calcutta is a possibility of sensation! However, do not let us get involved in metaphysics, or we shall not be able to escape in a hurry. And now before I sit down I have only one other word to offer, on transcendentalism and mysticism. These are very large words and very deep words, and they mean very much. I do not think they can be altogether disposed of by mere verbal proscription. I am astonished at one thing Mr. Row has said in reference to Hegel. He says,—

"A similar dealing with transcendental conceptions—I dare not call it reasoning—induced Hegel to assert the actual existence of non-existence; that Being and non-Being are the same."

Now that seems very like a paradox hard to get over, but I must say Hegel makes it perfectly plain and intelligible from his stand-point to any cultivated mind. But the objection to his fundamental postulate is not so much the paradox, but his assumption of being as an abstraction.

Rev. Dr. Irons.—I have not had the advantage of reading this most admirable and suggestive paper before I came here this evening, but all that I have heard of it has attracted me very much. But while I feel that I can thoroughly sympathize with the main conclusions of Mr. Row, there are many details in the paper on which, as they were read, I should have been glad to comment at the moment, but I have not marked them down, and when so long a paper is read one forgets at the end the exact points which

one would have liked to have said a word about. This is a feeling in which most hearers of so elaborate a paper will entirely sympathize with me. We have after-thoughts which remind us of what the French call *l'éloquence de l'escalier*,—that is, a man often recollects, when going down the pulpit stairs, a capital thing he had intended to say in his sermon. (Laughter.) The points to which I should perhaps be disposed to take exception will be in all probability more likely to raise debate than any other, and therefore I may as well mention them at once. One of the points on which I should differ from Mr. Row is as to the mode in which the infinite was regarded. I must confess that I deprecate altogether the dealing with this present world as though it were made up of nothing but phenomena. If you altogether eliminate general ideas, and what people call abstractions and transcendentalism, you would find it a very difficult world to manage, and the common sense of mankind would soon be altogether stranded——

Mr. Row.—I have not been led into metaphysics.

Dr. Irons.—No, you have not; but there is some divergence between your views and mine; though perhaps it is only a different way of putting the same thing. The relation of faith to reason was another point where I somewhat differed from the general view of Mr. Row. I do not think it is a wholesome or a right thing to lay down that faith is a distinct faculty—a something to be resorted to altogether apart from the domain of reason——

Mr. Row.—That is the very thing I assert and maintain.

Dr. Irons.—You do so, but still not in the way that I am now desiring to bring out. I understand you to speak of the human reason as making its conclusions independently and by itself, and then leaving faith to take its own course afterwards entirely apart from it. Now I, for one, am a perfect rationalist myself. (Laughter.) I am made so; I cannot help it. I feel that if anything is put before me contrary to my reason, or in collision with it, I shall be a downright hypocrite if I accept it. If any man tells me I must submit my reason to authority, I am as uncomfortable as possible. I believe the God who gave me faith gave me reason also, and somehow or another they must always go together. It is our bounden duty nowadays to come into collision with the opponents of revelation on their own ground. There has been a great deal too much flourishing of late. The attitude hitherto taken on both sides reminds one of the old rhyme :—

> "The Earl of Chatham, with sword drawn,
> Stood waiting for Sir Richard Strachan;
> Sir Richard, longing to be at 'im,
> Stood waiting for the Earl of Chatham." (Laughter.)

There has been a great deal of that sort of thing between the supporters of revelation and the opponents of revelation. The one is afraid, and the other dare not; and they therefore do not come to an issue. I am most anxious that the Victoria Institute should bring matters to an issue. Do not let any one on any side suppose that Christian men are afraid of taking up any

point whatever to which reason fairly and legitimately leads them. I complain deeply of those opponents of revelation who call themselves rationalists, and yet make large assumptions from narrow and insufficient premisses, while they are afraid to face all the facts. If they can bring the same accusation against us, they are free to do it; but instead of that I find they are always sneering at the clergy in place of reasoning with them. In one part of Mr. Row's paper there are certain statements as to the mystical interpretation of Holy Scripture which I may refer to. It is in reference to the temptation in Paradise, and Mr. Row is of opinion that nobody, apart from the interpretation of the later Christianity, could ever have divined that the serpent was the devil, or anything but a literal serpent. Now I venture to say that it was far otherwise. In the Targum of Jonathan the temptation in the garden of Eden is attributed to the devil——

Mr. Row.—I was confining myself to the strict letter of the Bible—of the Old Testament.

Dr. Irons.—But the letter of the Bible never did stand alone. There was always a strong interpretation deemed as authoritative and divine as the letter itself, and it is to that which St. Paul refers when he says: "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." Throughout the Old Testament, and in parts of the New, if we want to understand the spirit at all, we must have the traditional meaning incorporated with the letter. I should apologize to Mr. Row, considering that the paper is so carefully and admirably constructed, and so full of great and deep thoughts—I should apologize to him for dealing with it in this sketchy way; but when I assure him that I came here with my mind full of other things, and even then only heard part of his paper, I know he will forgive me, and excuse my differing from him on one or two points.

Thomas Paterson, Esq.—I should like to say a few words to express my great admiration for the paper, and my conviction that if the generality of the clergy and religious teachers throughout the land were to deal with the great questions before them in the spirit in which this paper has been written, there would soon not be much of what is called rational opposition left. But unfortunately that is not so. With regard to the paper itself, it seems to me that on this question, dealing with the infinity of God and the possibility of the human mind being able to grasp it, we fall into two or three errors. In the first place, if we take the Bible as a revelation, no one can think that the Jews, great as many of their thoughts were, had any such idea as we have of mathematical infinity. Their idea was directed rather to the perfection of certain attributes, and not to their mere extension as a matter of space, number, or power. The quarrel with Mr. Mill is rather this, that supposing we accept perfection as the figure of infinity present to the inspired writers, Mr. Mill denies that perfection altogether, or denies the possibility that the human mind can appreciate it. Thus, in reference to Sir William Hamilton's *Philosophy of the Conditioned*, speaking of our ideas of number and quantity, he attempts to refer them to constantly repeated impressions received by the senses. He says it is quite possible

that our conception that two and two make four has arisen from seeing four objects combined a great number of times. But suppose any mathematician should get it into his mind that two and two are equal to five. or equal to three and three-quarters ; that would quite annihilate Mr. Mill's whole superstructure——

The CHAIRMAN.—But I believe Mr. Mill conceives the possibility of two and two making five in some other world. (Laughter.)

Mr. PATERSON.—Yes, I believe he does ; and I suppose that is his idea of perfection. (Laughter.) Now I will take an extreme case : suppose we cannot conceive the idea of perfection, why, the whole, not only of our theological science, and of our conception of perfection, but the whole foundation of our physical science falls over. As every mathematician knows, geometrical demonstration does not depend on any diagram or drawing of lines, but on certain conceptions of form which must be perfect. Mr. Mill's great discovery that all our ideas are received from the external world, and that they must entirely fall short of perfection, is a thing that should be combated. Suppose the infinity of God is accepted as an infinity of perfection, we may believe that the human mind can grasp the idea of the infinity of that perfection, although we do not deny that it is one of the marks of the human mind that it takes an imperfect impression from the senses. But there is one thing in Mr. Row's paper which I think is rather dangerous, and that is at the close. I do not think Mr. Row has sufficiently drawn the line between the literal and symbolical interpretation of Scripture. There should be some canon of criticism. If you say we are to use our common sense in these matters, and then say of any passage, "This is the true reading, and you must reject every other as too literal," you put it in this way, that every person is not possessed of common sense, or, if all persons are, that common sense is so liable to be distorted and led aside that they cannot thoroughly and clearly exercise it. If you do not have some canon of criticism, you cannot escape from the wild views of Swedenborg and others, whom I respect, but whose idea of interpretation—I cannot call it a principle—I cannot accept. Too much figurative explanatory comment about the sacred book would entirely destroy its truth and reality——

Mr. ROW.—I am afraid you do not bear in mind what I have said on that point:—

"I advocate neither the literal nor the metaphorical, nor any one single mode of interpreting a book so various as the Bible ; but the application of sound sense, sound reason, accurate investigation, and enlightened criticism, with all the aids which can be supplied by collateral knowledge of the subject."

Mr. PATERSON.—But the qualifications are general. If they could be embodied in a canon of criticism in a more definite form, they would be very valuable in the investigation of truth. Dr. Irons has told us that the letter of the Bible does not stand alone. Now it seems to me that if we take the Bible as a whole, and intend to accept it as a revelation, we cannot so accept it as a revelation, except so far as we understand it. To take it synthetically

by faith, and then to examine it, seems to me absurd. I cannot believe any more than I can comprehend and understand. Mr. Poyer says he can accept St. Paul's Cathedral synthetically. Now I accept as much as I see; and if you ask me for details, I must see them before I have any faith in them. Now the Bible is presented to us as a revelation, just as the great facts of nature are; but many of the facts of nature are apparently deceptive; they come to us apparently saying that which they do not mean. Is it not true that the first believers in astronomy had good reason for saying that the sun went round the earth? Yet they were wrong, although they founded their belief on a fair interpretation of facts which were before them. Just in the same way many other facts were presented to the first believers, and they made true or false interpretations of them according to the facts and circumstances of which they had knowledge. But it appears to me that the Bible, with regard to all moral truth, contains in itself its own interpretation, while in regard to physical truth it should be interpreted by the facts of external nature, which should be taken with it as enlarging our views of the Divine Being, and giving us facts which we could not otherwise have got at.

Rev. Dr. Rigg.—I feel very much obliged to Mr. Row for this very valuable paper. It appears to me that Mr. Row has made some effort—but I do not mean to minify it,—I will say a comparatively successful effort, towards supplying that which Dean Mansel should have supplied in his Bampton Lectures, but did not. As far as I understand it, this is a sketch of the argument before us in its main propositions: That faith and reason are mutually inclusive; that, in fact, justly understood, they imply each other; that faith and reason coalesce, even with regard to the objects of the two respectively; that the infinite is equally, in a just sense, the object of faith and the object of reason; that those two—faith and reason—are to be harmonized eventually upon the basis of induction; and that the basis of induction is the only basis on which we can attain clear and articulate harmony between faith and reason in their respective definitions, objects, and spheres. That is the general scope, as I understand it, of Mr. Row's paper——

Dr. Irons.—Are you right in saying that the reason can recognize the infinite, according to Mr. Row's paper?

Dr. Rigg.—In a just sense, I so understand it.

Mr. Row.—My paper simply questions the possibility of obtaining a quantitative sense of infinity, but not any other sense.

Dr. Rigg.—I think I have given the scope of the paper as to faith and reason in their respective spheres and definitions. Confusion always arises from our want of defining the different senses in which we use the word faith. Now all reason has for its basis some faith, but the highest faith has for its basis much reason. I think Coleridge made great confusion by the way in which he used the word reason. He used the word to signify everything he conceived to be accepted by the heart or by intuitions; and hence he held that that initial faith which lies at the root of vision, and at the root of every exercise of sense; that that faith which lies at the root of every intellectual

judgment,—for there does lie an axiomatic faith at the root of every judgment; that that faith which lies at the root of every moral judgment; and that ultimate faith, the result of all, by which we grasp eternal realities, were but different exercises of the self-same faculty of reason. All these he spoke of as pertaining to the reason as distinguished from the understanding, thus confusing the whole subject. Now, while there is a certain general resemblance, there are such essential distinctions between these various exercises of reason, some lying at the beginning of all thought, and others at the perfection of all thought, that should have led Coleridge to a scientific distinction between the various kinds of faith, or exercises of intuitive reason. Mr. Poyer did not sufficiently bear this in mind when he spoke of our receiving St. Paul's Cathedral as an act of faith. That is a complex kind of faith, which we do not receive all at once. The eye, in every act of vision, sees something and holds to it; but yet what the eye sees is not that which the mind comes to realize. An infant, we say, sees its father; but what the child sees is not a complex living person, but merely an image upon the retina; and there is a process of acquired conceptions and associations of a complex character before the child has lost that first imperfection of childish perception and acquired all that belongs to the ordinary powers of vision, so as to realize at once the objects which come and go before it. This will clear away some misconceptions. Then, with regard to faith and reason being harmonized, I agree with much that Mr. Row has said. I believe that faith —when we come to the higher faith, that faith which apprehends and grasps eternal verities—must in a sense repose upon the basis of reason. If you reduce and narrow that basis too much, you will cut away the ground upon which all the defences of revelation itself must rest from beneath your feet. We must all be rationalists in one sense, and I regret that the term "rationalist" has been absorbed by a party which makes out reason to be contrary to faith. I deeply regret that. As for faith and reason in their respective spheres, again I believe I am correct in saying that Mr. Row has tried to teach us that the infinite was to be apprehended equally by faith and by reason, each on its own account and after its respective manner——

Mr. Row.—Certainly.

Dr. Rigg.—At the same time, I agree with the gentlemen who have said that the mathematical infinite has nothing on earth to do with the moral infinite. It only introduces a confusion into the subject which is quite needless. What can the mathematical infinite have to do with any moral or metaphysical argument? When you apply the term "infinite" to mathematical or physical science you are almost guilty of an abuse of terms. As for infinite space, I think it can be nothing more than an infinite deal of nothing. (Laughter.) It would seem to be nothing else than emptiness conceived as a possible condition of being—as a possible condition of matter. The more we talk of infinity, the more we are puzzled and bothered by terms which have no significance. As to the moral infinite, we should entirely relieve ourselves from all difficulties introduced into the subject by these references to a mathematical or *quasi*-material infinite. I am not prepared to give up the

use of the word "infinite" in its application to the Most High. It is a fine, noble word, and I take it to mean the fulness, the fontal fulness, of all perfection; and so regarded, we must apply it in a just sense, and in the only just and true sense, to the one Everlasting Supreme Being. As to Mr. Mill, we can hardly any of us undertake to criticise him lightly, although he has said that two and two in some inconceivable world may be equal to five. It appears to me that four means two and two—that it simply means so many units taken one after another; and when you analyze four, which is fair according to Mr. Mill's philosophy, and get at its meaning, you must come to two and two; and that, by his own principle of analysis, you never can make four otherwise than equal to two and two. That is to say, if A is equal to A, four is equal to two and two, and five can never be equal to two and two. But Mr. Mill had the advantage in his argument with Dean Mansel, and, moreover, he is much more nearly allied to those who are transcendentalists than they are willing to imagine. He is an idealist, perfect and pure, as much as ever Berkeley and Hume were, and a nihilist as well as an idealist, if it be possible to conceive the combination; but he is not the least in the world a materialist. He no more believes in matter outside of him than he believes in me as a unit apart from matter. I confess I think the real principle at stake has been indicated by Mr. Row, and that is, that all is to be harmonized on the basis of induction. But I think Mr. Row went too far in his endeavour to show how, in the philosophy of probabilities, reason and faith melt into each other. He tried to make us understand that demonstrative sciences were in part sciences of probabilities, and that therefore it should not be alleged against theology that it is simply a probable science. Now, I should be disposed to invert that statement. I do not believe it can be pretended that the demonstrative sciences, properly so called, are based on probabilities. I believe that Euclid's demonstrations are based on absolute axioms——

Mr. Row.—I have referred in my paper to Euclid's twelfth axiom as not being a pure intuition.

Dr. Rigg.—Well, I only state my own opinion that Euclid's elements are based on clear, absolute axioms. And I go further, and say that the physical sciences repose on axioms and on principles which are as clear and certain and axiomatic as any principles of mathematics; and, just as in any mathematical problem you may have conditions uncertain and unresolved, and can only come to an approximate conclusion, so in physical sciences you may have more or less of your conditions that are uncertain, and which only enable you to come to approximate conclusions. My argument is this, that physical sciences repose on intuitive principles, and so do all sciences, whatsoever they may be; and I reason in this way: You should harmonize faith and reason, not by making the demonstrative sciences appear to be merely probable, but by showing that metaphysical or moral science, no less than the demonstrative sciences, reposes on a basis of intuitive axioms and intuitive principles. The conclusion that I come to on the whole is this: that if we take the principle of induction,

which I apprehend is the only working principle on which any science whatever can be tested, we have as much right to apply that principle to our own theology and to matters of faith, as men of science have to apply it to the elements with which they deal. I think that passage of Mr. Row's, where he intimates that you can only deny miracles by going off the basis of inductive science, is very true and penetrating. That is what Strauss and Rénan do; and it underlies all the *à priori* criticism of a particular school. When you depart from the basis of induction, which was Christ's own method, you end in pantheism, and nothing but a foregone conclusion as to pantheism can justify any one in denying the probability of a miracle. Resting on that, I think we may come, as Mr. Row has said, to such a theory of inspiration as all parties are bound to accept. Let us take the phenomena and the facts; let us analyze them, and find what inspiration is. It will be a difficult process, but it is the only one by which we can ascertain the truth as to our theology.

Mr. REDDIE.—It is now so late that I feel I should be acting very unwisely were I to occupy much of your time; I must therefore pass over much minute criticism which I had intended to give Mr. Row the advantage of, and will limit myself to a few observations on important points. And first, as to the general antagonism which Mr. Row has noticed at some length in this paper as between the theologians and the scientific men,—I am not aware that theologians have taken exception to science as science. I have heard them refuse to admit certain so-called sciences to be true science; and I am sorry to say I have heard some theologians refuse to admit reason in matters of theology; but they are a small and diminishing, if not already extinct, party, and we may leave them out of consideration. The warfare which Mr. Row speaks of is not with those theologians who deny reason, but rather with those who are supposed to deny science; and I must say that as regards that war I do not want peace. But I do not think you can compare it to a material battle between nations. This is a matter that every man must think out in his own mind, and if men's minds are antagonistic, the differing parties must fight it out: and there can be only but one basis of peace, and that is truth. Until they arrive at that, there *will* be no peace; and there *should not* be. To get rid of this notion (which I am sorry to say Mr. Row has put forward more than once), that science as science is objected to by those who uphold revelation, I will bring Mr. Row to a definite test. He has referred to astronomy; but I will not go into that to-night, because I am going to read a paper on the subject in the course of the present session; and I want to bespeak the most extreme and bitter antagonism to what I shall then say, if I am wrong. But I will now pass on to geology, which in the present day has been more frequently placed at issue with theology than anything else, and Mr. Row has laid especial stress upon it. We shall see whether he will be able to answer this evening what I have now to say, and if not, whether he will do so at some other time. It will be placed on record in our *Journal of Transactions*, and if he does not answer it, all he has said on that subject must go for worse than nothing. Now I venture to say that

Mr. Row is not able to tell us what is now the orthodox geological theory of the creation or constitution of this world, nor is he able even to tell us that there is any extant theory that even professes to account for the creation or constitution of the world, since the recent geological theories were literally pulled to pieces. The great geological theory boasted of in Goodwin's essay on the Mosaic cosmogony in *Essays and Reviews*, was the nebular theory of Laplace. According to that theory, the nebular gas was cooled down into granite, which was the solid foundation on which all the sedimentary strata were deposited. That theory was wretched enough as it stood, for they never told us where the matter for such deposits came from; but it has now been discovered that the granite itself is a transformed sedimentary rock; and (as I stated in my reply to Professor Huxley) the geologists have as yet invented no new foundation, even as a theory, on which they could lay down their sedimentary deposits. They want a beginning. Perhaps Mr. Row can give us some theory which will supply one——

Mr. Row.—I did not lay down any theory whatever.

Mr. Reddie.—Of course not; and all these vague arguments from geology,—all these "bogie" theories of a gaseous world, must go for nothing. If Mr. Row wants us to give up the definite account of creation which we have in Genesis, on account of geology, he must surely say what theory geology has to supply us with in its place, and whether it is true or not. I put out this challenge in *Scientia Scientiarum* at the starting of this Institute, and not a single geologist has ever answered it. Mr. Row will not answer it :—he does not really know what to say. (Laughter.) It would therefore be much better to get rid of these general assertions that geology and theology contradict each other.—I also find that Mr. Row has several times in his paper read to-night contradicted himself—on the question of the infinite especially; but the most able and clear remarks of Dr. Rigg must have satisfied you all on that subject. One point in the paper which I should like to notice has not been touched upon at all previously, and that is with reference to the origin of evil. Mr. Row says :—

"If we assume that God could have prevented it, and has not, we assign imperfection to His moral attributes; if, that He was unable to prevent it, we limit either His power or His wisdom."

I am glad to find a kind of contradiction to this in another passage of the paper, where he says that these deductions must only be the result of our own ignorance. But suppose we say that God could have prevented evil, and would not, because there was some higher reason for permitting it; and you get rid of the difficulty altogether. It is to be regretted that this and one or two other points have been introduced into the paper unnecessarily, and not reasoned out; for vague remarks on such subjects are to be deprecated. We have plenty of opportunity to discuss such questions; and if Mr. Row will give us a paper on the origin of evil, and take either side, and reason it out, I shall be very glad. But I object to things of great importance being dealt with, as by a side wind, in this way. It is not satis-

factory, because we have no time to discuss them, and when such remarks slip in they may remain uncontradicted, on record in our *Journal*. I ought to say, before sitting down, as we are very much criticised out of doors, that Mr. John Stuart Mill is not the only person who has stated that two and two might make five. The *Saturday Review*, which is our great critic, once alleged the same thing. I am glad to find, however, that in a subsequent article it goes back to the fact that two and two are simply four, and cannot be anything else than merely four units! (Hear, hear.)

The CHAIRMAN.—It seems to be considered right that the chairman should inflict himself on the meeting for a short time, and I therefore crave your indulgence while I execute the duty allotted to me. I can join most decidedly in the universal commendation given to the paper before us. I am rejoiced to find that my observations were not premature when I spoke of it at an earlier period as a thoughtful and interesting paper, for the discussion which has taken place has shown incontestably that it is both thoughtful and interesting. The two principal points which have been commented on by the various speakers have been faith and the Divine attributes. With regard to faith, I think Dr. Rigg was right when he said we use the word in too many different senses. We should have a definition of what we mean by faith. It seems to me that those who impugn revelation wish to distort "faith" into meaning something akin to superstition. Hume, in his essay on miracles, first argues on the impossibility of accepting a miracle on any evidence whatever, and then goes on to say scornfully that if we cannot accept it on evidence or on any rational premisses, we must accept it by faith. He thus endeavours unfairly to degrade faith into superstition. We may divide faith into faith moral and faith intellectual. Faith moral is concerned with action; it is the faith of the infant, whereby it rushes into an apparent danger because its parent has told it that such apparent danger is no real one. In faith intellectual we accept the truth on less than pure demonstrative evidence. Where our love or affection is concerned, we acquiesce in something less than pure *αποδειξις*, something less than pure demonstration, and that is intellectual faith. As to the next point, namely, the attributes of God,—I would suggest to Mr. Row that there may be a certain amount of inaccuracy in our general language when we speak of the "attributes" of God. I do not read that God is a loving being: I read that God is love. The attributes of God—I speak reverently—are the Deity Himself. We do not attribute a quality to Him, but we know that He is that quality Himself. God is not merely just; He is infinite justice. He is not merely pure, but perfect purity——

Mr. ROW.—We read that He is holy.

The CHAIRMAN.—That is an instance of Scripture suiting itself to our popular way of speaking. What we call attributes are really the Deity, existing as the Deity Himself exists. It is not so with man, because his attributes are separable from him; the virtuous man may cease to be virtuous, and the vicious man may become virtuous. The attributes of man are in a continual state of flux, but in the Deity all is immutable and

infinite. Now, how are we to get over that hopeless way of treating the infinite, Mr. Poyer spoke of, as the despair to which Dean Mansel's view of the infinite would lead us? We must meet it by looking to the only begotten Son of God. He has declared God by becoming man; in Him the infinite is made perceptible to the mind; the glories of Omnipotence are brought out and displayed in His human actions. We have in Him, if I may so speak, the exhibition of God to man in so far as man can comprehend Him:—the Word of God on earth was the translation of the Divine Word into the language of man. I hope the canon for the interpretation of Scripture which Mr. Row has referred to, will be drawn up. No better model for it can be formed than one quoted by St. Augustine from Tichonius the Donatist. It is in the *De Doctrina Christiana*, and more fully in the *Bibliotheca Patrum*, where it is couched in quaint language, which, however, is highly philosophical when properly interpreted. One word more on the subject of reason and faith. As I said before, the opponents of revelation wish to show us that faith is superstition, and that reason is not faith. Mr. Row has entirely proved in their teeth that reason and faith are but different phases of the same intellect exerting itself to grasp what it can of the Creator.

Dr. IRONS.—Would you say that the Deity has no distinction whatever in His own nature between purity and justice, and so on with all His attributes? If we are not to speak of the attributes of God, I must confess I am puzzled. It seems to me to destroy the whole character of the Divine Being, and to make Him a pure, simple abstraction without an idea of what purity and justice are.

The CHAIRMAN.—This is rather a question of language than of anything else. When we speak of the Deity we speak of a Being whose essence those qualities are; we may speak of Him in reference to this or that, as we please.

Dr. IRONS.—It strikes me this would lead straight to the pantheism of the Eliatics, and almost to the pantheism of the mediæval schools.

The CHAIRMAN.—That would be only if we conceived the attributes without conceiving the one Personal Deity Himself. In that case we should be erecting as many infinite beings as there are attributes.

Mr. ROW.—I have very little to say in reply to the discussion which has taken place, as the objections to my paper have been so small. My object in regard to the question of infinity was to prevent the application of a quantitative measure. As I stated in the end, my paper is not an elaborate treatise: if it had been, I should have kept you here all night with it; and I can hardly exaggerate the difficulty I found in getting such a mass of matter into the space I have occupied. I could have written it five or even twenty times the length with much greater ease. It is the necessary consequence of such a condensation of material, that some things must be left obscure. With regard to the objection of Dr. Irons, the point he has raised is so small that it is hardly worth commenting upon. Two minds never can think exactly alike, I am quite aware; but Dr. Irons and myself really take an

exceedingly similar view. My idea of faith is that it belongs to almost every subject of human conviction: wherever there is conviction, there there is faith. It is not usual to say that axioms are the result of faith, but in one sense they are, and my only object on that point was to show that the 12th axiom of Euclid did require some trouble to comprehend it, and I do say it is not founded on distinct and intuitive truth. I have an old Euclid in which an attempt is made to demonstrate the axiom through several pages, and that only makes confusion worse confounded. (Laughter.) With regard to Mr. Reddie's objections, I had an idea of what he would say, and I read the other evening, since writing my paper, the following passage, written by Dean Howson, the dean of Chester, who is a man of very considerable mental power. Now, when I wrote the passage in my paper I had Mr. Reddie in my mind, for I think he is really a descendant of Ishmael—at least, I know that his hand is against every man, and every man's hand against him. (Laughter.) Dean Howson says:—

"A high estimate of Scripture being combined with a low estimate of Church authority, the two together lead to a technical view of inspiration, which, being asserted and not proved, is taken to be axiomatic. Through a certain impatience of thought, the proofs of the divine origin of Christianity are assumed to be *ipso facto* proofs of the verbal inspiration of the Bible. . . . . In another direction also they have been much to blame, viz., in their treatment of the claims of science. Sometimes it seems to be assumed that scientific men are puffed up with pride, whereas scientific men are often very modest and humble. But it is the general mode in which science has been dealt with by the party, which must be especially pointed out as full of danger. Science is necessarily impatient of assumption. Induction can never stand still. Thus, if a fixed barrier is presented to scientific inquiry by traditional interpretations of Scripture, an uneasy state of mind cannot fail to result, with a tendency on the part of scientific minds to reject revelation, and a tendency too on the part of Biblical students to reject the Bible. Who can say what harm has been done by denunciations against geology which were heard years ago from some of our pulpits—denunciations which would perhaps now be willingly retracted by those who made them? This ought to be a warning against precipitate assertion in regard to those ethnological and anthropological questions which are now causing anxiety. The wisdom of the Christian student is to wait quietly for the solution of problems in which science is concerned."

Dr. IRONS.—What does he allude to? Did you ever hear any one preach against geology?

Rev. C. A. ROW.—Yes, certainly.

Mr. REDDIE.—Did you ever hear *me* preach against geology? (Laughter.)

The Rev. C. A. ROW.—Yes, I think I have. (Laughter.) I occasionally accompany a friend of mine, who is a very learned man, living by his literary labours, and who devotes a portion of every Sunday to going out and combating the infidelity of London—the Bradlaughs and the men of that type, —and from what I have seen, I am certain there is very great danger to that

class of minds amongst which he goes from our continual small efforts to pick holes in science. We should rather endeavour to arrive at certain strong principles with regard to revelation on which we might take a firm stand. I do not know that I have anything more to reply upon, as the criticism has been so exceedingly favourable to my paper.

Mr. REDDIE.—But you have given us nothing as to the geological commencement of the world. (Hear, hear.)

Rev. C. A. ROW.—I am not called upon to say what I believe. I say the periods of geology rest on very high probability, and you must wait for the present.

Mr. REDDIE.—By which you mean that the science of the world rests upon chronology?

Rev. C. A. ROW.—Ninety-nine out of every hundred geologists think that 8,000 years is too narrow an amount of time for the existence of the world. I think that the enormous preponderance of geological evidence gives us a right to assume the probability of that view. It may be true or it may not.

Mr. REDDIE.—But you have not noticed the fact that the long geological periods were based on the nebular theory; geologists thought that the immense heat, which they had assumed, would take all that long time to cool down. But the nebular theory has now gone.

Rev. C. A. ROW.—It would be ridiculous in me to attempt to go into this question; it has nothing to do with the paper. I only wanted to establish some sound ground for believing in revelation, and for not constantly running our heads against science.

The meeting was then adjourned.