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JOURNAL OF  
THE TRANSACTIONS  
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The Victoria Institute,  
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EDITED BY THE HONORARY SECRETARY.

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VOL. IX.



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done in any society of this kind than it has been done in the Victoria Institute. (Cheers.)

The CHAIRMAN.—Before the Address is read, it is customary to ask if any member has anything to urge, or any remarks to make, in regard to the general management of the Institute ?

Dr. E. HAUGHTON rose and proposed a resolution, which not being seconded, fell to the ground.

The original motion was then put to the meeting, and unanimously agreed to.

The HONORARY SECRETARY.—I have to move the following resolution :—  
“That all moneys received on account of the Institute be paid in the ordinary manner into the bankers’, and that all cheques shall be drawn under the authority of the Council.” This is the custom in the Institute, but there is no bye-law to that effect. I also propose, in regard to the Auditors, “that one Auditor be on the Council, and that the other may be elected from among the Members and Associates who are not on the Council.”

Mr. A. V. NEWTON.—I second the motion. It merely makes two formal alterations in our laws which require no argument.

The resolution was then agreed to.

The Rev. ROBINSON THORNTON, D.D., Vice-President, then delivered the following Address :—

## ANNUAL ADDRESS.

I. **A** STRANGE kind of wonder seems to pervade us as we pass through some complete and well-arranged collection of arms, and note the various instruments of offence and defence which it exhibits to our view. Brought face to face with a series, historically arranged, of practical developments of the least amiable portion of human nature, we are amazed at the great variety of the means employed in each age to work out, or to impede, the same unhappy end. We begin with clumsy and ponderous maces, spears, and axes, whose uncouth forms tell of violence more than skill, and the equally ponderous helm and hauberk, forged with equal labour, and equal lack of artistic refinement, to encounter them. Then come the weapons borne by warriors of a more advanced and artistic age ; lighter, yet from their very lightness more difficult to ward off, and so calling forth from the artisan of defence an exertion of skill and judgment more than equal to that of him who constructed them, and far above that of the armourer of earlier and ruder times. And so we are led on, step by step, to our own days, when the science of destruction and preservation seems almost to be surpassing

itself, and giving us a hope of certain peace from the utter hopelessness of war.

The interest with which we view all that is thus presented to our sight becomes a melancholy one, when we reflect that one half of the skill and labour whose results we behold was expended for the single purpose of destroying human life, and the other half for the purpose of shielding the destroyer. The pictures of battle-fields, which, at once as embellishments and illustrations, make the armoury complete, only intensify the feeling by showing how, with varying appliances, men from age to age tried to solve the one terrible problem—how to kill and yet to live.

Some such a feeling comes over us as we examine the sceptics' armoury, the varied forms of the weapons from time to time brought into play by Unbelief against the Christian faith, and the varied methods of attack; as we review, at the same time, the varied modes and means of defence resorted to by the champions and upholders of Christianity when assailed. We seem, I think, to wonder and to grieve that so much thought, so much ingenuity, so much labour, so much power, so much earnestness, should have been spent in the endeavour to take away man's moral and spiritual life by leaving him nothing to live for; to ruin his peace by wresting from him that most peaceful of all privileges, the privilege of saying, "I believe."

There is this comfort, however, that whereas in military warfare the arms of defence and offence usually belonged to each party alike, and both equally sought to preserve themselves and destroy the others, in our warfare the two are quite distinct. We may be pained at the sight of arms, but we exult in reviewing the armour. The assailants seek only to destroy, while we and ours are standing on the defensive only, and are endeavouring not to slay, but, while preserved ourselves, to give to our opponents that life and peace which their aim is to annihilate.

#### PERIOD OF UNSCIENTIFIC DENIAL.

II. The scepticism of a century and a half ago took in most instances the form of a vulgar Deism. Paltry cavils were raised against the details of the Old and New Testament, such cavils as had been long ago suggested by Tryphon, Porphyry, and Celsus, and answered by Justin and Origen. Interpolations in the original text of the Scriptures were suggested, wherever anything like definite teaching was found, or where

arguments could be drawn from the marvellous agreement of one part of Scripture with another. In short, the sceptical mind seems to have been possessed with the extraordinary fancy,—a fancy which has not altogether disappeared even at the present time,—that from the year 100 downwards, Christians habitually devoted their time to interpolation and forgery, and evinced an astonishing amount of cleverness in their performances; that no sooner was any important work produced and brought to the knowledge of the Church, than Christian intellect was brought at once to bear on it, and all flew to insert in it passages which might tell in favour of their peculiar doctrines and practices: so that, instead of those virtues which we are, groundlessly, in the habit of attributing to our predecessors in the faith, their excellence consisted in an extraordinary power of successful forgery, and the monastic *scriptorium* and the student's cell were both alike devoted to the corruption of the text of the Scriptures, and the dissemination of interpolated manuscripts. The science of textual criticism was in its infancy, and could scarcely then be used on the side either of sceptics or believers. Sometimes the charge of interpolation was dispensed with, and a sweeping accusation of utter falsehood was brought, with a rude refusal to listen to argument or evidence. The scientific unbeliever did not and could not exist; he was to be the production of a later age, the positivist and secularist man of the nineteenth century, developed by a process of unnatural selection out of the gorilla sceptic of the seventeenth. There was no geology in those days, and no chemistry. Philology was not, when Sanskrit was unknown, and Arabic looked upon as a strange, barbarous dialect; when people commonly believed that English was derived from Latin, Latin from Greek, and Greek from Hebrew, the primeval and original tongue. Nor could there be any scientific history, when Livy was credited and Herodotus disbelieved. Towards the close of the period, perhaps, some intimations of a coming alteration in the character of the warfare were given in a bombastic imitation of Lucretius, containing his Atheism without his philosophy, and in kindred works, now quietly mouldering in that limbo of decay which is reserved for useless and unfounded negations. Here and there appeared, no doubt, some works—few and far between, though not at all angelic—of a more dangerous because more enlightened character; more subtle, and more thorough-going. But as a whole the scepticism of the eighteenth century did not require, and indeed did not afford a place for, such an Institute as ours: it was met and combated by treatises on the Christian evidences, which we still value, though their imme-

diate work is over, and above all by the immortal "Analogy of Religion."

### PERIOD OF SCIENTIFIC DOUBT.

III. The end of the last and commencement of the present century witnessed the rise of a new school of opponents of Revealed religion: a new workshop for offensive weapons was opened, and a new style of weapon fabricated. The clumsy Deism of a past age was succeeded by a far more elegant and refined Theism, and the rude arguments or ruder denials of the previous generation were exchanged for something very different. Men began to patronize rather than to repel. "How beautiful the poetry of Scripture, how wise many of its precepts, how lovely the character assigned to the alleged Founder of Christianity! what a pity we cannot accept the Bible! what a real pain we feel at being precluded from believing in the Christ!" The period which now commenced, contemporaneously with and because of the rise and increasing study of inductive and experimental science, may well be termed that of Scientific Doubt; as the one which preceded it may be called that of Unscientific Denial.

The method of historical criticism which is connected with the name of Niebuhr was probably the first, certainly the earliest which became conspicuous, among the weapons of the sceptical armoury. Niebuhr had shown that many obviously legendary tales which are mingled with early history (particularly early Roman history) are not absolutely to be rejected as pure figments of a poet's or a rhapsodist's brain: they contain the truth, though in the letter they do not express it; they can all be interpreted by means of the higher criticism, and hermeneutic intuition of the historian, and yield to us valuable information as to the thoughts and modes of feeling, the political sentiments and revolutions of opinion, of ages long gone by. It was natural enough to suggest that this higher criticism should be applied to the sacred writings. The Greek term *myth*, lately introduced into the language to express the significant legend handed down from unhistoric or prehistoric times, was seized upon with avidity, and applied to the histories in the Old and New Testament. Abraham and Moses, Elijah and Daniel, became mere personified conditions of national excitement; the story of Joseph and his brethren, which seems to us to carry the impress of truth in its touching simplicity and artless pathos, is a mythical representation of an early trade between Egypt and Syria, and of some myste-

rious ethnological connection between the Hyksos usurpers of Noph, and the Bedawin sheikhs of Canaan.

But the most remarkable offspring of this scientific mode of misinterpreting the Scriptures appears in two works, one many years subsequent to the other, both differing considerably in method and in detail, but both exhibiting the same animus and the same principle;

“Facies non omnibus una,  
Nec diversa tamen, qualem decet esse sororum.”

I mean, of course, those two fancy “Lives of Christ” which we know by the names of their authors, Strauss and Rénan.

The former handles his subject as we might expect a German philosopher to do. Christ (I cannot bring myself to employ our Saviour’s Holy Name in discussing sceptical writings, and I therefore use His title) is with Strauss a mere idea personified. Whether this personified idea was attached to the name of a real person or not, is of little consequence. The preaching, the miracles, the suffering, the resurrection, are merely modes of telling us that the yearning after a national life, and perhaps a Theocracy, continued to agitate the minds of Israelites long after the Roman Empire had suppressed their separate nationality; and that their hopes, though rudely dashed to the ground, were nevertheless indestructible. The self-consciousness of the nation was as lasting as that of the individual, and survived everything but annihilation. In process of time men began to see that this personification of the national spirit might be made to include the yearnings of humanity itself after something higher and purer; hence the tale of the admission of the Gentiles to the Christian covenant. And finally, the personification itself was adored: martyrs bled, and confessors suffered for a deified figment of Oriental imagination.

Rénan, on the other hand, gives us a romance. He leads us among cool groves, and fields of fragrant lilies, over bold hill-tops, and through shady valleys. He takes us to the fountain-side; he bids us, like the Reubenites in the Song of Deborah, to tarry among the sheep-folds and listen to the piping of the shepherds. Christ with him is a real person, a fascinating enthusiast, half believing in himself, and making others wholly to do so. Without being deliberately untruthful, he lends himself to occasional deceit—for what Oriental would do otherwise? And so, when his enthusiasm, or that of his disciples, has gone so far as to become obnoxious to the stern reality of Roman rule, he suffers as Romans always made such dangerous

characters suffer, especially after being tolerated as Romans always did tolerate. But so firmly were his words imprinted on the minds of his enamoured followers, such literal credit did they give to all the dark, mysterious sayings he let drop about himself and his future, that they pictured them to themselves as absolutely true and as actually fulfilled; he was present to their "mind's eye" as clearly as if he had risen from the dead; and when the mental picture vanished from a spiritual retina which was too feeble to maintain it, Christ its subject was affirmed to have returned to the heaven from whence he came.

I am not here pretending to give a résumé or analysis of the two works, but rather attempting to sketch in outline the impression left by them on the mind as to the general drift of their argument. Both are marvellously ingenious, and have a certain, or rather an uncertain, kind of beauty about them: a beauty like that attributed by Bentley to Pope's *Iliad*; "a very pretty poem, Mr. Pope, but you must not call it Homer;" or, to speak more seriously, like St. Augustine's "quædam defectiva species et umbratica vitiis fallentibus." But the grand fallacy, the *πρῶτον ψῆδος*, in them, and in the whole Historico-critical argument against Scripture, is that the Scriptures do not come to us as legends, but as real history: it is assuming the whole question to attribute to them a legendary character. The criticism fails utterly when applied to matter for which it was never intended; and by so employing it we may arrive at the most absurd results, and explain away the most undoubted facts. Archbishop Whately, in his "Historic Doubts of Napoleon Buonaparte," showed the ridiculous conclusions to which we may be brought by the misapplication of the Niebuhrian criticism. We will try another instance, in a somewhat different style. Let us take the Wars of the Roses; we shall be able to find in the history of this period not a disputed succession, but a conflict between the landed proprietors and the artisans.

"In this political myth or saga" (we may conceive our critic to say) "we meet with two distinct sets of names of alleged monarchs, which undoubtedly represent events and interests personified. The kings on one side are all named Henry, those of the other are either Richard or Edward. In the name Henry, properly *Hain-ric*, rich in groves or forests, we see personified the class of land-owners; a view which is confirmed by the correct interpretation of the name by which they called themselves, Lancaster. This curious but significant word, compounded of the British *lan* (our *lawn*), a field, and the Latin *castrum*, a castle, shows that these forest-proprietors,

occupiers of land and castles, arrogated to themselves a nobility derived at once from the old British autochthonous inhabitants of the land, and from the Roman colonists. The wife of the last Hain-ric is with equal significance called Marguerite, *daisy*, the produce and ornament of the field.

“The names on the other side are also significant, and equally conclusive. Richard is *Ric-art*, riches or power of the artisan; Edward is *Eadu-art*, happiness or prosperity of the artisan; the two are respectively personifications of the power and of the prosperity of the working classes; and are spoken of together as belonging to the house of York, or Yorick, a name evidently derived from *gear-ric*, rich in *gear*, or machinery. We have a hint of the pauperized and oppressed condition of this class in the neighbouring Scandinavian kingdom given us in the compassionate exclamation put by Shakespeare into the mouth of the Danish prince, Hamlet: ‘Alas, poor Yorick!’

“We are now in a position to interpret the whole legend. The reign of the so-called Eadu-art, the Third of the name, points to a long-continued period of freedom and prosperity of the working class. At his death the crown devolves, not upon his son, Eadu-art (whose common title of Black Prince seems to indicate some supremacy belonging to the workers in metal), but on a grandson, Ric-art; in other words, the artisan class obtain supreme power. This power does not bring them *eadu*, prosperity, but, on the contrary, leads to a revolution, which places Hain-ric on the throne; that is to say, transfers the supreme power to the land-owners. This supremacy of the landed aristocracy lasts through three periods, of rise, brilliancy, and fall, symbolized by the three successive kings bearing the name of Henry. The last of the three becomes feeble; the land-owners’ power diminishes, and they endeavour, but too late, to conciliate, and to ally themselves with, the artisans; at least, so much we gather from the statement that Hain-ric named his son Eadu-art, and that that son was slain by his rival and namesake of the party of York. The adhesion of a Ric-art, surnamed *War-ric* (powerful in war) to the Lancaster party would seem to indicate that those of the artisan class who were enrolled in a regular army showed the usual tendency of the military, from whatever rank they are drawn, to incline to the aristocratic or monarchical side.

“Hain-ric falls before Eadu-art, and once again the old drama is enacted. Eadu-art, son of Eadu-art the victorious, succeeds for a short time, but prosperity is soon destroyed by overweening power being lodged in the hands of the artisan: Ric-art assassinates the youthful monarch, and is in his turn,

after a few unquiet years, himself overpowered by another Hain-ric, whose marriage with a princess of the Gear-ric or artisan party bearing a Hebrew, that is, a religious, name, appears to hint somewhat obscurely at a reconciliation effected between the two parties by the mediation of the ministers of religion. It is not improbable that the name of Tudor, given in the legend to him and his family, may be derived from *twa* and *duru* (two doors), and so may signify the access opened for both parties alike to the honours and emoluments of State offices."

This is all very ridiculous ; but I do not think it is a very gross caricature of the higher criticism, as it is proposed to apply it to the sacred records. Surely it is clear that to treat as legend what comes to us as history, and then call it un-historical because it has been so treated, is as great an error as to argue that  $2=3$ , because  $d \cdot (x + 2) = d \cdot (x + 3)$ .

But the sceptic will not confess himself beaten. He possesses that *μῦθς θάρσος*, or bluebottle courage, which Homer so amusingly describes as inspired into one of his heroes ; he buzzes still about the point from which he has been repelled : just as though the base metal of confuted-error, if only it be pertinaciously maintained, were, by some mystic process of sceptical alchemy, converted into the solid gold of undoubted truth.

The historical discoveries of the earlier Egyptologers were for a time alleged against Revelation. But the force of the Egyptian arguments was not great. The most prejudiced sceptic could not refrain from seeing that the authority of the books of Scripture, even if they were looked upon as in a great part legendary, was quite as good as that of a half-understood, half-misunderstood inscription placed by a superstitious king or priest in a heathen temple ; a discrepancy between the two did not necessarily prove the Bible to be in the wrong. The worshippers of Isis and Osiris, of Pasht and Anoub, were quite as likely to exhibit prejudice, and indulge in a little quiet manipulation of facts, as the votaries of the God of the Hebrews. Besides, it was soon found that the artillery brought from Egypt partook a little of the dangerous nature of rockets in warfare—it was apt to go off on the wrong side.

As to the Assyrian and Babylonian discoveries, I am not aware that any one has had the hardihood seriously to allege them against the biblical records. On the contrary, they have put a new weapon of defence into our hands ; and, while confirming the truth of Scripture history, have poured a flood of light upon its interpretation.

The giant strides made by the positive experimental sciences,

and the wonderful discoveries arrived at by those who prosecuted researches in the various branches of physics, produced another set of weapons to use against those writings on which the Christian faith is based. So numerous were these discoveries, and so rapidly did they succeed one another, that the whole of Nature seemed to have been ransacked, when but a beginning had been made; and consequently men began to draw conclusions, as if the period of search and investigation were ended, when in truth it had scarcely commenced. Thus a hasty and imperfect generalization from inadequate facts produced conclusions which seemed to be, and indeed to a great extent were, inconsistent with certain statements of Scripture, as popularly understood. Geology especially was held to reveal a state of things absolutely incompatible with the Mosaic account of the Creation and maintenance of the universe. In short, there appeared upon the stage a new type of sceptic, the scientific unbeliever. "I must believe my eyes," was his argument; "I cannot deny the truth of what I hear and see and feel: and induction is infallible; law rules all phenomena, and the human mind is free from the possibility of error, when it elicits, by a rigorous logic, the eternal truth which underlies each group of varied facts presented to the senses. You, on the other hand, offer for my acceptance certain books, whose authority rests on testimony alone; and these books I find to contain propositions irreconcilable with those conclusions to which I have been led. I am bound, by the necessity of human intellect, to reject your books, and to adhere to my own opinions."

Such I take to be a general statement of the arguments of the scientific unbelievers. And, indeed, there was every reason why they should be induced to employ them; the wider opening of the field of science seemed in the first instance naturally to lead to a review, if not a curtailment, of the domain of faith. Nor must it be forgotten that,—just as the study of mathematics disposes the mind of the student to be dissatisfied with anything like mere probability, anything, in fact, short of actual demonstration, and the intellectual digestion which is habituated to the syllogism nauseates and rejects the enthymeme,—so the mind which is accustomed to the inductive process, to experiment and interrogation of Nature, becomes singularly averse to the reception of testimony, and the discussion of that which is unseen and invisible. Scripture, a testimony received on testimony, Scripture, which deals with the visible and sensible only in reference to the Eternal, Immeasurable, and Invisible, was not likely to approve itself, *à priori*, to the purely positive understanding.

It is curious to see how this intellectual temper shows itself in dealing, not with religion, but with a kindred subject,—that of Moral Philosophy. The habit of dwelling on the laws of physical phenomena, to the exclusion of all others, has, not unnaturally, but most unhappily, led to the denial of all responsibility, and of the difference between right and wrong, save only as regards the effects of each action on the general utility, not as regards the character of the agent, and the essential nature of the action. In short, the mere men of science ultimately become thorough-going Fatalists. “Place a man under certain circumstances,” they say, “and he must inevitably act in a certain way. There is no such a thing as absolute morality; men are under a natural necessity of obeying the conditions under which they find themselves; actions differ only *à posteriori*, according to their results after performance: they cannot be said to have any character *à priori*. Integrate a moral phenomenon between limits *a* and *b*, your result is a good action; integrate the same between *p* and *q*, and your result is a bad one; humanity is but the *x* and *y*, the variable substratum, so to speak, in the grand equation of phenomenal being.” And thus we find Mr. Buckle, alleging—or, to speak more correctly, insinuating—as an argument against moral responsibility the theory of averages. This he illustrates by the curious fact that the number of letters posted without direction, throughout England, bears a nearly constant ratio to the total number posted. There is, therefore, he argues, a law that so many people per annum out of so many forget to direct their letters; consequently, the person who commits this error does it under a necessity, in obedience to a higher law, and therefore is not culpable.

The reply is patent. The fact that the percentage of undirected letters is invariable shows that people are just as careless in one year as in another, no better and no worse; a conclusion of which I do not know whether we ought to feel proud or ashamed. Perhaps under the new educational system the percentage will diminish. But it does not prove that the will of each individual person was irresistibly impelled, either wittingly or unwittingly, towards the act of posting an undirected letter, so that he was withheld by an unseen and unperceived force from putting the address outside his letter as usual, and from recognizing and supplying the omission before the letter left his possession and became the property of the Postmaster-General.

A similar reply may be made to the whole of the Positivist propositions on the subject of morality. An exaggerated view of the necessary sequence of phenomena has led to the entire

elimination of the notion of will, human and Divine; the factor has been differentiated out: a method has been adopted which does not suit the subject matter, and the induction has been incorrect, since, in obedience to this method, moral facts have been left out of consideration, because dissimilar to physical facts, and axioms of high probability have been neglected, because unlike those of positive science.

The answers returned by the believers to the school of scientific and utilitarian sceptics have been in general based on the same principle. The opponents of revealed religion were for ever crying, "Doubt everything; take nothing on testimony; like Pyrrho or Descartes, be prepared to doubt even your own existence; forget all that you have ever accepted because you were told it; give up all that you have ever believed, and elaborate it over again, for acceptance or rejection; Doubt alone can lead you to Truth. One thing alone is true, that is, the inductive method; it is this alone by which we may escape the errors of the vulgar; this alone

ἔσθ' ὄρου  
 χρῆσάμενος δὴ βασάνῳ  
 ἐπὶ τὰν ἐπίδαμον φάτιν εἶμι.

Our induction has overthrown the testimony to, and the testimony of, Scripture; and so you will find it, when you have worked out the problem as we have."

"Very true," rejoined the believer, "so far as it goes. Doubt and Induction are of the essence of Experimental Philosophy. There nothing must be taken on trust; everything must be verified by experiment and examination; no proposition can be acquiesced in relative to phenomena or phenomenal laws which cannot be reached as a conclusion by means of induction from those phenomena. But there are conditions subject to which your inductive method must be applied, and there are limits to its applicability. Evidently if a man had to doubt and examine into everything and take nothing on trust, he might reach the age of an antediluvian patriarch before he could breakfast in comfort, prudently plant a row of cabbages in his garden, or conscientiously hazard a remark about the weather. How many people who assent to the doctrine of the revolution of the earth about the sun, and habitually act upon belief of its truth, have worked, or can work, the simple problem of elliptic motion? And it is perfectly clear from your own admission that one proposition at least is not to be attained inductively—namely, that which asserts the infallibility of induction; or else poor man would be compelled to be perpetually traversing an intellectual asymptote, ever working

towards, but never reaching, that point of contact which should inductively prove his Induction to be what it claims to be, the only method and the certain method of arriving at Truth. The fact is, that this method of yours is not of universal applicability. There is a region in which it fails, and in that region lie the truths which we offer for your acceptance. To employ your method upon them, and to insist upon their being submitted to it, is just the error of the historical critic who should apply his method to the story of Napoleon Buona-parte or the Wars of the Roses ; just the error we complain of in the critic who does apply it to the Scriptures.

“ Further, it is necessary for a true induction that facts be certain and complete. Are you sure that you are in possession of all the facts, and that they have been accurately observed ? ‘ Life,’ Poisson said, ‘ may be represented by an equation, could we only be certain of the variables and constants :’ but till these are all accurately ascertained, the biological  $X=0$  must remain a meaningless formula. Just so the scientific arguments against Scripture, or supposed Scripture, would be of the highest importance and cogency, were we sure of the completeness of the induction, and the absolute clearness and correctness of the facts.” That these were not certain in the early days of scientific scepticism will be evident to any one who will compare a geological manual of 1834, or even 1844, with one of the present year. “ So then,” the believer in Revelation went on to say, “ as you are not yet sure of your facts, and, indeed, cannot always be certain of your senses, till their report is verified ; as you have as yet examined but an infinitesimal part of the Great Book of Nature ; and as the method you apply to your facts and your subject matter in general is not applicable to mine, I prefer to adhere to my opinions, and, while gladly receiving your conclusions,—so far as they are founded on a deliberate and complete, or at least wide, generalization,—within their own province, I still claim for myself the right, as I acknowledge and urge on you the duty, of moving at times in spirit within the pleasant land of Faith.”

#### PERIOD OF ATHEISTIC POSITIVISM.

IV. For a considerable time, indeed I may say till within the last decade, the scientific and historical sceptics were generally Theists. They admitted, or did not deny, that there was, or might be, a Personal Creator and Preserver of all things. They admitted, or did not deny, that there were, or might be, marks of design in Creation. They admitted, or

did not deny, that there was something to be said in behalf of Christianity, though they did not themselves allow its cogency, and usually declined to listen to it. But we now find ourselves in a new period of scepticism : a new armoury has been opened. We are now no longer contending with Theists, who will admit the argument from design, and bear with those praises of the Creating Power and Love which flow unbidden and almost involuntarily from our lips, out of the abundance of our hearts, when we study and tell of the marvels of the physical and moral universe. The school of our opponents, like the Internationalists, imprints on the first page of its manual, "This Society declares itself Atheist," and, with the French Revolutionists of the last century, has carried by an overwhelming vote that proposition which to the Psalmist appeared to be evolved from the heart's depth of human folly, "There is no God." In fact, we have reached an epoch of systematized Atheism, an absolute and more than Sadducean refusal to admit or hear of the existence of the Supernatural or the Transcendental : and whereas even Fichte would acknowledge the Infinite as a third with the Ego and the Non-ego in the triad of Existence, those with whom we have now to deal will admit of no element higher than humanity ; and sketch out for us an engaging form of the grand drama of Creation, from which the part of the Creator is omitted. This system has its apostles, who lecture, alas ! to not unwilling hearers, on "the good cause," "the emancipation of humanity from thralldom," "the elevation of man by the refutation of those fables of a superior Power which retard his intellectual development and limit his enjoyment of existence." One of the earlier thinkers, or rather of the forerunners, of this school, to whom I have already alluded, the late Mr. Buckle, distinctly lays down the principle that the prosperity of a country depends upon its rejection of religious restraints. He flatly contradicts Jehoshaphat's exhortation to his people, "Believe in the LORD your GOD, so shall ye be established ; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper." In proportion as a nation is religious, in that same proportion, according to him, it is held back from the possibility of attaining happiness or greatness ; as it divests itself, little by little, of Religion, so it begins and continues to flourish. In short, he either deliberately confounds Religion with grovelling Superstition, or is unable to see the difference between the two, in his haste to arrive at the grand conclusion, in which I believe Mandeville forestalled him, that all religions are equally false, and nearly equally mischievous.

There is much wisdom, the wisdom of the serpent, in this altered tactic of the unbelieving school. David's "fool" is

guided by no intellectual folly. Once admit a Personal Creating God, and you admit the possibility, nay, the probability, of a revelation; the being of the Supernatural; the possible existence of a higher Law which may overrule that which we are able to discover; and that inferiority and imperfection of humanity which Aristotle could lay down as an axiom for a *reductio ad absurdum*, εἰ μὴ τὸ ἄριστον τῶν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐστίν. But the Atheist is not troubled with any of these. The argument from design, which touches a mind that admits the vaguest Theism, has no force for him. For him soul and spirit, providence and adoration, Omnipotence and Omniscience, are only unmeaning terms foisted into language by debasing superstition, and nothing is true save that misty ring of unceasing self-evolution, which,—like the circling storm-clouds that, as astronomers tell us, are whirled by giant winds round the body of Jupiter,—is swept on through space by an all-controlling Fate.

As a natural consequence, the sceptic of the present day ignores Christianity. He takes for granted that it is now given up. He quietly assumes that every mind worthy of the name must long ago have surrendered the last lingering relics of that exploded delusion. He simply blots out of his book of history the grand tale of the Christian Church, or, if he permits it to remain, treats it only as a melancholy obstacle which perverse ignorance allowed for a time to obstruct the pathway of human development. To any one who ventures to talk to him of Scripture, or of the teaching and example of the Founder of Christianity, he replies with a quiet smile of mingled pity and contempt, as who should say, "All that has been long ago discussed and done away with. Every thinker knows now that the Bible is a late and not very clever forgery, and marvels how men could so long have tolerated a book which, though its writers here and there show some poetic genius, and even approach a simple sublimity, is defaced and defiled by those patches of human passion and error which form a dark crust upon its surface." Do we allege the pure morality of the Old and New Testament, he partly denies it, partly considers it taken from Confucius, Manu, and Socrates. Is a not unlikely coincidence of sentiments and expression found between passages of the New Testament and others in a treatise of the Talmud, or a Sura of the Koran, it only shows to him that the Christian forgery must be dated later than A.D. 500 or A.D. 622. In short, as I have said, we are confronted in the present day not by doubting Theists, but by Atheists, who meet us with a foregone conclusion, obstinately and scornfully upheld, against the doctrines which we maintain.

And this leads to a third point in which the scepticism of the present period has changed ground. We used to be told to disregard authority, even the very highest, to doubt everything and every one, to be satisfied with nothing that we had not examined and verified for ourselves; but the tone is altered now, and the despiser of authority has been converted into its champion. "Can you believe what the acute and judicial mind of Voltaire rejected? Has not such and such a great thinker avowed his utter disbelief of Christianity, and can you dare still to plead for it? Has not every true man of science now given up the Bible; and after that can you venture to say a word in its favour? Has not a great living authority expressed his astonishment at the clumsiness of much in Nature, and do you still talk of an infinitely intelligent Creator?" In a word, there is no one who uses more freely the *argumentum ad verecundiam* than the sceptic of the present time. But it is only the old tale—"Have any of the rulers, or the Pharisees, believed on Him? but this people, who knoweth not the law, are cursed." And surely, if we chose to retort the argument, we might have something to say: a Grote and a Mill have not done so very much more for their fellow-men, have not contributed so very much more to the advancement and well-being of humanity, than a Wilberforce or a Whewell; we may compare at no disadvantage, as to intellect and general usefulness, Bossuet with Voltaire, Johnson with Hobbes, Filippo Neri with Machiavel, Manzoni with Mazzini.

I cannot forbear alluding to another point which must be remarked in the scepticism of late years, and that is its extreme narrow-mindedness and illiberality. There was something captivating in the openness and fairness of the unbeliever of a quarter of a century ago. He was as tolerant as an old Roman. You might worship Christ, provided you did not interfere with the Goddess of Reason; you were free to go the way that suited you, provided you did not try to drive others into it. Nay, you were free to proselytize, if you could, so that you said and did nothing in disparagement of his adoration of pure intellect: even Christianity was better than a vacuum. But this tolerant temper is fast vanishing, and a deadly enmity to all definite religion is taking its place. We have heard of the *odium theologicum*, we know something of the *odium scientificum*: but I suspect we have yet to fathom the profundities of the *odium atheisticum*.

## CONCLUSION.

V. I have endeavoured to give a brief sketch of the different characters of the assaults made by unbelief on Revealed Religion. It only remains that I venture a few suggestions as to the character of the religious armoury at the present time, and the temper of the Christian warrior as he goes to the intellectual battle-field. And first let me express my conviction that, if in any contest, certainly in this, *fas est et ab hoste doceri*; nay more, we owe very much to our opponents for what they have caused us to learn. Their attacks have led to a better acquaintance with the language of Scripture, a fuller comprehension of what it does and what it does not mean, a more accurate conception of what it is intended to be, and what it is not intended to be, for mankind; may I not add, a greater admiration of its marvellous comprehensiveness, such that a book proceeding from an inconsiderable Oriental people adapts itself to the varied habits, opinions, and modes of thought of widely different individuals, races, and epochs in the world's history? I maintain, without fear of contradiction, that Holy Scripture has been far better known and more valued since the time when it began to be more fearlessly and audaciously impugned and depreciated.

Our attitude towards those conclusions which are alleged against Christianity should be one of uncompromising firmness, and yet not of obstinate contradiction, but of doubt. The advice the earlier sceptics gave us as regards our faith may be very fairly adopted as regards their science. Doubt, we must remember, is antagonistic to Faith; unless it be that "honest doubt" of which we have heard so much, and which means, if it means anything, a readiness to acquiesce in higher truths, if only a little of that dim nebulosity in which they are too often needlessly enveloped be cleared away. But doubt of any kind, if it does not take the form of a despairing Pyrrhonism, is rather an aid to real science. Very beautiful was the ancient myth which made Iris the daughter of Thaumas,—the rainbow-hued personification of multifarious science the offspring of that wonder with which men first gazed upon the varying phenomena of Nature. No less truly may we say that Doubt is the honest though sometimes rude friend of Iris, preserving the tints of her bow from unsuitable juxtaposition and inharmonious admixture. Doubt of facts till they are verified, doubt conclusions till they are shown to be necessi-

tated by the facts,—but then, cheerfully admit them both. There can be nothing more injurious to the cause of Truth than an obstinate and prejudiced refusal to assent to what is fairly proved. In religious morality our pious rule is “Do your duty, whatever it costs, and trust in God, Who will bring all right.” In religious dealing with science let our rule be the same, “Assent, as a matter of duty, to what your opponent demonstrates by legitimate proof; the God of Truth will show you its connection with His own Truth. It may be that in resisting a logical conclusion you may be destroying a weapon which would ultimately be of the greatest value, not to your adversary, but to yourself.”

But especially I would urge this temper of doubt in the matter of alleged contradictions. There are many propositions, hypotheses, theories, which have been vaunted by one side and branded by the other as opposed to Revealed Religion, which after all are not inconsistent with it. I remember an occasion on which, at a large scientific meeting, the subject of spontaneous generation was discussed, and one or two speakers gave an account of experiments made by themselves in which bacteria and vibrions appeared in liquors which, after boiling, had been enclosed in hermetically-sealed tubes. The obvious answer to this would have been for some one to state—as was afterwards done, I believe, though not at that time—that he had performed the same experiment exactly, and that the bacteria and vibrions were not produced. In fact, several speakers expressed their doubt of the accuracy of the experiment. But one individual rose, and with somewhat unnecessary *empressement*, declared that no one should rob him of his Bible; that the Bible told him that God made all things, and that he would die before he surrendered his faith. Now none of the speakers had even suggested that God did not make those bacteria; the experiments only went to show that the Creator did not always employ the same method in producing living creatures; and the opponent's declamation was shown to amount to this, that he would not be robbed of his *own notion* of what the Bible told him, the explanatory addition, in fact, which he had made to the word “created” in the sacred volume. There was no necessary contradiction between the teaching of the Bible and the doubtful proposition that animated life of the lowest type sometimes shows itself without the ordinary conditions of generation.

Again; many, both believers and unbelievers, imagine that if the supposed discovery of traces of pre-Adamite man were confirmed, it would go very far to invalidate the authority of the Scriptures, and would, at all events, be inconsistent with

the Biblical cosmogony. Is this so certain? I am far from saying it has yet been satisfactorily made out, or even that reasonable grounds have been shown for thinking it probable, that any rational beings in human or even in gorilla form did exist before Adam: but is it so clear from the words of the Bible that there could not have been a prior type of humanity which appeared and disappeared in one of those periods of mundane existence, anterior to the present state of things, at which Scripture hints, though it makes no definite revelation?

The same may be said with regard to a scientific theory,—or perhaps I ought more correctly to say hypothesis,—of the present day, without some allusion to which this paper would be thought incomplete: I mean that of Evolution. Is it satisfactorily shown that, as some will have it, the hypothesis is at variance with the teaching of Scripture? True, many of those who hold and teach it combine with it the elimination of all design and intelligence from the great work of Nature, and an absolute denial of the Personality of the Creator. This part of their teaching is certainly inconsistent with Revelation. You cannot hold that God is a mere all-pervading force, and yet that “in the beginning God created:” you cannot reject design, and yet allow that “He saw, and, behold, it was very good.” But surely one need not maintain that an Evolutionist must be an Atheist or Pantheist, and cannot be a Christian; one cannot see that Christianity is at all affected by the truth or falsehood of the Evolution theory, whether the latter be, as some say, a sham induction from misunderstood, distorted, inadequate, invented particulars, or, as others tell us, a physical Gospel, an indubitable, irrefragable truth, supported by an absolutely complete induction from a perfect chain of well-ascertained and undeniable facts. It has not yet been shown that the God of Scripture cannot possibly have willed to create, or rather to preserve and amplify His creation, according to the rule of Evolution.

The growing intolerance which characterizes the sceptical tactics should teach us to be tolerant,—liberal in the best and truest sense of the word. Let us give our opponents full credit for endeavouring to seek the Truth. It is a hackneyed remark that Truth is many-sided: we must not fail, therefore, to remember that there is much more error and falsehood in negation than in affirmation. The science which is unhappily opposed to us may be,—nay, most often is,—true after all: our adversaries' view of the Truth is taken from a different stand-point to ours, so that they are in the right when they affirm, and fall into deadly error only when they begin to deny; and denial

on our side might not necessarily preserve us from being in the wrong. And yet tolerance has its limits; there is a point where true liberality stops. There is no real tolerance in acquiescing, for the sake of peace, in what we know to be untrue. Genius has by some been defined to be the power of seeing remote similarities. This genius is to my mind a kind of Cocles, mighty, but one-eyed. It would be imperfect without the power of seeing points of difference also; and these two powers themselves require to be completed by the presence of a judicial faculty, a power of estimating the value of points of agreement and difference, and deciding whether they are essential or merely accidental. Such a genius we must call to preside over our contests for the Faith; so that, while we tolerate all that is tolerable, we may make a firm stand against all that is really incompatible with the essence of our Christian belief.

Though we must, as I have already hinted, be extremely cautious not needlessly to mix up Science and Religion, and we of this Institute must above all remember that we are associated not as scientific Christians, but as Christian men of science, to examine, on scientific principles, the statements of non-Christian men of science,—there is one religious truth which we must earnestly contend for; and that is, the Personality of God. We must contend for it, as well as the conclusions which directly flow from it, because it is a scientific as well as a religious truth; the grand axiom of Natural Theology. Theology is a science, and a possible one. I once heard a speaker—a scientific man—use this unfortunate expression in defending some rather daring statements from the opposition made to them on religious grounds: “I do believe in Religion, but I do not believe in Theology”: and this claptrap was actually applauded by those who ought to have known better. What he *meant* was, I suppose, that he declined to assent to all the propositions about things Divine which men had imported into Religion, Natural or Revealed. But what he *said* in effect was, either that he believed in Religion, but not in a God, a most extraordinary statement; or else that there was a something, namely God, cognizable by man, of which he refused to admit a science; an assertion painfully unscientific, for of everything that man can know there is a science, and Theology is the science of God, so far as He permits Himself to be known by man. And so (to return to our point) we must, as men of science, *maintain* devoutly and inexorably, as one of those axioms which are common to all science, the Personal Being of the One First Cause.

Such are the cautions as to our method and temper which I would venture to suggest to this Institute, and to all who are with us in spirit. It would be presumptuous to say, in the words which Göthe puts into the mouth of his hero,

“Und gedächte jeder wie ich, so stünde die Macht auf  
Gegen die Macht, und wir erfreuten uns alle des Friedens.”

Peace there can hardly be, so long as humanity is what it is, prone to worship itself rather than its Maker. But of this I am sure, that a quiet, large-hearted, and yet firm maintenance of the great truths of our Religion in the face of the glare and din of new discoveries, amidst all the confusion which necessarily arises when, as now, old landmarks are broken up,—a temperate and enlightened defence of our Christian inheritance against those who would bid us fling it away as effete, tainted with the superstition of the past, and dimmed with the rust of ages, will, with the blessing of the Great Author of all, be the happy means of preserving many a soul from the eddying whirlpool of Atheism, or the dreary desolation of a Pantheistic wilderness.

The Right Hon. the Lord O'NEILL.—I rise to move,—“That our best thanks be presented to the Rev. Dr. Robinson Thornton for the Annual Address now delivered, and also to those who have kindly read papers during the session.” I am but a humble learner in the work brought before this Institute, and therefore can only say that I listened to the lucid sketch given by Dr. Thornton, of the progress of scepticism, and of the manner in which scepticism should be met, with very profound respect and admiration. As to the second part of the resolution, I am scarce competent to say a word, because this is the first evening I have had the honour of being present, therefore I have not had the advantage of hearing the papers this year; but I have not been inattentive to the publications of the Society, some of which I have read with great interest and profit; and am sure that if the course delivered this year be at all like those I have read for previous years, they must be such as most of us would be desirous of returning thanks for. I have much pleasure in proposing the resolution which I have read.

The Rev. Principal J. H. RICE, D.D.—I have great pleasure in seconding the vote of thanks just moved, and feel it a great honour to do so. It is quite impossible for us to do justice to such an Address as that to which we have listened, and I will not attempt to do so, but we feel our thanks. The Address has been truly criticised as a very lucid, and a very able review of the scepticism of the last two centuries. It is impregnated, as all that Dr. Thornton writes is, with allusions which show a range of reading that very few of us can hope to emulate; but notwithstanding

this, the general course of thought has been so clear and able, that I feel certain we shall all endorse the words already spoken, and the purport of the language of the resolution itself. I am sorry to say that I have only heard one of the papers that have been read this year—a singularly able one—but I have looked into some of the others, and I have great pleasure in seconding the resolution. (Cheers.)

The motion was agreed to.

Dr. THORNTON.—I have to express my thanks for the privilege of being permitted to deliver the Annual Address, and also for the resolution you have just passed. Let me impress upon you to do all you can to keep up the numbers of this Institute, for I am sure we shall not do the great work which lies before us without the necessary numbers. We want members and money very much indeed. I have often applied to people to join the Institute, and they have said, “We cannot, because we are not scientific.” This is no reason why they should not do so. When our noble President was first requested to join us, he replied, “I am not a scientific man”; but it was represented to his Lordship that we had the science already, and wanted his patronage for it. And so I say we want your support: I think I may fairly quote the maxim which was found in the pocket-book of the individual whose trial lately interested us all,—“Some people has plenty money and no brains: other people has plenty brains and no money.” Applying that to ourselves, I may say: “Some people have plenty of money and no science: other people have plenty of science and no money: why should not those who have plenty of money and no science give to those who have plenty of science and no money?” (Cheers and laughter.)

The Right Rev. BISHOP PIERS C. CLAUGHTON, D.D.—I have the happy task of proposing a vote of thanks to our excellent Chairman, and wish that I had some better title to represent you; but except now and then coming to your meetings, and once reading a paper, I have been a very unworthy Member of this excellent Institute; yet I give it my hearty sympathy, for I believe it is doing a great and good work, and when we attend its meetings we always hear something that we may carry away, and which makes us better able to grapple with and to fight that terrible enemy which is now abroad. Let me say it is very important that we should always keep on our guard against strong language; there was nothing in the Address read to-night inconsistent with that. We should have great patience with our opponents; we should not revile them or encourage a feeling of contempt. We should remember that of all men they are most to be pitied. I do not mean anything insulting to them, far from it; but if there is any man for whom we should feel a deep pity, it is the man who, having once had a great capacity for it, has let slip his faith. What can the doubt of the sceptic give us in place of that? Let us go out to the world, and if we are not able to meet the objections that are urged, let us patiently and lovingly hold our tongues. I am certain that this Institute does a good work, and I can assure you of my great sympathy with its objects. (Cheers.)

The Rev. Prebendary W. J. IRONS, D.D.—I beg to second the resolution. In taking a retrospect of the past year, it is due to the memory of our late Vice-President, the Rev. W. Mitchell, that we should acknowledge his services to this Institute and to the cause of Christianity. He was long with us in our arduous work, and laboured to the last, heart and soul, with simplicity, knowledge, and truthfulness. During the past year we have lost another scientific name,—in his own department inferior to few,—I mean Richard Thomas Lowe, who was shipwrecked last month in the *Liberia*, in the Bay of Biscay. He was one who, in his Lincolnshire Parsonage, regularly waited for our papers, and read them with interest; one whose life, from the time he was a youth at Cambridge till his dying day, was a life of science as well as a life of purity and piety. His record is to be found not merely in the Church, but in the scientific history of this country; and his cabinets, which I trust will be carefully preserved, will testify to those who come after, the definiteness, the minuteness, the honesty, the zeal, of his life-long effort in the cause of Science. When I spoke to him not long ago, in the presence of others, on some topics bearing on the great objects of this Institute, and while listeners were in some consternation at certain scientific results, he replied with his usual great modesty,—“At present we are but tabulators of facts. I am a collector and nothing more. A future generation must fix the theories; we will provide them with the materials.” He was anxious to the last to testify his unshaken faith in God and Christianity. He devoted all the leisure he could command, to furnishing to his countrymen that which I hope will be fully appreciated by many, as I know they are by the few to whom they are accessible,—those carefully-manipulated notes, which even now surprise one in looking over his subjects. This testimony is due to one who if not recognized as a great man, only failed of that recognition through his intense retirement and modesty. We should feel thankful that God has granted to this Institute such a measure of success that noble hearts and clear heads and scientific understandings like his, have come to us from the beginning, and have remained with us to the close of their career. There is yet one other topic which I will refer to, arising out of Dr. Thornton’s admirable Address, it is this:—I am quite sure Dr. Thornton has hit the right point when he tells us that the battle of the future in this country will not be a battle for any of the mere externals of our religion; but it will have to be, on our side, a defence of the very personal existence of God. We must gird ourselves for that. I hold that implies, at length, the Creeds of the Church. It implies more, no doubt, than that acknowledgment which suffices for a Membership of this Institute. I do not desire to intrude on the special thoughts, feelings, or distinctive opinions of any member of the Institute; but I am bound to say that here, in this Institute, though we admit all who are professing Christians, and would hinder no man from the proper discussion of any truth connected with the Gospel of God; and although we should not wish to force anything on the attention of any man, to a larger extent than fair reason and earnest argument would justify; yet, in the future, we,

must prepare for something more than this. While we admit that "un-denominational religion" has brought us together, may that bringing together lead to higher results, and to a more intimate knowledge of those truths which we hold in common. We must have something more than a merely sentimental religion, if we wish to grapple with the positive Atheism of the coming day. Nor am I disposed to fear for the result in entering into the controversy on the ground of pure reason. There is no part of the Christian religion which clashes with the human intellect. "'Tis Reason our great Master holds so dear," I have quoted these words before in this Institute, "and I do not believe," said Berkeley, "that any man can serve God against his reason." Let us fearlessly enter into this controversy, only keeping men to the point. I have regretted to find that some arguments which had been powerfully adduced in this Institute have been quietly ignored outside, and the old objections, and what are called "difficulties," have been revived, even within the last twelve months, by persons who knew that these difficulties have been completely met. A man who superficially skims the surface of a religious topic, frequently does not hesitate to come forward with boldness, and state what he calls "his difficulties," though he would be obliged to acknowledge that he has not taken the pains to fathom them, and has no intention of going on with the intensely difficult work, which "difficulty" answering involves. I have no patience with the characteristics of that mind which goes sedulously to work to pick up difficulties, and then will not wait for their solution. For a man who seizes upon any grave subject, or matter which deserves investigation, is bound, as an honest man, quickly to let it alone, or else to grapple with it as a thinker. (Cheers).

The CHAIRMAN.—At this late hour I will not occupy your time any further than to return you my best thanks for the honour you have done me.

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[The Annual Meeting being concluded, the Members, Associates, and their friends assembled in the Museum of the Society of Arts, where refreshments were served.]