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A table of contents for *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jtvi-01.php

JOURNAL OF
THE TRANSACTIONS
OF
The Victoria Institute,
OR,
Philosophical Society of Great Britain.

EDITED BY THE HONORARY SECRETARY.

VOL. VII.



LONDON:
(Published for the Institute)
ROBERT HARDWICKE, 192, PICCADILLY, W.
1874.

ORDINARY MEETING, FEBRUARY 3, 1873.

MR. ALEXANDER MCARTHUR IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed, and the following Elections were announced :—

MEMBERS :—

The Rev. William Carus, M.A. (Canon of Winchester, and late Senior Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge), The Close, Winchester.
Edmund H. Currie, Esq., St. Leonard's Street, Bromley, S.E.

ASSOCIATES :—

The Rev. Marsham Argles, M.A. (Canon Residentiary of Peterborough), Barnack Rectory, Stamford.
The Rev. G. W. Danks, Gainsborough.
The Rev. H. G. Tomkins, Park Lodge, Weston-super-Mare.
Sydney Turner Klein, Esq., 24, Belsize Park.
Miss S. H. Carruthers, Cisanello, Pisa, Italy.

Also, the presentation of the following Work for the library :—

“Transactions of the Royal United Service Institution.” Part 69.

From the Institution.

The following paper was then read by the Author :—

REMARKS ON SOME OF THE CURRENT PRINCIPLES OF HISTORICAL CRITICISM. By the Rev. C. A. Row, M.A., &c.

THE subject to which I am about to draw your attention is one which has not hitherto been considered in this Institute. Yet its claims on our attention are strong; for not only are the principles on which historical criticism is based of a strictly philosophical character, but more than any other subject which is discussed in this room, they have a direct bearing on Revelation. As Christianity is an historical revelation, the investigation of the claims of its facts and documents to be received as historical comes strictly within the limits of this science; its relation to religion is therefore more direct than that of any other.

I have assumed that a science of historical criticism ought to exist. It may be defined as the science which discriminates between fact and fiction in the history of the past. If there be no such science, we can have no certain grounds for knowing what is true or false in the events of history, and past experience would be rendered worthless as a guide to the future. No less dangerous is the introduction into it of false principles, by which whole regions of fact are consigned to the domains of fiction. The most dangerous attacks on Christianity have originated in false principles of historical criticism.

I. One of the most important questions connected with this subject is the limit which ought to be assigned to what Professor Tyndall has designated the principle of philosophical imagination; or, to speak in the language of this science, the principle of historical conjecture. I put the case thus: if facts are deficient, or their evidence or interpretation uncertain, to what extent are we at liberty to supply the deficiency by the use of a supposed power of historical divination. You are aware that this principle has of late years claimed the right of reigning over a wide range of subjects, and pronouncing on them with dogmatical authority. Not only has it claimed the right of interpreting the mythical and semi-mythical periods of history with a boundless license of imagination, but within the historical period, where facts are separated from each other by an unknown void, many writers of history claim to possess the power of erecting a solid bridge of fact over the interval which separates the one from the other. I fully admit that it is both the right and the duty of those who engage in these inquiries to employ all the resources of reason in endeavouring to separate the true from the false in the history of the past; but by this process there is no little danger that a number of mere conceptions which are merely subjective should become metamorphosed into objective facts.

I am far from wishing to deny the use of philosophical imagination or historical conjecture, as long as they are kept within the limits which a sound philosophy will assign them. Without imagination all discovery is impossible; but, like all other good gifts, it requires to be carefully watched, lest it should intrude itself beyond its legitimate province. Its duty is to act as the pioneer of reasoning, not to supply its place. Its unguarded use is far more dangerous in history than in science. Scientific analysis can subject its conjectures to a rigid verification; and they have no right to plant themselves as facts on the solid earth until they have passed through this process. But as history treats only of the past, conjecture is incapable of verification, except by analogy; its conclusions, therefore,

cannot pass beyond the regions of the probable; and however high their probability, they must be carefully distinguished from ascertained facts.

There is no employment more easy and delightful than, when facts are wanting, to supply their place by the aid of the imagination. The labour of doing so does not require us to move out of our easy-chairs. When facts are wanting to sustain theories, all may be made easy by boldly inventing them. Hence the attractiveness to many minds of the mythical and semi-mythical periods of history, and of fable and fiction generally. Their interpretation gives a boundless scope to the imagination. Mr. Cox, in his work on the Aryan mythology, has carried this principle to a point beyond which it is impossible to advance. I have little doubt that, with the aid of the machinery employed by him,—viz., the effects of the solar orb, the scenery of our globe, light and darkness, the alternations of cloud in every form, &c.—that it is possible to resolve every fiction,—nay, every event in life,—into a solar myth, provided one is gifted with a fair share of imaginative power. Similar is the mode in which whole schools of mystics have in all ages handled the Bible, and made it say everything or nothing at their pleasure. Are such plays of the imagination entitled to rank as rational convictions? When two facts are separated from each other, the connecting links of which have passed away, there are many conceivable theories by which they may be united; and a powerful imagination, unrestrained by reason, can see analogies in everything. Minds of this order require to have it constantly reiterated to them, that to prove a theory possible is not to prove it probable; and to prove a theory probable does not convert it into a fact.

The tendency of many gifted minds in the present day to erect a magnificent historical theory on a very few uncertain facts is very remarkable. Formerly it was too much the habit of theologians to compose histories out of a few uncertain traditions. Grave philosophers and historians seem ready to adopt the practice which theologians are now disposed to abandon. To a certain order of mind the act of groping in the darkness of the past has the same charm which climbing to the most dangerous heights of the Alps has to others. Probably, one day the history of the human race for the last fifty millions of years will be reconstructed by the aid of a few archæological remains; and the gradual steps by which man has emerged from an inarticulate animal into an articulate one will be clearly pointed out. I heartily commend every effort to extract out of the memorials of the past every particle of truth which they will yield by any legitimate exercise of reason; but facts which

have perished can seldom be revived by the imagination. Two events may have been united together in twenty different ways. It is necessary to speak on this point very plainly, for the most serious consequences are constantly resulting from a use of it, which can be made to rest on no rational principle.

On the other hand, let us not close our eyes to the danger of fictions getting into history. This is so great, and numbers of writers have been so credulous, that a thorough sifting of the evidence on which historical facts rest is absolutely required. Even in ordinary life, no small number of events get currently reported as facts which a careful inquiry proves to have been fictions. It is impossible to deny that there is a considerable principle of mendacity in man. Both national, party, and sectarian feelings have led to the gravest *suppressiones veri* and *suggestiones falsi*. If a history of the late German and French war was composed from exclusively French sources of information, it would contain a large mythic element. In proportion as history rests on one-sided evidences of the character I have referred to, it is liable to suspicion.

It is impossible to deny that the science of historical criticism has done us good service. It has banished multitudes of supposed facts into the regions of fictions; and the world is always benefited by getting rid of a falsehood. An immense mass of fiction had succeeded in introducing itself into history. Those of us who can remember when Rollin was the great authority for ancient history are in a position to estimate the greatness of the change which historical criticism has effected. In those days history consisted of fact and fiction in nearly equal proportions. Little effort was made to test the evidence on which it rested. Authors who lived five hundred years after events were referred to as equal authorities to those who were contemporaneous. The utmost which criticism ventured to do was, either to eliminate the supernatural or to rationalize it down to the limits of the possible.

There is still a great tendency to think that an event is proved to be true if we can adduce the authority of an ancient writer for it. The whole value of such a person's testimony depends on the interval of time which separates him from the fact which he professes to record. If he lived beyond the period of reasonable historical tradition, he is no better an authority for an event than a writer of modern date, unless it can be shown that he had before him historical materials which have since perished. One constantly hears authorities quoted to prove the truth of facts who lived hundreds of years after them. I have heard, for example, Josephus adduced as an authority

for an event which occurred more than one thousand years before his time. If he had no definite historical materials before him, his authority because he lived 1,800 years ago would be valueless. If the world should last another thousand years, writers of the present day may be then ancient authorities, and some will probably think their testimony valuable for some fact connected with the battle of Hastings. Against this fallacy we cannot be too closely on our guard.

A considerable portion of the blame must be laid on the ancient historians themselves. History was viewed by them too much as a work of art. Style held the first place; the separation of fact from fiction the second. Hence the facility with which they composed speeches, and put them into the mouths of others. Even the accurate Thucydides, as you know, did not escape from this evil habit, though he candidly owns that his speeches are his own composition. The same spirit has led some of them to give us lively descriptions of battles for which it is evident they could have had no authority but their own inventive powers. Hardly an ancient historian exists who applied the principles of criticism to events which occurred before the period of written contemporaneous documents. Livy's preface well exhibits the careless spirit with which they generally treated the events of early history.

Great, also, is the debt which modern history owes to the growth of the critical spirit. Partisan writers, and writers who drew their information from second-rate authorities, had succeeded in stereotyping their own views of it. We have now arrived at the conclusion, that history which is not based on a comparison of original authorities, and a careful sifting of evidence, is valueless. The extent to which documentary evidence has been adduced is one of the most striking improvements which the spirit of modern times has introduced into this study. If hero-worship has sometimes too much characterized it, it has certainly demolished a multitude of idols.

Of the critical school of ancient history Niebuhr may be regarded as the founder, although several earlier writers had prepared the way by calling attention to its uncertainty. Prior to his labours the general views of it were hopelessly indistinct, and the value of the authorities, on which it rested, had never been tested. Certain positions may be considered to be now firmly established. 1. That all secular history, to entitle it to the name, must be founded on contemporaneous testimony of some sort, and that alleged facts, which cannot be discovered to rest on such testimony, are unworthy of credit. 2. That the assertions of no writer, however ancient, are trustworthy evidence for events which occurred centuries before his birth,

unless it can be shown that he was in possession of materials of an historical character, and was not drawing from mere myths and legends. 3. That before it is possible to arrive at historical truth, the testimony of ancient writers must be carefully weighed, their sources of information ascertained, and their prejudices allowed for. 4. That the history of most ancient nations, prior to the birth of contemporaneous literature, consists of two portions; one in which the events are entirely mythic and legendary, and another in which a certain number of historical facts are intermixed with myths and legends. 5. That even in those periods in which the historical element largely predominates, myths and legends occasionally intrude themselves. It is remarkable that, even in these modern times of journalism, we have narrowly escaped from the introduction of at least one great myth into history. I allude to Barrère's mendacious fiction of the sinking of the *Vengeur* in Earl Howe's victory. It was even commemorated by a modern model of the sinking ship. The great majority of French writers have reported it as an historical fact. Alison, Carlyle, and I know not what other English historians, followed suit. It had all but taken the rank of an unquestionable fact, when it was found to have been an audacious falsehood. The gradual discovery of authentic documents proves that this is no solitary case in the history of the first French Revolution. If such fictions can all but enter history in modern times, with all their superior advantages of testing the accuracy of events, what must be the probability that they have frequently done so in ancient times, when none of our machinery existed for the diffusion of information? I need hardly say that the application of sound critical principles to the history of the first French Revolution is rendering the position of many a demigod on his pedestal extremely precarious.

The critical method of Niebuhr consisted of two portions; one of which was destructive, having for its object the elimination of fiction from history; the other constructive. The destructive method was based on the great principle, that nothing can be accepted as an historical fact for which some form of contemporaneous testimony cannot be adduced. This is unquestionably sound. What constitutes such testimony I shall inquire presently. Applied to the history of Rome, it proved that by far the larger proportion of the events prior to the capture of the city by the Gauls rested on no trustworthy historical foundation; and that the same was true with respect to the earlier portions of Grecian history; and that even for a considerable period afterwards myths and legends are largely intermixed with facts. In one word, the period of

trustworthy history only begins within a moderate number of years before the birth of a contemporaneous historical literature.

It will be seen that these principles admit of being applied to history generally, and cannot be limited to these special cases. We cannot but admit as a general fact that the early history of nations contains a mythic element, for which historical testimony is wanting. Prosaic writers have mistaken poetry for history, and represented its creations as historical facts. In the case of many of the Oriental nations the art of writing was in use in a very early period, and its employment for recording historical events rests on unquestionable evidence. Hence the period of their credible history extends up to a much earlier date than that of the Occidental races. But in nearly all of these myth precedes history; races of Gods and heroes that of ordinary men. The question, therefore, becomes of the greatest importance. Have we any means of separating the grains of historic truth from the mass of myths and legends in what they are intrusted?

It is not my purpose to enter on the regions of pure mythology, or to inquire whether by any possible application of reason an historical element can be extracted from it. It is evident that attempts to assign an origin to the innumerable myths of the ancient world must rest in no small degree on conjectures which admit of no verification. I am far from denying that the study of comparative mythology may lead to some historical results. My immediate concern is with the semi-historical periods of history. Do they admit of a reconstruction which rests on a basis of reliable evidence, or must we be content to leave them in the disjointed state in which they have been handed down to us? Niebuhr considered that he had discovered a constructive method applicable to this period of history. After the fictions had been destroyed, he held that there remained a certain number of disjointed historic facts. He considered that the intervals which separated these facts could be filled up by the aid of a faculty which he called that of historic divination, but what may be more truly called conjecture, aided by reasonings from analogy. He used as an illustration of this faculty the power which a man who has lived in a dark chamber can acquire, by means of habit, of seeing objects in it, which are invisible to those who have just entered from the light. The analogy, however, fails in one most important particular in its application to the obscure regions of history. We can verify the assertions of the man who reports objects which he sees in the dark chamber, but although a man may see much more deeply than we can into the obscurities of history, we never can verify the

truth or falsehood of his assertions. We must take his *ipse dixit*.

On such a principle he attempted to reconstruct considerable portions of early Roman history. These reconstructions, although they were assented to when they were first propounded by a large number of eminent men—among others by Dr. Arnold—have since fallen into considerable discredit. Others thought that they had an equal right to propound theories as facts, and very discordant ones were the result, for which probable evidence could be adduced. The great work of Sir G. C. Lewis may be considered to have given them their death-blow. He has proved that a large portion of early Roman story is destitute of an adequate attestation, and that where facts are wanting the attempt to supply them by analogies and conjectures is an utter failure.

The reason of this is plain. The number of possible events by which they may be united together is indefinite. It is impossible to reason out by analogy what must have been the course of events, unless human actions are due to necessary causes. At least, in our present state of knowledge, human passions and human actions do not follow so necessary a law as that of gravitation; and until they do, to reconstruct lost events can only be a matter of probable guess-work, except in a limited number of cases. Niebuhr thought that he could divine the changes through which the Roman constitution must have passed, and the influences at work which actuated the agents in them. Let us test his position, and suppose that certain portions of English history have perished in a similar manner; how hopeless would be the work of reconstruction. Would it be possible to reconstruct the events or causes by which the Parliaments of Edward I. were connected with the Witenagemote; or if the memory of the events of the reign of Henry VIII. had been obliterated from history, to reconstruct the immediate causes which produced the Reformation; or if those of the reign of Elizabeth had undergone the same fate, those which have given its peculiar aspect to the Church of England.

But the principle is still active in various other branches of historical inquiry, especially in those which have even a remote connection with Revelation. Of this numerous works which you well know, and which I therefore need not name, are striking instances. I will offer a few observations on one which is rarely referred to in this room,—*Ewald's History of Israel*. This work is a most singular instance of learning and ingenuity, united with audacity, of which its respected author seems supremely unconscious. I fully concede the right of the his-

torian to subject the historical books of the Bible to the severest principles of criticism, for they belong to history, and as I have said, it is the function of this science to discriminate fact from fiction. I have no immediate concern with that portion of this work which denies the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, but with some of its reconstructive principles. We will assume, therefore, for the purposes of argument, that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses, and that it is a composite work, which a late writer has reduced into its present form, out of several original authorities. Ewald, by the aid of conjectural criticism, not only asserts his ability to determine the exact number of these authorities, but to assign each passage to its respective author. But his boldness does not stop here. After a lapse of over three thousand years, he attempts to reconstruct *the history, which he considers these authorities to have misunderstood. The audacity with which he uses the principle of historical conjecture is almost sublime, and it seems never to have occurred to him that its validity is questionable. As far as I have read this work, I have failed to discover any rational principles by which the greater portion of the enormous mass of ingenious conjecture which it contains can be verified, or any proof given that they are veritable facts, except the author's own opinion that he possesses a deep power of vision by which he is capable of seeing into the obscurities of the past. I cannot conceive that a person can be convinced by its perusal that the positions taken by its author are proved, unless he has come to it with a predisposition to accept them. Similar attempts are made from time to time to reconstruct the life of our Lord, and are widely applied to subjects most closely connected with revelation. Do they rest on a rational foundation? Let the plain truth be boldly spoken. These and similar reconstructions are novels, and not histories.

Let me guard myself from the danger of being misunderstood. The foregoing observations are meant only to apply to the principle of historical conjecture. I by no means wish to imply that there is not a legitimate use of reason on this subject, or that we cannot by its aid infer the presence of a fact for which we are not in possession of direct evidence. We constantly do so in the daily affairs of life; and what is legitimate in these is legitimate in history.

I will conclude this portion of my subject in the words of Sir G. C. Lewis,—“The main cause of the great multiplicity and wide divergency of opinion is, the defective methods which have been adopted. Instead of applying those tests of credibility, which are constantly applied to modern history, they attempt to guide their judgment by the indications of internal

evidence, and assume that the truth can be discovered by an occult faculty of historical divination. . . . The consequence is, that ingenuity and labour can produce nothing but hypothesis and conjectures, which may be supported by analogies, and may sometimes appear specious and attractive, but can never rest on a solid foundation of proof. There will be, therefore, a series of conjectural histories. Each successive writer will reject all or some of the guesses of his predecessor, and will propose some new hypothesis of his own. . . . History will perpetually revolve in the same hopeless circle." I think that the general principles contained in this passage are not only applicable to history, but may be usefully applied to a wide range of philosophical, theological, and scientific speculation.

II. If the only secure foundation of history is contemporaneous testimony, or a something which may be taken as truly representing it, it becomes a most important question to determine, for what number of years prior to the birth of a contemporaneous historical literature can we be said to possess a trustworthy historical tradition?

According to the opinion of Sir I. Newton, the transmission of historical events by a trustworthy tradition extends only a little beyond 100 years, anterior to the existence of contemporaneous documents. We may assume that the period of a man's trustworthy historical recollections extend from about ten or twelve years of age to about eighty, if our faculties continue entire. The cases of prolonged life beyond this period are so rare that they may safely be left out of the calculation. It may be urged that ten is too early an age for a trustworthy recollection of historical events. It will be so, unless they are striking. Speaking from my own experience, I have a most distinct recollection of the chief events of the battle of Navarino, which took place when I was eleven years of age. I am confident that I have not read a description of the battle since, yet I could at this moment describe its chief events from recollection. There is one event which happened one or two years earlier, of which my recollection is no less vivid, and of some of the scenes of which I could give an accurate description,—the ravages of the great November gale which inflicted a greater amount of mischief on the west coast of England than any within the recollection of the present generation. I can see many of its scenes at this moment before my eyes, and think that I shall continue to do so as long as I live. Among the earliest political events of which I have a distinct recollection are the sudden illness of the Earl of Liverpool, which dissolved the ministry; the great commercial panic of 1824; the death of the Emperor Alexander; and, earliest of all, the coronation of George IV.: but of these,

though I remember the facts, I have no recollection of the details. Assuming, therefore, that a man's personal recollections may extend over this interval of time, we may add to them what he may have learned from his father or his grandfather, and this will bring us a little over the period I have stated. But as few men attain the age of eighty, some abatement must be made from the influence which old men can exercise in preserving a traditionary recollection of events.

I am aware that there are exceptional cases on the other side. I think that I have read that the grandfather of the late Marquess of Lansdowne had conversed with a person whose father had stood on the same scaffold as King Charles I. It is unquestionable that such prolonged historical recollections occasionally occur; but they are so few that they can exercise little influence on the transmission of accurate oral traditions. They are, however, valuable in particular instances. Thus Irenæus tells us that as a boy he had heard Polycarp describe things which he had heard from the apostle John, and that his recollection of his interviews with Polycarp was of a most lively character, considerably exceeding in vividness that of many subsequent events. In such cases an accurate traditional transmission of events could be extended over 160 years; but we must remember that such cases are extremely rare. Their chief value is when the last link in the chain is himself an author. In this particular case, it affords a singular attestation to the genuineness of St. John's Gospel, for it is hardly conceivable that a man situate as Irenæus was could have been imposed on by a forgery which had only been in existence ten or fifteen years before he wrote.

We have the means of estimating in a highly civilized community the period of time within which oral tradition becomes an untrustworthy vehicle of transmitting accurate historical information. The little states of Greece must have formed favourable examples of the power of tradition to transmit accurate historical knowledge. The smallness of the number of the citizens must have imparted to each individual a far livelier interest in political events than is at present felt by the members of modern states. Hence we should expect that traditions of the past would deeply impress themselves on the public recollection. Thucydides tells us that the Athenians of his day, while they possessed a general historic recollection of the tyranny of Pisistratus and his sons, had fallen into a popular error as to some of the material facts. The general belief was that Hipparchus, who was killed by Harmodius and Aristogiton, was the eldest son, and had succeeded his father in the tyranny; whereas his eldest son and successor was Hippias. Historical

recollection, therefore, had become confused at Athens within a period a little over a century respecting a most important event in its history. It is easy to explain how the error originated, because Hipparchus was killed by Harmodius and Aristogiton, and Hippias continued to reign four years after his death; but the fact of the error proves that there is considerable danger that fictions should get into histories which are only transmitted orally. Another fiction had also become current on the same subject. A popular song represented Harmodius and Aristogiton as the liberators of their country, and statues had been erected to them in that capacity; whereas the fact was that they killed Hipparchus as an act of private revenge; that the tyranny lasted four years longer, and was dissolved by the interference of the Lacedæmonians, who acted under entirely different motives, namely, a false oracle, obtained by the exertion of influence on the Delphian priests. Such falsifications of history are frequently due to political partisanship. A few tolerably accurate accounts of events which occurred 140 years before the birth of Herodotus and Thucydides, reached these historians; but there were favourable circumstances which kept the recollection of them fresh in the popular mind.

These considerations prove that, as a general rule, it is impossible to trust tradition for the accurate transmission of facts for a period much exceeding a century; it speedily becomes confused when the chief actors are dead. The utmost which it can effect is the transmission of general statements; but in minor details, it becomes hopelessly inexact. After a considerable lapse of time, even these require corroborating testimony for their substantiation. Great was the interest which was excited in the minds of the mass of our population by the great French war; but the knowledge of its events is rapidly dying out, and that which remains is chiefly preserved by books. If an historian were to attempt to write an account of it from popular reminiscences, it would be one mass of inaccuracies. Yet thousands of our grandfathers fought and perished in it. Still more dim is the recollection of more distant events in the popular mind. Any knowledge of the battle of Beachy-head has perished from the recollections of the inhabitants of the neighbouring coasts. Hardly a recollection remains at Barnet of anything connected with the battle. A monument points out the spot where it is said to have been fought; still there is much doubt as to the precise locality. If it is true that a mound, three miles off, on which I stood a few months since, contains beneath it a large number of the remains of the fallen warriors, it must have been spread over a wide extent of

neighbouring country; but on these points all local knowledge has perished.

If popular recollection of distant events is very imperfect, even when it is aided by the existence of an historical literature, it is a much more uncertain vehicle for the transmission of facts, when it is forced to rely on its own unaided resources. In fact, events transmitted orally become speedily varied, coloured, and exaggerated. This is particularly the case with respect to numbers, even when the events are recent. I can well recollect the surprise with which I first learned the numbers which were engaged at Waterloo, compared with the popular exaggerations of them. We may lay it down as a general rule that popular conceptions of numbers are nearly always exaggerated, and when handed down to us by mere tradition grossly so. Hence, the high numbers so generally found in ancient writers. When we take into consideration that the hosts of Xerxes, after they had passed the Straits of Thermopylæ, could have derived their subsistence only from supplies which must have been transported by sea, it is evident that the accounts which have been handed down as to the numbers of the army and the camp-followers are unworthy of credit. In fact, the mode in which they were said to have been ascertained was the roughest possible. The late war proves that the numbers of armies on paper and of those which took the field differ widely. Ancient writers have given the numbers of the Persian force which fought at Marathon as varying from 100,000 to 600,000 men. We have a solid fact by which to test the truth of this report. The whole was conveyed across the Ægean in 600 trireme galleys, the ordinary crew of one of which consisted of 200 sailors and thirty marines. For these the space on board was so limited, that whenever a favourable opportunity presented itself, they took their meals on land. You are aware that the accounts handed down of the earliest portions of Roman history are filled with minute specifications of numbers. If these accounts of the numbers which fell in battle are worthy of credit, the inhabitants of that portion of Italy must have been more prolific than mice. One army is no sooner slaughtered than another is in the field, and this year after year.

But it will be more satisfactory to test the value of oral tradition as an accurate reporter of events, not through the remote past, but by the recollections of the times in which we live. Let us take an instance very favourable for the transmission of traditional historical recollections,—the inhabitants of a great naval port. Everything in such a place would tend to keep alive the knowledge of events, the *esprit de corps* of a constant succession of seamen, the interest felt by the whole population in their actions, and the ships which would help to

keep alive the memory of their past history. I have lived for many years in the vicinity of such a town, and therefore I can form a judgment of the degree in which traditionary history can be accurately transmitted.

Let us take a period of twenty-eight years after the close of the great French war. Would it have been possible for an historian to write an accurate history of it from oral tradition? I take this particular time, because it constitutes the interval which separates the composition of St. Paul's four chief Epistles, from the Resurrection. If we add to these the twenty-two years of the war, the whole interval will be greater than that which separates the composition of the latest of the synoptic Gospels from our Lord's public ministry. I have no hesitation in affirming that, at the time I have mentioned it would have been possible to have composed a generally correct history of all the chief battles from the local traditions of the place, although there would have been considerable variations in minor details, which would have afforded a number of specious objections for critics, who were anxious to invalidate it. They were habitually talked of in all ordinary society, and the chief events were thoroughly known. At the time I speak of, there was probably not a boatman in the harbour who could not give an account, more or less accurate, of the different actions in which each ship had been engaged, which he had heard talked of, over and over again, among his friends and acquaintances. These narratives were of an essentially popular character, and the accounts of them in books and newspapers had nothing to do with their formation. The only changes which they had undergone were those natural ones which came from the desire of individuals to exaggerate their own importance. While such numbers of men who were personally present in them were alive, it would have been impossible to have introduced into this kind of oral history any number of mythical or legendary traditions affecting their general character, without the danger of certain refutation. I have taken this example, because it seems to me to present a strong parallel to the position of the Christian Church for the fifty years which followed the Resurrection.

But in proportion as those who were present in them have died off, the popular interest has become less vivid, and the knowledge of them less accurate. A general fading of them from the popular recollection has now taken place. A very inconsiderable number of persons are now alive who took part in any of them. To get accurate knowledge, it would now be necessary to institute careful inquiries of what men had heard from their fathers, and their grandfathers. Still a certain amount of accurate informa-

tion might be obtained from a careful sifting of different family traditions. Multitudes still survive who have heard from their fathers and their grandfathers accounts of the events, though the living interest in them is gone. That knowledge is still sufficiently accurate to render the introduction of a large mass of legendary matter impossible.

The Christian Church of the first century must have been in a still more favourable position to preserve a traditionary history of the life of its founder, than that which I have just considered. It alone, of all the corporate bodies which have ever existed, drew its life from a personal history. Destitute of a knowledge of this life, it must have lost all cohesion. The necessity of its position compelled its members to preserve a recollection of the actions attributed to Jesus Christ. They must have formed an essential portion of its organized instruction, for Christianity is founded on them. It possessed many of the essential characteristics of a close corporation. Such bodies have the means of handing down a knowledge of events, of which popular ones without organization are destitute. Nor was the transmission of them entirely oral; for we know that memoranda existed prior to the composition of the Gospels. The most far-going critics of the Sceptical school do not venture to assign to the synoptic Gospels a later date than from sixty-five to eighty years after the events which they record. This interval, as I have shown, lies within the limit of accurate historical recollection, and is one far too short for a story which excited the profoundest interest, to get buried beneath a mass of legendary inventions.

Let us now ascend a little higher. I have heard, when a boy, a minute description from one who was an actual witness of an event nearly a century old,—the appearance of the combined French and Spanish fleet off Plymouth, during the American War of Independence, and of the terror which it occasioned. Many persons must be still living who have heard similar accounts from their grandfathers. If I survive twenty-five years, an accurate description of an event 120 years old could be handed down by oral tradition; and this, under favourable circumstances, might be extended to 130 years. But how far does this tradition still live in the popular mind? The knowledge of the mere fact still remains; but that of its details is no longer the subject of popular recollection. Still the materials of history exist, supposing them to be properly used.

But the power of transmission is increased when events are commemorated by monuments; but even these are far from being necessary evidences of truth. Even here, after a lapse of time, legendary additions grow up around them, of which many remarkable instances might be adduced. In some cases,

when the occasion of the erection of a monument has been forgotten, a wholly legendary one has been invented. We are painfully aware that the presence of innumerable relics is no necessary voucher for the truth of the stories connected with them.

The account given by Philo and Josephus of the mode in which the Septuagint version was effected is a most striking instance of the imperfection of oral tradition as an accurate reporter of facts after a considerable lapse of time. A period of 280 years had sufficed to encrust an historical fact with such a mass of fictions, that it is now impossible to disentangle the facts from the fictions. One might have expected that the position of the Alexandrian Jews would have been favourable to the transmission of the knowledge of the precise circumstances connected with the formation of this version. But the story, as handed down by Philo and Josephus, not only contradicts the phenomena of the version itself, but the facts of history as known from other sources, and, I think, is believed by no critic at the present day. What is more remarkable is, that a certain number of huts were shown at Alexandria as memorials of the fiction.

III. I must now offer a few observations on that canon of historical criticism which summarily excludes all miraculous events from the region of history, and banishes them into that of mythology. To what extent is it valid? How far does the occurrence of miraculous events invalidate the whole context in which they occur? This is a question with which the historical inquirer cannot help grappling. Stories of the kind are scattered over the whole period from the mythic ages to the recent alleged miraculous events in France. During some portions of time such alleged occurrences are very rare; at others they abound.

It will be unnecessary for me to examine the validity of the principle enunciated by Hume. This has been most successfully handled in a work recently published by a former member of this Institute.* I shall only offer a few observations connected with the general question, which are suggested by common sense.

If all miraculous narratives are to be rejected simply on the ground that no testimony can establish them, because they form no portion of our previous experience, then it is evident that all extraordinary events, nay, that every event which has not been included in past experience, must share the same fate. It is impossible to lay down a line which shall accurately discriminate between events which are extraordinary and those which are miraculous. I am ready to admit that certain miraculous events belong to an order which, with our present knowledge,

* Warrington,—*Can I believe a Miracle?*

it is impossible to connect with any natural process. But these shade off by insensible stages into others, which have a close resemblance to extraordinary occurrences in nature. I feel, therefore, unable to dispute Butler's general position, that to a higher order of intelligences all supernatural occurrences may seem natural. It is unquestionable that extraordinary occurrences not unfrequently happen, which lie quite as much outside past experience as strictly supernatural events. Of these one mentioned by Mr. Warington, the production of ice within an inch of a most intense heat, is a striking illustration. Such an event would have been unquestionably pronounced incredible in past times. It is evident, therefore, that any canon of criticism which would render the whole class of extraordinary events and fresh experiences incredible, cannot be maintained, and would render all enlargement of our experience impossible.

Still, however, as a fact we do summarily reject the great mass of the supernatural events recorded in history, without troubling ourselves to inquire into the attestation on which they rest. We also all feel that the evidence which we should require to accept an extraordinary event, whether it be supernatural or natural, is far greater than that which we should require for an ordinary fact. Thus I should at once credit a person who told me that he had seen a man walk across London Bridge; but if one hundred persons were to assert that they had seen one walk across the Thames, I should receive the statement, if meant to be the assertion of a literal fact, with no inconsiderable incredulity.

Let us take a few instances of the manner in which we summarily reject miraculous stories, without inquiring into the degree of their attestation. Probably every one in the room has thus rejected the recent miracles in France, or has referred them to mental phenomena. I would not spend an hour to inquire into the alleged miracles of spiritualism (of course, I am aware that the spiritualist would not allow that they were miracles), except from a desire to expose a great delusion. Most of us treat with similar contempt the narratives of the great witch mania, though thousands of people were sentenced to death on evidence which satisfied both judges and juries. I cannot help treating in a similar manner the innumerable miraculous stories of the Middle Ages, though a few of them rest on an attestation on which I would believe an ordinary fact. To go to an earlier period. There can be no doubt that Livy's History of the Punic Wars is in the main historically true; yet, year by year, in the midst of his historical narratives, we have reports of a set of prodigies made to the

Senate, and accepted by that body of practical men as true ; at any rate they ordered them to be expiated at the public expense. Some of them may be explained by the action of natural causes, and the power of an excited imagination. Others cannot be referred to these, as, for instance, when the Senate repeatedly accepted as a fact, that a cow had brought forth a lamb. It seems to me that it would be unjust to assume that every member of the Roman Senate was a knave, when he professed to accept such stories as true, although it is unquestionable that the Roman religion was repeatedly worked for State purposes, just as it would be equally so to make a similar charge against Bishop Jewell and other eminent men, for accepting the stories of witchcraft. Yet there is not a person in this room who would hesitate to reject such a fact as untrue, without troubling himself to inquire into the evidence on which it is alleged to rest. One thing respecting all such stories is certain. Not one of them was ever pretended to have been brought to attest a revelation, and they all belong to a belief in occult and magical powers in nature. Another class of prodigies was of frequent occurrence in the ancient world ; and I think was not unknown in the Middle Ages ; as, for instance, the sudden bursting of a brazen statue of a god into a profuse perspiration. Such an event may possibly be explained by peculiar atmospherical phenomena ; but to the general fact that brazen statues can burst into perspirations, every one of us will refuse to give credence, even when reported to us as supernatural events. I feel justified in rejecting in an equally summary manner the whole of the miraculous stories attributed to St. Anthony, and the monkish miracles. Nor does even the assertion of St. Bernard that he performed miracles enable me to accept the fact that he really did so.

Is there any rational principle which we can establish for thus dealing with historical testimony, or are we in such matters to submit to the sole guidance of caprice ? Why do I refuse to accept as a fact that a cow brought forth a lamb, although such an event has been substantiated by numerous decrees of the Roman Senate, and without hesitation accept as true an event of a very extraordinary character resting on the same authority, that the consul Varro, whose recklessness occasioned the terrific and all but fatal defeat at Cannæ, instead of being executed, or even censured, received public thanks for not having despaired of the safety of the republic ? This latter event was as contrary to prior experience as that a cow should bring forth a lamb.

The following considerations will help us to the solution of this difficulty. From whatever cause it may occur, mankind are firm believers in the permanence of the natural order of

events. This I believe to be strictly true, even in times when the legendary spirit is most widely prevalent, notwithstanding the assertions of the critics of the Gospels, that there were times when the belief that there is a permanent order of nature did not exist. There never was a time when men went to bed with the expectation that they might possibly see the sun rise tomorrow in the west. But the visible order of nature is the order of phenomena, and nothing else; and while men contemplate events as phenomena, and nothing more, it is impossible to believe in supernatural occurrences. The possibility of a supernatural occurrence depends on our belief as to whether there be a supernatural being. If the mind accepts his existence, the whole question is dependent on two considerations, whether it is in accordance with the known character of the supernatural being, to have caused such an event, and the existence of adequate testimony that he has done so. A supernatural being must have a character, and his actions can only be in conformity with that character. Whenever, therefore, I read of a supernatural event which contradicts my conceptions of the Divine character, I at once reject it, and assume that it is either a misrepresented natural phenomenon or a fiction. According to my own conception of that character, I apprehend that all interferences with the existing order of nature must be of a very rare occurrence, as if it were otherwise, it would nullify the purposes of the Divine government. Others, who have different views of this subject, are capable of admitting as true events which I cannot. We act precisely in the same manner in the common events of life. If a person were to come into this room, and assert that five hours ago he had seen our worthy chairman exhibiting Punch and Judy in the Strand, we should refuse to believe him; but if he affirmed that he had simply seen him walking there, we should give the fullest credit to the assertion. The question of the agreement of alleged facts with the character of the agent is an important portion of the evidence on which we accept them as true. I cannot believe that the Governor of the Universe ever caused a cow to bring forth a lamb, under the circumstances recorded by Livy; but I can accept as a fact that Varro was thanked after the battle of Cannæ, because it was in conformity with the general character of the Roman people. If, however, such an event had been reported of a community of Negroes, the individuals comprising which had recently been slaves, I should pronounce it a myth.

No self-acting rule can be laid down on this subject. Each man's belief in the reality of a supernatural event must vary with his opinions of the character of God. It must never be forgotten that it is not a question of what God can do, but of

what He will do, and what His character leads Him to do. This seems like a truism ; but the consequences of the practical disregard of the caution are lamentable, and it is one which is frequently disregarded by persons who attempt to defend revelation. We reject the great mass of supernatural occurrences with which certain portions of history are flooded, because, in the great majority of cases, they have no adequate attestation ; but where the evidence for them is as strong as that on which we would accept an ordinary event, we reject them from their repugnance to the Divine character, or because they were not performed for the purpose of attesting a divine commission. In one word, we do not believe that God will work miracles of this description. It is on these grounds that I feel myself compelled to reject the alleged miracle at the conversion of Constantine, which is one of the best attested of this kind. It seems to me that the miracle in question is contrary to the character of Him who wrought the miracles in the Gospels ; and that it is possible, without accusing either Eusebius or Constantine of deliberate falsehood, to explain it on the principle of peculiar physical phenomena acting on a highly excited state of the imagination.

The above considerations render it evident that the presence of a single mythological or a miraculous story does not justify us in rejecting the entire context in which it occurs. Some of them can be accounted for by mistakes as to physical phenomena ; a still larger number can be referred to mental causes. Yet their presence unquestionably shakes our confidence in the judgment of the person who reports them. When, however, they occur in large numbers, the case is different. They naturally produce great suspicion of the truth of the facts with which they are connected. In prehistoric ages they are the result of the play of poetic imagination. Still, however, it is impossible to lay down a general rule which will render unnecessary careful rational inquiry as to the degree in which the presence of a mythic element invalidates a fact otherwise credible.

IV. I cannot conclude this paper without offering a few remarks on literary forgeries, and the rules of criticism applied to them. In this department of criticism conjecture has been invoked to a degree which no rational principles will justify. It frequently happens that writers who have a particular theory to maintain, pronounce a book or a passage to be a forgery, or assert that an author has misrepresented a fact, for no other reason than that it opposes their own views ; and then seek for a number of reasons to render the assertion plausible. Thus, because the facts referred to in Pliny's letter to Trajan, and in Tacitus's description of the Neronian persecution, are not agreeable

to certain persons, the charge of forgery has been insinuated against the letter of Pliny, and Tacitus has been charged with having ignorantly applied to the Christians what was true only of the Jews. A similar process has been applied to several other important documents connected with early Christian history.

It is unquestionable that the practice of forging writings in the names of men of high reputation was very common in ancient times, and opinion seems to have attached but little criminality to the act. Of this the vast number of forged works known to have been once in existence is sufficient evidence. Whether our morality in connection with this subject be improved in modern times may be difficult to determine, because the probability of detection, which in the ancient world was small, in the modern world is great. I have often been disposed to question whether all these forgeries were put forth with the express purposes of deception. Perhaps some of them might have resembled many classes of modern fictitious writings, and the knowledge that the writer composed it as a fiction has perished. Still, however, many of these writings must have been composed with the direct purpose of deception. We may judge of the hardihood with which it was practised from the fact that St. Paul thought it necessary to take precautions against letters being forged in his name in his lifetime. Let it be observed that this habit was far from being confined to matters connected with religion.

Happily, however, the forgers of the ancient world were great bunglers in their art. They set all matters of history and probability at defiance. They freely put opinions into the mouths of authors which were only broached long after they were dead. Their powers of throwing themselves into the feelings and ideas of past times were of the meanest possible kind. They had not among them a single Daniel Defoe. Not one of them has succeeded in effectually personating a character. To speak generally, a small amount of critical acumen is all that is necessary to detect a large number of the forgeries of the ancient world. This consideration is sufficient to prove that the off-hand manner of pronouncing this or that work spurious because forgeries were common, is one which is entirely unwarrantable. It is hardly possible to find a forged work attributed to a known author which contains a successful imitation of his style. I need hardly say that there are certain indications of truthfulness derived from minute acquaintance with facts, customs, localities, and opinions which the most successful writer of modern fiction would be unable successfully to imitate.

It is an important question how far from differences of style we are entitled to infer differences of authorship. The style of

many persons presents as wide a difference as their faces; and the assertion is generally true that a man's mental characteristics, if he has any, display themselves in his style. Thus it is impossible to mistake between Johnson and Macaulay, Hume and Gibbon, Plato and Aristotle, Cicero and Demosthenes; and we are safe in pronouncing that the minds which produced the one set of writings could not have produced the other. The style of the sacred writers is no less widely distinguished from that of their contemporaries and successors, and from one another. The imitation of St. Paul's style would, I think, have been impossible; and we may assert with the strongest confidence that those who composed the spurious gospels could not have composed the canonical ones. Writers of distinctive individuality can hardly fail to impress that individuality on their pages; and it is hardly possible for a man of a different order of mind to imitate it. It seems to me unquestionable that such divergencies of style prove differences of authorship.

But large numbers of modern critics carry this principle beyond all legitimate bounds in inferring from minute differences of style differences of authorship. It is a certain fact that authors do not conceive at all times alike, and that within certain limits their mode of writing varies, not only in conformity with the subject-matter of their compositions, but with the different periods of their life. Criticism founded on minute points of style is of very little value except when supported by strong external evidence.

I have noticed this subject because it is one on which modern criticism exercises the most unlimited license with respect to the Sacred writings. Different portions of them are boldly pronounced spurious on account of minute differences of style. Of this the last edition of Dr. Davidson's *Introduction to the New Testament* forms the most striking illustration. Admitting, as he does, that the external testimony that the fourth Gospel and the first epistle by St. John were composed by the same author is exceedingly strong, he boldly denies that the epistle was composed by the author of the gospel, on the ground of certain minute differences of style which it requires critical eyes of a high magnifying power even to perceive. This species of criticism can, however, be brought to a test of direct verification, and when thus tested it utterly fails. Let books which have been indubitably written by the same author be subjected to the same process, and far greater divergencies will be found in them. No difference of style, therefore, will avail to prove difference of authorship which is not capable of undergoing this test. What is compatible with sameness in the one case cannot be incompatible with it in the other.

The length of this paper now requires me to bring it to a close. The whole subject consists of a number of very minute particulars, and extends over an extremely wide field. It is therefore impossible to treat it with strict scientific accuracy in a short paper. My object has been to bring before you a few important principles which are of the highest importance with respect to historic truth in general, and to revelation in particular. I have found it wholly impossible in the limits assigned to me to treat them in an exhaustive manner. Criticism will only rest on a solid foundation as long as it applies to history the same principles as those which we daily apply to common life. All historical evidence rests on the same foundation. A principle which I would refuse to act on as my guide in life I am fully entitled to reject as a guide in history. What in the one case conducts to practical truth will conduct to the same result in the other.

The CHAIRMAN.—I think it speaks well for the interest taken in this Institute, when, considering the state of the weather, we see so large an attendance; but I am sure we are amply repaid, and shall unanimously accord a vote of thanks to Mr. Row. It is now open for any one to offer remarks upon the paper.

Rev. G. CURREY, D.D.—The paper which has been read, embraces so large a number of topics, that it is not possible to attempt to discuss them all. I would, however, observe that there seem to be three subjects which are quite distinct,—so distinct, indeed, that one almost regrets their being treated together in the same paper. These three subjects are, first, the nature of the evidence required for common historical facts; secondly, of the acceptance of miracles on such evidence; and, thirdly, the detection of forged documents. I will make a few remarks upon these various points in the inverse order. First, referring to the method of detecting forged documents by an examination into their style. There can be but little doubt that differences of style form fair subjects for examination, and that we may properly draw conclusions from them with regard to authorship. On the other hand, this may also be said, that such work has sometimes been recklessly and carelessly done, and persons have arrived at hasty conclusions, which they have too readily assumed to be facts. One point may be specially noticed with regard to those documents with which we are most nearly concerned, namely, those which relate to the revelation of our religion,—and I think Mr. Row will agree with me here—that it is not safe to rely mainly upon the internal style, although it is often a valuable corroboration of external evidence. We base our acceptance of the documents upon external evidence, furnished by the careful consideration and adoption of documents by those early assemblies and councils which considered the subject at a time when they were able to collect together the traditions of past ages; and thus, in accepting such documents as the work

of the persons to whom they are ascribed, we are accepting the testimony which has been recorded in early ages, but which was only recorded then as being the result of still earlier information and tradition. In that way any one who examines the documents must approach that examination with regard to the corroboration of evidence, and not as seeking the evidence in the documents themselves. Indeed, it seems to me that the great cause why many critics have gone wrong is, their thinking that they had to consider whether a book was or was not the work of a particular author, from the examination of its internal evidence simply, without considering what has been declared by the voice of the Church through the aid of traditional history. They take up a document with what they profess to be pure indifference, although they often are, in fact, warped by a desire to find out that it is to be ascribed to some other than the reputed author. They rely entirely upon the small indications which they are able to glean from a writer's style ; and naturally, when people give their close attention to style, they are apt to exaggerate the importance of the arguments founded upon it, and so are led astray. The great point is, that these subjects have been carefully examined in times when there were many means of coming to a correct conclusion, and we are bound not to reject the information which then existed and which was thus made available. This is entirely in agreement with Mr. Row's view. With regard to the next point, the question of miracles, there is a great deal in this paper with which we must all agree. In the earlier part of Mr. Row's remarks on the subject of miracles, there was a parallelism drawn between extraordinary and miraculous events, and that parallelism was based on an incidental remark of Bishop Butler's, in his Analogy, in which he passingly compares miracles to such extraordinary occurrences as comets and the like, they not being so well understood then as they are now. I have always myself thought that this illustration of Bishop Butler's was not a happy one. It appears that anything like a comparison between an extraordinary and a miraculous occurrence fails altogether ; the two things are entirely different. If we proved that anything which we now call a miracle were capable of being reduced to some general law with which men were not acquainted at the time of its occurrence, directly it comes under that general law it ceases to be a miracle altogether. It is of the essence of a miracle that it should be the interruption of some general law. I think, therefore, that any comparison whatever on this point fails altogether, because, so far from making a miracle appear credible as a miracle, it rather detracts from the peculiar authority with which we wish to invest it. The consideration of a miracle seems to me to rest simply upon this ground : Is the order of nature due to the effective will of a personal God, who wonderfully upholds and superintends the same ? If a personal God superintends and upholds the law of nature, there can be no *à priori* difficulty in supposing that the same God who ordained the law should at certain times suspend it ; and if we once arrive at that, it follows that a belief in miracles is only a necessary, natural consequence of a belief in the existence of a personal God. When once we accept that, we not only have

no difficulty in believing in a miracle, but such a belief is most in accordance with our belief in a personal God. Hence we have only to consider what end miracles are intended to serve, and our moral nature and reason easily recognize the fact that there have been certain purposes for which it is in accordance with our belief in a personal God that He should have interrupted the order and course of nature. This seems to me to lay aside altogether the supposed resemblance between extraordinary occurrences and miracles. As to the other point on which the main purpose of the paper rests, namely, the consideration of the nature of historical evidence, and the province of the historian, I must fairly say that I differ from Mr. Row, if I rightly apprehend his arguments. In fact, I think that the views enunciated in this part of the paper leave us in a most hopeless condition; for if we lay aside altogether the use of conjecture and hypothesis, we lay aside the noblest province of the historian. It is true that history is not a mathematical science, and we have not the same means of verification that we have in such a science. But it seems to me to be the duty of the historian, as well as of the mathematician, to make use of hypothesis, in order to bring together isolated phenomena or isolated facts under one general theory. Work of that description, as illustrated in the department of history, is particularly exemplified in the case of the great historian whose labours have recently been undervalued by some authors, and, among others, by the author of this paper—I refer to Niebuhr. When Niebuhr first began to write his history, he was vehemently assailed for believing too little, but, of late years, the attack has been directed against him on the ground that he believed too much, and those things which he accepted as facts and truths, he has been assailed for accepting at all; and it has been said that many, if not most of the supposed facts which he has picked out from legendary history, are of no value at all. Some indeed go so far as to maintain that hypothesis itself is not within the province of the historian. But this would destroy one of the great charms of the study of history. It is true that a hypothesis may be wrong, and that Niebuhr may have made mistakes; but it does not follow that the method is wrong, and that his labours were in vain. Because he made some mistakes, it does not follow that he had not a great work to perform, and that he did not perform it. Let us consider what he did. In striking out that noble hypothesis with regard to the Roman Constitution, which runs through his whole work, he has thrown altogether a new light on the history of the Roman Commonwealth, though probably, in his ardour for that hypothesis, he may have laid stress on small matters, and unduly pressed them to support his theory and plan. Some of the details may be shown to be errors; but is his great hypothesis an error?—that hypothesis according to which he demonstrated the relations of the commonalty of Rome to the Patrician houses—a perfectly new idea, that still remains as a possession for future historians and students: Niebuhr's main points are, I think, established beyond doubt, but, of course, it is possible for a man to rise up and put forward another hypothesis; and when that is done we must examine it, and see which is most likely to be true. Even in science, and in the present

day, there are persons who have advanced a hypothesis, which they say is superior to the Newtonian theory. It does not follow, nowever, that the Newtonian theory is false. It is said that there are no verifications in the case of history, as there are in the case of science. It is true, as I remarked before, that there are not "the same exact means of verification," but still there are verifications of no inconsiderable weight with regard to history. Is not Niebuhr's system a system full of verifications? All through his works you find him labouring on the same plan, bringing this fact and that fact together, and showing how they bear upon his theory, and then he says: "This is my hypothesis. See how thoroughly the facts support it. It falls in with this fact, solves that difficulty, and so on." In much the same way Newton struck out the theory of gravitation. It flashed across him suddenly, as these things do, but before he propounded it to the world he tried it on this planet and on that planet, by this observation and that, and then he said: "See how all these observations concur and bear out the theory." The same thing, therefore, goes on in the same way in both cases, though there is this difference, that the province of history is less exact than that of science. Niebuhr followed this method with regard to the whole construction of the Roman Commonwealth and the growth of the Roman constitution, and then his learning enabled him to bring in a vast series of facts, observations, and events, all of which, by means of his hypothesis, he made to work harmoniously together. If we do not allow the historian the use of hypothesis in examining ancient history, or even in examining modern history,—because even that must be constructed upon some hypothesis or other—if we do not allow the use of hypothesis, I ask, what does history become?—a mere chronicle of bare facts, which is really useless until it is moulded into form and life by the historian, who makes it not a mere chronology, but a history. That is my view of history, and it seems to differ from that of Mr. Row. With regard to the consideration as to what period of time may be necessary for the details of a particular story to be lost or to become inexact, I do not think it is necessary to go into that question. We know that, in regard to most events, great differences and inaccuracies arise in a very short time, but does that really matter? History is concerned, not with small details, but with great facts. It does not signify what was the precise number of the army of Xerxes—that is a matter of the smallest moment, and so is the number of guns that were fired at the battle of Navarino; but there still remains the substratum of the great events, and of the causes which led to those events, and the examination of those causes, and their connection with future events, is perfectly within the province of the historian at a long distance of time afterwards, and he is enabled to carry on his investigation with as much accuracy, and sometimes with even more accuracy, than if he had lived at a time nearer to the occurrence of the events themselves. At a distance of time he has before him the actions of nations and peoples, and their laws and constitutions, and various other things which enable him to compare one thing with another in a better way, and to have a larger field of comparison; and in that way he is more capable of judging motives and actions than a man who lived

nearer, in point of time, to the events which have to be investigated. This, then, is the province of the historian, to trace causes and feelings and motives; and if he be man of genius, he may be able to do so correctly. It is not because it is difficult to do it correctly, that therefore he must abandon the attempt altogether. This question of the province of the historian seems to me to be very important with regard to our understanding the nature of past events. In the present day some people are too apt to reduce history to a mere string of dates, which would make it a very barren study of little importance. After all, the person who is able to form a great hypothesis, and to show a great principle running through the history which he presents to us, not only interests us much more than one who does not proceed in this way, but he probably does us much more good. There may be a good deal of error mixed up with his hypothesis, but at the same time he seizes great facts and principles, and feelings, and these principles and feelings recur over and over again. It has often been said that history repeats itself. No doubt it is difficult to compare the acts and laws of nations; but still they are capable of comparison, and when compared, there is to be found a certain amount of uniformity among them, which gives room for analogy. It is by the use of analogy that the great historian is enabled to seize, and, as Niebuhr has said, to divine and see through actions and details which, to the less endowed mind, might appear dry and barren. Let me now say a word with regard to a great work which has been treated somewhat summarily by Mr. Row—I mean Ewald's *History of Israel*. I allow that the term "audacity" is not by any means too strong to apply to Ewald, a man who is most reckless in his conjectures, and who is constantly setting aside the miraculous, and reducing everything to natural causes. All this is perfectly true; but when we look into that work, and pass over to other parts of it, where we have more in common with the author, we see how great a contribution it is, not only to the literary world, but also to the man who studies Scripture, and wishes to understand its meaning. Why is this? Because Ewald has seized upon certain events, and has connected them together by hypotheses. In some cases the hypothesis is rash and unsustained, but in many it appears to be true; and it is the existence of such hypotheses, where they are true, which gives interest to the work, and throws a new light on different facts which otherwise might appear to be unconnected. We know very well that Ewald dealt with the question of the authorship of Deuteronomy in a very reckless manner; but if we pass from that, and look at those portions of his book in which he comes to that period of history about which we really have a better understanding, and more to guide us,—I mean the latter part of the history of the Kings of Israel and Judah,—any one who reads this portion of Ewald's work will allow that he has thrown a marvellous light on the Scripture history, not only in reference to the political circumstances of the people, but also to the progress of religious feeling; especially has he shown the growth of the longing for the Messiah, which became stronger and stronger among the Jews at the time when they were about to be separated from their native land, and when, on a foreign soil, they looked back with

regret to what was past, and in that way had awakened in them the thought and hope of better and higher things. No doubt it is true that Ewald in a very large measure regards this feeling as of natural growth, but at the same time it is perfectly true that God works by natural feelings and causes ; and although I fully believe that in that growth of the desire and hope for the Messianic kingdom, there was the direct operation and guidance of the Spirit of God acting upon the people, especially through the prophets ; yet at the same time I believe that God was pleased to act upon His people not only by the prophetic voice, but also by the whole government and dispensation to which they were subjected. Not only did the voices of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel awake a sense of expectation of the coming Messiah in the people ; not only did those voices keep alive the hope in their breasts, but every circumstance in the natural life of the people was so ordered by God as to lead up to the same end, just in the same way that their marvellous dispersion throughout the whole world enabled them to be missionaries and messengers to spread a knowledge of the true God, and prepare the way for the advent of Christ. In that dispersion, which, as commonly viewed, seems to be simply a punishment for their sins, we see God's providence working for the diffusion of a particular knowledge throughout the world ; and so, in the other instance, we see how their circumstances and government, their intercourse with foreign nations, and so on, were all directing their hopes and thoughts towards a Messiah. Thus, a great historian like Ewald seizes upon the facts before him in a simple narrative form, and shows how he can connect them together by means of a hypothesis. We see how he works in the true province of the historian and throws light upon his subject we see how he shows that all those points, which we formerly regarded as a mere summary of facts, have, to a person who reads them aright, a bearing, a purpose, and a moral, which they do not possess for any one less informed. Such is the service which Ewald has rendered to the study of the history of Scripture, and for that I think every student should be deeply grateful. But I mention this merely as an illustration of what I wish specially to maintain, that so far from its being beyond the province of the historian to bridge over gaps, and bring together isolated facts, by means of hypothesis and conjecture, it is, in my opinion, essentially within his province so to do. He may do it ill or well—it is a difficult work, in which many a man will fail, but not on that account is it less the right method to pursue. It is the true way by which alone we can derive real benefit from the study of ancient records and legends. It is just as much the business of the historian thus to connect together isolated facts, as it is the business of the jeweller to take up pearls and string them together so as to produce a graceful ornament. (Cheers.)

Rev. J. H. TITCOMB.—I am sure we have all heard with very great pleasure what has fallen from Dr. Currey, and are glad to welcome him as a new member and speaker in this Institute, the meetings of which we trust he will often adorn. But I feel that, in a friendly way, I must defend this paper from some of the remarks which Dr. Currey has made. If he will allow me

to say so, it strikes me that Dr. Currey is far more in accord with Mr. Row than he himself imagines. Mr. Row, as I conceive, does not object *in toto* to a reasonable amount of conjecture.

Mr. Row.—I have expressly said so.

Mr. TITCOMB.—What Mr. Row objects to is that excessive amount of conjecture which hardly belongs to the regions of truth. Then, if I caught Dr. Currey's observations aright, it strikes me that he has to some extent substituted the genius of interpretation for the genius of conjecture—the defence he has taken up is rather the defence of the genius of interpretation than the defence of the genius of conjecture. For example, in reference to Ewald's celebrated book, the remarks which Dr. Currey made about the feelings which the author of that work gives expression to,—however brilliant, however truthful, however full of genius,—seem to belong not to the genius of conjecture, but to the genius of interpretation, and I take it that that is the function of the historian in the most prominent degree. But that, unfortunately, was not the function of Niebuhr; his was, first, the destructive principle, and then the constructive, based upon conjecture and not upon interpretation. Then I think Dr. Currey was scarcely fair to Mr. Row in reference to the comparison drawn between extraordinary facts and miracles. If Dr. Currey will look at the third division of the paper, he will see that no such comparison is really instituted; Mr. Row simply goes upon this basis, that Hume, having said that no amount of evidence would justify a belief in a miracle because it was too extraordinary, such a course would lead to the rejection of any extraordinary fact hitherto unknown, for it would be utterly incredible, simply because, not having been seen before, it could not be credited. Mr. Row then goes on to show, in answer to Hume, that extraordinary facts, such as the one mentioned in Mr. Warrington's book, with reference to the formation of ice near the most intense heat, upset Hume's reasoning, inasmuch as their truth can be clearly proved, notwithstanding that they are entirely outside all previous experience. That is not a comparison instituted between extraordinary facts and miracles, as if they were parallel, but the observations are introductory to a more general and philosophic consideration of the miraculous element in history. But though I have thus far defended Mr. Row, I must venture to qualify my remarks by differing strongly from what he says three pages further on :—

“Whenever, therefore, I read of a supernatural event which contradicts my conceptions of the Divine character, I at once reject it, and assume that it is either a misrepresented natural phenomenon or a fiction. According to my own conception of that character, I apprehend that all interferences with the existing order of nature must be of a very rare occurrence, as, if it were otherwise, it would nullify the purposes of the Divine government.

* * * * *

“We reject the great mass of supernatural occurrences with which certain portions of history are flooded, because, in the great majority of cases, they have no adequate attestation; but where the evidence for them is as strong

as that on which we would accept an ordinary event, we reject them from their repugnance to the Divine character, or because they were not performed for the purpose of attesting a Divine commission."

Now it seems to me much more wise, and much more rational, and much more safe ground, at all events, for the Christian to take up, to say, "I shall not believe in any event as of a miraculous nature, because it is not given to attest a Divine revelation," than it would be to say, "I will not believe it, because it does not square with my conceptions of the Divine character." In the latter case, you merely reduce the evidence of a miracle to your own subjective feelings, and your own self-consciousness, and one man may greatly differ from another in that respect. In reducing it in that way to natural subjective feelings and self-consciousness, you remove it in a great degree from that sacred ground of belief on which it is desirable that it should rest. The only safe ground to go upon is that all miracles are antecedently incredible, unless they are sent by a Divine Creator, to attest a Divine revelation. That takes from the region of history all absurd so-called miracles; and it is upon that ground that I should reject the miracle of Constantine and the Popish miracles, like those that are alleged to have occurred in France lately. All miracles that do not come as the attestation of a Divine revelation, I take to be without any *locus standi*. And now let me say one or two words on the last part of the paper, where we have a criticism upon the forgery of documents. Some remarks are there made by Mr. Row on the authorship of the Gospel of St. John as compared with St. John's first epistle, and the difference in the style of the two works. Let me add a remark in relation to St. John's Gospel as placed side by side with the Revelations of St. John. The divergences between those two works are much greater than the divergences between the Gospel and the Epistle; in fact, the Epistle stands as intermediate in style between the other two, the Book of Revelations being rugged and full of Hebraisms, and quite distinct from the more polished Greek of the Gospel. It is upon this that the modern school of critics say that internal evidence shows the two works could not have been written by the same author, and that the Revelations are St. John's genuine work, and the Gospel a forgery. How are we to answer that? The author of the paper and Dr. Currey very properly say that the mere question of internal evidence is not enough, and that we must look to external facts to throw light upon the style. Now there is one external fact which, I think, will clearly explain the whole thing. St. John, to whom Greek was not a native language, when living at Patmos, wrote in Greek; and naturally there were at first archaisms and Hebraisms in his style, when writing in a tongue not his own, just as the style in our writing would be very indifferent indeed if we wrote in French. But after a time—the Gospel being a very much later composition—St. John became more familiar with Greek, and obtained that knowledge of the language which any one will get by experience in a country; and thus he was enabled to write the Gospel in much purer Greek. This is an explanation of the variety in style which allows the two documents to proceed from the

same pen. I wish Mr. Row had had time enough to make a few remarks upon another branch of the subject,—I mean the question of the criticism of history, in relation to discrepancies, because that is a very important point. We know there are many apparent discrepancies in Scripture ; and how far any rational kind of criticism would make the book historical, although it seems to some to contain discrepancies, would form in itself very interesting matter for a paper. There always are discrepancies, more or less, in contemporary accounts. During the late war, for instance, the correspondents of the *Standard* and of the *Daily News* sent very different accounts of what took place, according to the side from which they wrote. Both accounts were, no doubt, in the main correct ; but there were discrepancies, although those discrepancies did not make the accounts unhistorical. In conclusion, I may, perhaps, be allowed to express my strong conviction that Mr. Row's paper is a very valuable contribution to our proceedings. (Cheers.)

Mr. I. T. PRITCHARD.—I must say that I agree with what Mr. Titcomb has said with reference to Dr. Currey's remarks on the province of the historian. If I understand Mr. Row rightly, he intends to find fault with, or to throw doubt upon, statements which historians have recorded, and to show us how careful we ought to be in accepting them as facts ; and that we ought not to receive them unless they are supported by good authority and by collateral testimony. Now, I will mention two illustrations of this view. Take, for instance, the question of biographical as distinguished from political history—I mean that portion of history which deals with the lives of great men. A discussion took place only a year or two ago, upon certain incidents connected with Lord Byron's life, and it was very instructive from one point of view. Here was a case in which a man had moved in society, and was very well known, and certain facts had taken place within the cognizance of a number of people living at the time of the discussion ; and yet, as that discussion went on, no single fact was brought forward which was not contradicted by some person who had very good grounds upon which to form an opinion. This was a case in which a prominent man had passed from society, almost within our own recollection, and yet it was impossible to get at the truth relating to his life. With such a case before us, how can we trust to any historian for obtaining a correct view of such a man as Henry VIII. or any one of earlier date ? As to the statements of historians with reference to such events as the number of men slain in a particular battle, and matters of that kind, I should like to offer another illustration within my own experience, which brought to my mind the same idea which Mr. Row has expressed. It was an incident that happened to me in one of our great Indian battles during the recent wars. We all know how apt reports are to magnify the numbers of those who are killed in battle, and on one occasion—at the battle of Goojerat, which broke down the military power of the Sikh nation, and laid the Punjaub at our feet,—it was my fortune to be present. The battle went on from early morning to midday, and it was magnificently conducted. Towards the afternoon we got into the enemy's camp, which was then deserted, and in the evening we

pitched our own camp on that ground. It was commonly said amongst us that thousands of the enemy had been killed ; and in discussing the matter with my brother-officers I mentioned my disbelief in such an enormous slaughter ; for I had passed over the field, and was altogether incredulous. I agreed to go out next morning with a brother-officer, to count the bodies of the killed, in order to ascertain the strict truth. Accordingly, we set out, and rode over the whole field, as far as we could tell ; over all those places where the hardest fighting had taken place and the greatest slaughter. We carefully counted every dead body belonging to the enemy, and there were not more than 250 of them. After that I was much impressed with the necessity of receiving with the utmost caution the statements of history as to the number of men killed in battle. I have only one other remark to make, and that is with reference to historical criticism as applied to the Holy Scriptures. I may not, perhaps, echo the views of any of those here present, but I will state my own belief. With regard to miracles and the question of extraordinary phenomena, I adopt most heartily the remarks of Mr. Titcomb, which appear to me to bear out the line of argument contained in that excellent book of Mr. Warrington's. But I do not believe that any historical criticism whatever will convince a human being of the truth of the Scriptures. I believe that spiritual things are only to be spiritually discerned, and that they are not to be discerned by means of historical criticism. You may bring all your knowledge of science, and of language, to illustrate the meaning of Scripture, but it will not convince a man of the truth of Scripture if he be not otherwise convinced. The only thing that will convince a man of that truth is the operation of the Spirit of God, which is only to be gained by prayer. (Cheers.)

Mr. J. ALLEN.—I should like to ask this question : If the Scriptures reveal to us an evil spirit, who has wrought miracles, and shown signs and wonders, to deceive if possible even the elect, and if the Scriptures also show us cases of witchcraft, should we reject as miraculous all seemingly miraculous events which we know cannot proceed from God ?

Mr. H. CADMAN JONES.—To my mind it is hardly putting the matter on a perfectly satisfactory ground, to say that a miracle is to be believed in only when it is worked to attest a Divine commission. The question is purely a question of evidence—is there evidence enough on which to believe it ? No doubt a person who believes in a God, and who believes that it is consistent with His character that He should send a revelation, will have little difficulty in believing that He should send a miracle in order to authenticate His message to man, that being the only conceivable means by which the Divine message can be authenticated ; for although the internal evidence of a divine mission is the strongest of all, to those who feel it, and those who have once received revelation, and who have seen how worthy it is of God, have but little need of external evidence ; still you can give no answer to those who ask for a reason for their belief, unless you can appeal to some external evidence. Less evidence, therefore, would be required in such a case, as to an alleged miracle of such a nature that it could not be regarded

as the work of a Divine power to attest a divine mission, I should say, that it would be no conclusive reason for disbelieving it, that we could not say it was wrought by some beneficent power. It is clear that there have been miracles wrought by Satanic agency; and if there is sufficient evidence to authenticate a miracle, we must believe it in the same way that we believe anything else which is attested by sufficient evidence, however improbable *à priori* it may be. Improbability is no sufficient ground for disbelieving a thing. If we say it is, we must hold that the man who had lived all his life in the East was right when he regarded the European as an impostor because he declared that he had walked across a lake which had become solid. We can easily conceive that no miracle would be more difficult of reception than that, to a man living in the tropics, who had never before heard of ice. Yet in that case we know that the man who disbelieved was wrong. It is a familiar fact to us that water does freeze; and therefore, however improbable the thing might appear to him, we know the Oriental was quite wrong in refusing belief on account of its antecedent improbability. As, however extraordinary a thing may be, we must believe it if attested by sufficient evidence; therefore, the most malevolent miracle, which could not possibly have been worked by divine power, is to be credited if it be supported by sufficient evidence. The question is one of evidence, and nothing else; but before we can say that religion is to be believed if it is attested by miracles, there comes in the question, "What is the nature of the message which the person who worked the miracle brings?" I should by no means say that a religion attested by the most numerous and remarkable miracles was to be accepted as from above, if it were one which was totally unworthy of the character of the Supreme Creator. We cannot pronounce it impossible that the devil might work miracles to attest a revelation, to lead man to misery and destruction. Whether miracles come from above or below, they must be judged by the character of the message which they are given to authenticate; and whether they have come from below or above, the fact as to whether they have taken place or not must be judged by the ordinary rules of evidence which we apply to anything else. Their miraculous nature shows, not that they were worked by a divine power, but only that they were worked by a supernatural power, and what that power is must be judged of from the nature of the message which the worker brings.

Rev. J. W. BUCKLEY.—I quite agree with the last speaker, that we must judge these matters by the ordinary rules of evidence; but would he be kind enough to point out where Satanic agency has ever wrought a miracle? Our Saviour speaks of "false Christs," who "shall show great signs and wonders; inasmuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect;" and St. Paul writes of one "whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders." But these texts seem actually to go to this very fact, that such things as Mr. Row refers to are not true miracles.

Mr. JONES.—The magicians of Pharaoh's time did the same things as Moses.

Mr. BUCKLEY.—There is no clear proof that that was a miracle at all on their part.

Mr. R. W. DIBDEN.—There is the witch of Endor.

Mr. BUCKLEY.—I cannot see—and I speak with great reverence—that God did not Himself permit that. There are a great many difficulties connected with the question; but I cannot find any distinct and clear evidence of the devil having wrought an undoubted miracle, such as, in our idea, would be an interference with the ordinary laws of nature. I cannot find anything that the devil has ever done which comes up to my conception of a distinct miracle.*

Rev. T. M. GORMAN.—I am much surprised at the criticism which Mr. Buckley has uttered with regard to the witch of Endor. Let us consider what were the chief points in relation to that event. Saul was commanded under pain of death not to consult the witch; but when the Lord did not answer him, he did so. Is it possible for any one to believe that God would cause Samuel, His prophet, to present a being from the other world to break the Lord's own command? That would be aiding in the breaking of His own command. The witch, by enchantments well known and constantly exercised in those days, did cause a spirit to rise, and that touches the whole question with regard to the working of miracles.

Mr. Row.—I have not very much to say in reply to the discussion which has taken place to-night. My object in writing this paper was to carry out a suggestion made by Dr. Thornton, that there was one subject upon which we had never touched, but which seriously affected the interests of Christianity; I mean the question of historical criticism: consequently I wrote this paper, which goes over a wide space, but which of course cannot be supposed to treat the subject completely or exhaustively. The whole of the paper has been written in view of many of the attacks made upon Christianity. I have not mentioned them, because I wanted to produce a philosophical paper; but any person who is well acquainted with modern controversies, will see that there is hardly any portion of the paper which has not a distinct bearing upon them. As to what has fallen from Dr. Currey, I think he supposes that we are more at issue than is really the case. In fact, he has mistaken the passage in Butler to which I alluded. I do not deny that I had the passage he refers to, in my mind; but the one to which I specially referred was that in which he expresses his opinion, that to a higher order of intelligence than man, miracles may seem to be brought about by God in a natural order; in one word, that which appears to be the distinction between the natural and the miraculous, may, in the eyes of a higher order of intelligence, form one great comprehensive whole. I alluded also to similar views to those maintained in the Duke of Argyll's *Reign of Law*, and in Mr. Warington's book, which latter work I have heard

* Most commentators consider the events detailed in St. Matthew, xii. 24 *et seq.*, to support a view similar to that enunciated by Mr. Buckley. [ED.]

stigmatized by some unwise defenders of revelation, as destroying the essence of a miracle. It is against the hasty adoption of such theories that I was desirous of uttering a caution. All that I intended to assert is, not that I adopt these positions as indubitably established truths, but that I am unable to dispute the general position, that to a higher order of intelligence all supernatural occurrences may seem natural. Any one may see from the context that by the word "supernatural" I mean miraculous. When I speak of the difficulty of discriminating between certain supernatural events and some events deemed miraculous, I mean that there are certain events where it is very difficult, if not impossible, to draw a line accurately discriminating to which order they belong. We all know that wonderful cures have been effected in certain classes of nervous complaints. Many of these have been pronounced miraculous. But in many cases they are now known to have resulted from purely natural causes. We are as yet profoundly ignorant of the power and action of the mind on the nervous system, and its influence on the body. But while there is a numerous class of events of this description, which it is impossible, with only our present knowledge, to say whether they belong to the miraculous or the natural, there is another class of events, such as the resurrection of a body unquestionably dead, the restoring of a man born blind by a word, or of an amputated limb, &c., which can only belong to an order which is unquestionably miraculous. These latter are the only ones which I conceive capable of affording an adequate attestation to a revelation. The others may be miraculous, but from the deficiency of our knowledge as to whether they are so or not, they are inadequate to furnish us with a sufficient attestation; I think it most important that we should keep this distinction steadily in view. Dr. Currey's remarks relate to a question quite different from the one I was considering. With respect to those points in the first portion of the paper, on which I am at issue with Dr. Currey, the only question is,—what is the degree of evidence which entitles a fact to be esteemed as resting on a secure historical foundation? What I contend for is, that "the philosophic imagination" cannot convert events, whose attestation is imperfect, into historical facts; or, where a large number of facts have perished, that it is unable to erect a substantial bridge over the empty space. If any large number of the received facts of history are of this description, I am very sorry for it; but all I can say is, "so much the worse for them." I by no means intended to assert that the principle of historical conjecture has no place in history or criticism. All that I am desirous of doing is to reduce it to its proper level. But at present, to borrow language from a celebrated resolution of the House of Commons, "Its influence is too great, is increasing, and ought to be diminished." I am far from wishing to undervalue the labours of Niebuhr, whose writings I have read with the profoundest interest. I once as firmly believed in them as Dr. Currey. But I have renounced a belief in a large portion of his reconstructive conjectures, for the simple and obvious reason that they lack evidence, and the vacant spaces of history may be bridged over by other conjectures equally plausible. When two, three, or four theories will equally account for the same fact, we cannot

assume that any one of them is the true account of it. I cannot relate a more striking illustration of this than Niebuhr's theories on the Decemviral legislation. What the real facts were we have no real historical evidence, all knowledge of them has perished ; and I contend that it is impossible by mere analogical conjectures to recreate the facts which have perished. These principles are abundantly applicable to many attempts of sceptics to set forth new lives of Jesus Christ. I am quite sure that if our Gospels are not trustworthy, their conjecturers are much less so. If the real facts have perished, as they say they have, I defy them to reconstruct a true history out of a few detached hints, by the power of philosophical conjecture. I am far from wishing to apply the principles of abstract or mathematical science, to history, or its evidence ; what I wish to apply to them is the common sense by which we conduct our daily lives. If the processes which I would apply to history destroy any of the *charms* of the study, I am very sorry for it, for I am intensely fond of it. But my love of history prompts me to utter a warm protest against any theory which tends to convert it into a novel or a fiction. I am far from wishing to reduce history to a mere string of dates or events. Let the philosophic mind exert its utmost powers in rearranging, and if you like, reconstructing, the past from any adequate data ; but let the distinction be kept clear as to what are facts and what are conjectures. I do not think that there is any real disagreement between Dr. Currey and myself respecting Ewald's history. We are indebted to Ewald for showing that the Old Testament contains a mass of substantial history, and that vulgar assertions that its narratives are fictions, are absurd. In dealing with the principle of conjecture, I could not help expressing my admiration that this great writer could have brought himself into the belief, that, if the Pentateuch is a mass of fragments, it is possible now, in this nineteenth century of the Christian era, and after the complete destruction of the whole mass of Jewish literature so frequently alluded to in the Old Testament, to pick out each separate fragment, and confidently to assign it to its respective author. This is philosophic conjecture gone mad : and it is deeply to be lamented that the presence of things of this description in this great writer's works has a tendency to persuade his readers that many of his most unquestionable facts rest on an equally sandy foundation. I am aware that the subject is not without its difficulties, when we adduce the character of the agent as a portion of the test of the truth of a fact. Still, when I survey the range of history, and the multitudes of lying miracles which have been invented, I cannot avoid taking refuge in the great principle, that whatever contradicts all our great conceptions of the character of God must be regarded as incredible. My moral convictions are the firmest portions of my beliefs ; and I am sure that "the same fountain cannot send forth fresh water and salt." To revert to the example which I have taken. It is, in my view, inconsistent with the moral character of the Creator to believe that He caused a cow to bring forth a lamb under the circumstances mentioned by Livy. This would cause me to reject it, despite of fifty decrees of the Roman Senate, while I could trust one of them for the truth of an ordinary

fact. The whole question of demoniacal agency is one so large as to require a separate paper entirely devoted to it. I shall only say with respect to the narrative of the witch of Endor, that there is nothing in the narrative which affirms that Saul saw Samuel, but much which implies the contrary. In one passage the magicians of Egypt are expressly stated to have done so by their enchantments and failed. I see nothing in these events which is not fully paralleled by many well-authenticated acts performed by the conjurors of modern Egypt and India. In fact, I have read of accounts much more wonderful. I think that no one believes that these latter are Satanic. The language of the sacred historian describes them as they appeared to the popular eye. I see no intimation on the face of the history that these acts were performed by the power of the devil. The admission that the devil has wrought real miracles is a very serious one, but it is impossible to discuss it at this time of the evening. I have only to thank you for your attention to the paper and the discussion.

The Meeting was then adjourned.
