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with the Author's kind regards

THOUGHTS

ON THE

INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.

BY THOMAS HODGKIN, JUN.

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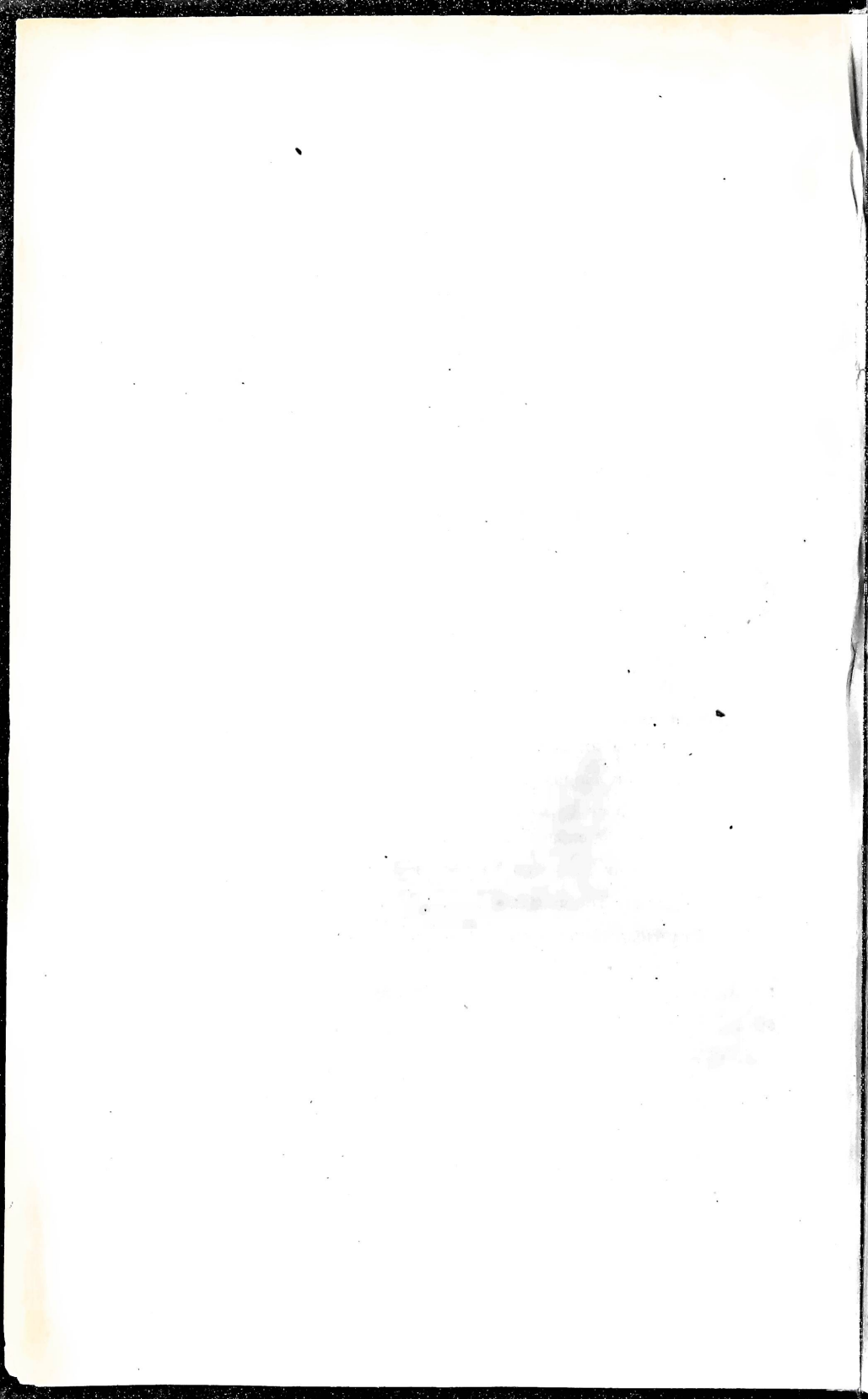
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PREFATORY NOTE.

The Author of this little Essay has supposed himself to be addressing those who are either themselves troubled with doubts on the subject in question, or are frequently brought in contact with the doubts of others. He does not desire to be read by the perfectly untroubled Believer in the Inspiration of the Bible, to whom any discussion of the subject will probably bring more pain than profit.

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THOUGHTS

ON THE

INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.

I. "The judgment,"—says Dr. Newman Introduction.
in his famous Autobiographical Polemic,

--- "which experience passes on establishments or education as a means of maintaining religious truth in this anarchical world, must be extended even to Scripture though Scripture be divine. . . . A book after all cannot make a stand against the wild living intellect of man, and in this day it begins to testify as regards its own structure and contents to the power of that universal solvent which is so successfully acting upon religious establishments."—*Apologia pro Vita Sua*, 381-2.

Differing as I do by nearly the whole horizon of Christian thought from almost every argument and inference of the *Apologia*, I feel nevertheless that there is a truth in these words, and I think that no attentive observer of the signs of the times would dare wholly to deny them. It is, and true men are bound to confess it, a day in which questions as to

the authority of Scripture are, not indeed pushed *further*, but *more widely* prevalent than has probably been the case in any preceding epoch of Christianity. But if we believe that "there has no temptation taken us but such as is common to man," that *this* difficulty has been not without Christ's own permission suffered to beset the present generation of His Church, whose strength to resist it He alone could measure, and that "God is faithful who will with the temptation also make a way to escape that we may be able to bear it," it is surely the wisest course, and that most truly honouring to Him, to go boldly forward in such strength as He may give us, to *meet* the difficulty, rather than ostrich-like to hide our heads in the bush of Ecclesiastical Tradition, declaring that we cannot see the difficulty and therefore no such difficulty exists. Of course I am not going to attempt within these narrow limits any regular and systematic discussion of a subject so vast as well as so momentous. All that I hope to do is to gather up a few scattered fragments of thought which reflection has sometimes found remaining on the field of Controversy.

II. Let me state as briefly as may be what appears to me to be the kernel of the modern objections to the Divine origin and Divine authority of the Scriptures.

Objections
to Divine
Origin and
Authority
of Scrip-
ture.

"They are not one book," it is argued, "but

many, written at far distant epochs of time, under widely differing circumstances, only *collected* into one volume, or rather into two, by Jewish Scribes and Christian Fathers."

"Do you mean," it is asked, "to claim a sort of Papal infallibility for these compilers of the Sacred Volumes, to assert that they could distinguish with unerring wisdom between the writings inspired of God, and those penned without supernatural assistance by merely devout but uninspired men?"

"And to come to the test of facts, are all the books included in the Canon superior to all the books excluded from it? Can you frame any theory of Inspiration which shall account for the books of Esther, and Canticles, and the genealogies at the beginning of Chronicles being admitted into 'an inspired volume,' from which Ecclesiasticus and Wisdom are shut out? Are the greetings in St. Paul's epistles and the message about the forgotten cloak at Troas, the direct utterance of the Holy Spirit; while the Epistle to Diognetus, the Dies Irae, and the 'Rock of Ages,' are the work of man's unaided intellect?"

"Then, again, as to errors of transcription and translation. In the face of the vast variety of Texts both of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, you cannot maintain that the miracle of a constant succession of infallible transcribers has been exhibited to the world; and the merest beginner in the study of

the Originals at once discovers evidences of imperfection in the English version, and probably in other versions besides. Does not this prove that until our palaeographers are all agreed upon a Text of the whole Bible (which is not likely to come to pass for centuries) and our scholars upon a translation of that Text (for which our country may wait some centuries longer) we shall not have a book, if the Church ever had one, which can claim to speak to us authoritatively as the written word of the Most High ?”

Then besides all these *à priori* objections, it is said, “ Have we not in the want of scientific accuracy exhibited by the writers of the Scriptures, as to points astronomical, geological, and physiological, sufficient evidence that they were not infallibly guided by the Omniscient Creator of the Universe ? And as the strength of a fortress in war is equivalent only to the strength of its weakest point, even so here does not one admitted error in the Scriptures bring the whole fabric of their Divine authority to the ground ?”

“ To sum up all these arguments in one ; there is evidence of man’s handiwork in their original composition, there is necessity for man’s handiwork in their transmission to us, and it is only that which is unmingledly Divine, or in which the Divine can be marked off from the human element with mathematical precision, that can command our obedience or escape our criticism.”

III. Before replying in detail to any of the objections thus urged, I wish to notice one error from which I think most of them derive their chief strength and nourishment. I call it an error; and such I fully believe it to be, yet I admit that it is one extremely natural to the human intellect. It is *the tendency to over estimate our powers of definition and to demand a degree of accuracy in it greater than the subject matter in hand admits of*. The fact is, that all reasoners are more or less influenced by the triumphs achieved by Definition in the science of Mathematics. In that one science, as we all know, the conceptions with which it deals having been first rigorously *defined*, or marked off, from all others—so that there can never be any confusion, mathematically speaking, between a circle and the most circular ellipse, or between the sine of an angle and its tangent—every conclusion follows from the premisses with such undeviating certainty that “mathematical exactitude” has passed into a proverb. But, however great the desire of the intellect may be to see equal certainty attained in the moral sciences, we all of us know that it never has been, and most of us believe that it never will be arrived at in our present state of being.* Moral certainty is that upon which

Degree of accuracy of definition, which we have a right to expect.

* Compare Aristotle's prelude to the Nicomachean Ethics, where he says, “Our argument will have been sufficiently successful if it shall have been treated with as much accuracy as

we are compelled to act, and this, though abundantly sufficient for our needs, is not as absolutely irresistible by the human mind as mathematical certainty. I may feel, for instance, fully persuaded that some one whom I have known and honoured and closely watched through a long course of years, *could not* be induced to commit a dishonest or dishonourable action, and on the strength of that assurance, I may cheerfully risk every shilling of my substance: yet I cannot say that the possibility of his so transgressing is as absolutely inconceivable to my mind as the possibility of 6 and 5 making 12, or of two right lines enclosing a space.

This is of course a very old though necessary distinction between the pure and the mixed sciences—between Geometry, for instance, on the one hand and History on the other; but what I wish at present especially to insist upon is, the absolute and inherent difference between all the *definitions* with which the moral sciences are conversant, and the definitions of mathematics. Try to frame a definition which shall include with mathematical accuracy, all honest men, and shall exclude with equal rigidity all dishonest ones, and you at once feel the difficulty. Mark off the Sane from the Insane as Euclid separates Right Angles from Oblique, and test your defi-

the subject matter admits of: for the same degree of accuracy is not to be expected in all arguments any more than in all handicrafts.”

inition as he does his through several hundred propositions of unquestionable truth, one following irresistibly from another, and you will have a right to claim the very highest place among the monarchs of the mind. Again, has any one really ever framed a perfectly satisfactory definition, after the mathematical model,—including everything that is essential, excluding everything that is extraneous,—of Man himself. Even as to his bodily organization, does not Science confess some difficulty in so describing it as to shut out the highest anthropoid apes, while embracing the most degraded races of Australia, of Lapland, of Ceylon. It will no doubt be replied, that the Divine endowment of reason is his proudest and most distinguishing characteristic. But how shall this endowment be so defined as to separate it from the marvellous instincts of the Ant, the Elephant, the Shepherd's Dog, on the one hand, and yet not to shut out the Cretin, and the Idiot on the other, from the privileges of that manhood, which degraded as they are, we do not deny them to possess?

If the difference lie in the Faculty of Speech, the Parrot is included and the Deaf Mute excluded; if in constructiveness, the Beaver is the rival of Man, if in political organization, the Bee is his superior. Progress and the power of discovery might serve well enough to mark off the civilized *races* of the world from the brute creation; but even among these there are *individuals* for whom they would not

avail, while to many of the more degraded races of the world, to the Australian, the Esquimaux, and the Hottentot, they would be as inapplicable as to the lower animals themselves.

I will not multiply instances: the every day experience of my readers will at once suggest numbers of cases in which our intellects are confessedly unable to define with any approach to mathematical accuracy, existences and ideas, which, nevertheless, we are obliged to accept undefined in the course of our daily lives. For this is after all the great point. The distinctions between Honesty and Dishonesty, between Sane men and Lunatics, between Man and the Lower Animals, are distinctions, which, however, impossible to express in perfect scientific definitions, we must accept and act upon now, if we would not bring ourselves into evident, perhaps, fatal collision with the laws by which this world of ours is governed. Imagine a man accused of murder pleading before a jury that the deed was done in revenge for the death of a favourite dog, bringing forward proofs of its sagacity, contrasting its intellect favourably with that of his victim, and so arguing that the death of the brute justified the murder of the man, "because no satisfactory definition of the distinction between man and the lower animals had yet been given." We know what the fate of such a man would be: but is not his conduct similar to that of the Rationalist who refuses attention and obedience to the re-

vealed will of God, because he has yet met with no thoroughly satisfactory Definition of Inspiration ?

IV. The error of which I complain may be traced in the reasonings of some of the defenders of the Divine Authority of the Bible, as well as in those of its opponents. In the former, it has produced theories of Literal, or of Verbal Inspiration, and statements which appear to amount to this, that every word and every letter in the original Hebrew and Greek Manuscripts of the Bible, was as directly the work of God as the Ten Commandments written by the Divine finger on the tables of stone. If the authority for such very rigidly enunciated propositions be demanded, we are generally met not so much by references to Scripture itself, as by *à priori* arguments as to what a Divine Revelation ought to consist of, and still more often by the favourite counter-question, "Where will you draw the line?" "If any human element be admitted to exist in the Scriptures, one man may reject one portion and another may disbelieve another: the door is opened to endless questionings and to boundless infidelity. Unless every letter be equally from God where will you draw the line?"

To this I would reply in all sincerity, "I do not know. Our business as men is not to draw lines nor to frame mathematically exact definitions of spiritual existences, nor, especially in the matter of Divine

Revelation, to be wise above that which is revealed. But our business is to accept the great facts of this world in which God has placed us, as we find them, to conform ourselves to his laws as far as he has explained them to us, though we may feel that we understand them very imperfectly, and to receive humbly the dispensations of his *Providence*, though the chief of them, such as Life and Death, Health and Disease, the Increase of the Ground, and the Workings of the Brain, be matters dimly comprehended by us, and which the wisest men feel it the most hopeless to define. Far more than in the Kingdom of his *Grace* should we sit as little children in our Father's presence, content to learn what he is disposed to teach us of himself, just as he teaches it to us, and not on any other plan or out of any other lesson-book, which we in our ignorance may fancy more worthy of his Omniscience."

V. And thus looking at the subject, and endeavouring to say concerning the Bible no more (and no less) than it says concerning itself, we shall find ourselves constrained to admit the presence of a Human as well as of a Divine element ; even in the primary copies, the absolutely pure and unmodified text of the Holy Scriptures. God might have written his message in characters of fire upon the midnight sky, or graven it like the story of the conquests

Existence
of Human
as well as
Divine
Element
in the
Bible.

of an Assyrian King upon rock-tablets in a Syrian desert: though even then some human element would have existed in the construction of the language whose shackles the Divine message must still have worn. But there is infinitely more of condescension and of loving-kindness shown to us in the actual Bible than would thus have been manifested. That book is emphatically God's message *to man conveyed through men*. The one great subject with which the whole of it is concerned, the one miracle of miracles to which the Old Testament points prospectively, of which the New Testament tells triumphantly, is the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and hence arises an especial fitness in the fact that the message telling of him has also a human vesture, so to speak, with which it is arrayed. If I may be permitted to use the words, I would say that as "the Word took flesh and dwelt among men," even so, the written word, the message of God, became a book and was written by men, and has been subjected to all the misunderstandings, and scoffs, and cavilling criticism of an unbelieving world, even as He was exposed to the questionings of Jewish High Priests and the insults of the Roman soldiery.* Throughout its course the history of Revelation as of Redemption is one of infinite condescension in

* This similitude between Christ and the Scriptures is beautifully illustrated by Adolphe Monod in two of his death-bed discourses. See *Adieux d'Adolphe Monod Discours* 20.

the Creator towards his creature: and I repeat it is God's message to man *through* his fellow-men. As examples of this human vesture in which the Divine message has clothed itself, I may refer to the differences of style between different Prophets and Apostles. The stately march of Isaiah's prophecies, the plaintive flow of Jeremiah's life-long grief, the daring flights of the ecstatic spirit of Ezekiel,—we all admit that here are diversities of natural character, and most of us will agree that these diversities in the instruments are human, though the one Spirit which breathes through them all is Divine. So too with the contrast between the logical acuteness and Rabbinical learning of St. Paul, the simple earnestness of St. Peter, and the wonderfully varied melody drawn from one word "Love," by "the disciple whom Jesus loved." So too in even greater degree with the trifling discrepancies in matters of detail between the four Evangelists. It is an old but true remark, that these little divergencies, by removing all suspicion of conspiracy between them, render the general convergence of their testimony all the more valuable. But in so saying, we at once admit that the Evangelists are *in part* at least to be listened to as men, truthful but finite men recording the wonderful works which they had seen, not as mere amanuenses of the Omniscient Spirit.

These varieties of character, these little diver-

gencies of detail, may probably belong to what I have called the human garment of the truth. So may the strong Oriental hyperboles which we at times meet with, the artificial construction of the Psalms, the omission of a few links from a genealogy, or here and there the possible misstatement of a number or misquotation of a date. But I feel persuaded that that human element does *not* include any the slightest trace of conscious inaccuracy or exaggeration, that it has not introduced into the Scriptures one atom of that pious fraud which in *majorem Dei gloriam* would chronicle events that never happened, nor leavened it with one grain of the spirit of mediaeval miracle-mongers. The God from whom that message comes to us is a God of Truth, and I am persuaded that his servants the Prophets were kept by Him ever in remembrance of this fact, and that "no lie is of the truth." I feel bound therefore to yield entire and substantial belief to the miracles recorded in the Bible,

~~To every miracle therefore recorded by them, we yield entire and substantial belief,~~ however little in accordance with the technicalities of our modern Science be its manner of describing them. In the "hard sayings," both of the Old Testament and of the New, I am content to recognise difficulties arising from the imperfections of human language, or the conditioned character of all our knowledge, difficulties which shall all vanish away in the light of

Eternity. And above all, when they tell me anything concerning the nature of God, the ruin wrought in our hearts by Sin, the plan of our salvation through Christ, the power and malice of our soul's great Spirit-Enemy, there is no limit to the unquestioning reverence and submission with which I rejoice to listen to that which is, I am persuaded, not the word of men but the written word of God.

VI. To some doubting minds, I am well aware, this recognition of a twofold element in the Holy Scriptures will appear an unsatisfactory conclusion. They will say, "Either claim Divine authority for every word or else admit that it is purely human. If it be as you say, a Divine message in a human clothing, it is the external part, the mantle of humanity, alone, which we can apprehend: the spirit within—supposing it to exist—must remain incapable of being understood by us, and therefore as far as we are concerned, might as well be non-existent. And besides all this, is the old and ever recurring difficulty, where will you draw the line?"

Analogy
of twofold
Nature of
Man.

I must crave permission to answer this objection by a similar one drawn from the affairs of every-day life. It is not merely or chiefly as a disciple of Butler that I venture to recur so frequently to this argument of Analogy. Far rather is it, because I believe—and am fortified in this belief by the

Parables of Christ—that the facts of this outward physical Universe are God's own chosen method of teaching us the mysteries of his spiritual Kingdom, and that we are like little children slow to learn and awkward at remembering abstract truths, whom he accordingly deigns to instruct out of the great picture lesson-book of his visible Creation.

I say then in answer to such objections as these last described. "How do *you* deal with the nature of Man himself?" Here is a being, part of whose organisation plainly and undoubtedly belongs to the material world. The analytical chemist can tell us how many ounces of phosphorus there are in his bones, and what quantity of nitrogen in his flesh. Administer certain drugs, and certain results will follow, with the same unerring accuracy with which chemical equivalents combine. The laws of Statics and Dynamics govern this part of Man's being as absolutely as the veriest clod of the fields: he may strive to neutralise, but he cannot escape them. In short, on this view of the case, Man is a certain amount—varying generally from one to two hundred-weight—of solid, liquid and gaseous particles of matter, combined in certain proportions, and sharing the power common to all animals of taking up fresh atoms out of the material world around and giving off others in their stead.

Is this all the nature of Man? We know that it is not. I am not writing for Materialists, for men

who have persuaded themselves that Thought is a mere incidental function of Animal Life, and that the imagination of Shakespere, and the will of Napoleon are simply the results of particular arrangements of molecules of matter, which, a little differently disposed, would have culminated in a Jelly-fish, or a Zoophyte. That in me and in thee, which reasons, which fore-casts, which wills, that by virtue of which we love, and hate, and desire, and worship, all the Intellectual, Moral, and Spiritual part of Man's Nature (whatever divisions and classifications we may make of it in itself,) constitutes another something utterly distinct from his Corporeal Nature, and from the Material Universe of which it forms part. Utterly distinct, and yet for the present inextricably intertwined : encompassing the globe, and weighing the planets, and yet for the present compelled to work through these few poor pounds of cerebrum and cerebellum : free itself from all the laws of matter and motion, and yet through its humble instrument constantly brought back again into the most abject bondage to them, so that a few grains of opium will quiet the most restless spirit, some drops of alcohol will kindle the most sluggish the great Dictator laid low with ague,

————— “cries, Give me some drink Titinius,
“ Like a sick girl” ————— ;

after a few hours of fasting or of fatigue the need of nourishment and of sleep lays its equalising hand

on the Poet and the Prize-fighter ; and the most brilliant and far reaching intellect of Europe may as the result of a fever or a blow, find itself to-morrow the inmate of a Lunatic Asylum.

Here have we then a two-fold element even nearer home than in the Holy Scriptures. And yet we cannot deny the existence of either the one or the other element of our being. There is the material nature without to be seen and handled, here is the thinking nature within, asserting its own existence by its one unsilenceable argument "*cogito ergo sum.*" Nor is it the outward material part alone which we can know and apprehend. All the charm of the highest kinds of literature, the greater part alike of the difficulty and the interest of Human Life, the strongest and most abiding threads in the tissue of Family Love, are derived ultimately from one origin, the knowledge of character. And what do those words, "knowledge of character," mean but this, the Soul of Man penetrating through the veil of material things and making itself acquainted with the Souls of his fellows.

So much for the impossibility—the alleged impossibility—of apprehending the Divine element of the Scriptures through their Human envelope. I say that even amongst us men "the invisible things" of Man "are clearly seen, being understood" through his visible and material nature, so that the Sadducee

“is without excuse.” And as for the difficulty of “drawing the line,” if what I have before said, on the subject of definitions generally be not deemed sufficient, I would still hold fast to this analogy presented by the human body and soul, and assert that the same difficulty there prevails. That dependence of the Intellect on its instrument to which I have already alluded, makes it impossible to draw with mathematical accuracy a line which shall separate between them. And historically, who can tell the hour or the day when the little helpless infant, which certainly in the origin of its being has appeared to lead a purely animal existence, is first informed with a new intellectual life. True it is, that there is one great Definer who with perfect success draws the line between the Body and the Soul of man, but that Definer’s name is Death.

Before finally quitting this subject of the Analogy between Scripture and the compound Being of Man, let me mention one minor lesson which I draw from it as to the comparative value of different portions of the Bible. I have known sincere-hearted Christians who have held themselves in duty bound to regard all parts of Holy Scripture with equal reverence, and to read them all with equal interest. I do not believe they have ever succeeded in fully realising their ideal, but they have striven to work themselves up to this point, and if they did not find themselves reading the 7th chapter of Numbers,

verse by verse, with the same interest and attention which they delighted to bestow on the 7th of Acts, they have imagined that the fault must be in themselves, and have grieved over their own imagined shortcoming. I do not believe that this absolute equality of value for the different parts of Scripture is required of us. There are passages in both the Old and New Testament, in the writings both of Prophets, Evangelists, and Apostles, where Jesus Christ is so manifestly set before us, the interpreter of God's love to a ruined race, that we feel ourselves in reading them, like a man looking with earnest gaze into the answering eyes of One whom he loves, at those times when the intervening veil of matter is felt to be the thinnest, and Spirit all but communes with Spirit, none intervening between them. Then there are many other narrative passages which do not indeed bring us so close to the mysteries of Christ's Kingdom, but which display the general bearings of his character and office. So the very lines of the face of a friend speak to us of his disposition, and often tell to the eye of love, a tale of self-mastery or of patient endurance which the world, unsympathising, knows little of. And yet again, there are many other portions, especially those describing the history of the Chosen People, which while full of interest as revealing to us the general outline of God's Providential Government of the world, and his preparation of one peculiar soil to receive the seed of the

Kingdom, do not, I at once admit, in themselves speak to us so clearly of *our* Father's love as either of the classes which we have before named. These I would liken to the "less honourable members" of the human body. But are they therefore to be left unstudied? No, by no means. These too display something of the character and purposes of Him whom we desire to know, and Art herself will tell us, that no member of the body is unimportant in her view, that the very shape of the fingers and the outline of the instep are faithfully reproduced by the truly great Artist, since these too have to bear their part in revealing to us the inner nature of the man portrayed.

Scientific
difficul-
ties.

VII. It remains for me to make a few remarks,—very few they must be, in proportion to the countless avenues of Thought opened up by the subject—concerning the relation of the Scriptures to Science.

In the history of this question, three main periods may be traced. When the intellect of Europe first began to awake from the sleep of mediæval barbarism, its tendency, as represented by the schoolmen, was to look upon the Bible, or rather upon the Bible's Guardian and Interpreter, the Church, as the one infallible Expounder of all Truth both Human and Divine. And thus Science was, or professed to be bounded in all her investigations into the nature

of things by Revelation. The Scriptures were the quarry from whence the Subtle, or the Seraphic, or the Irrefragable Doctor using Aristotelian Logic as his pickaxe, was to hew out all Truth, Physical, Intellectual, or Spiritual.

The protest against this monstrous perversion of God's choicest gifts to man culminated in Bacon, and in the *Novum Organon* it found both voice and victory. Roughly speaking, for the two following centuries, the 17th and 18th, Physical Science and the Christian Revelation lived side by side in reasonably harmonious neighbourhood. Of course there were doubters in abundance, especially towards the end of this period; but Metaphysics rather than Physics, and Literature rather than Science were the weapons of their warfare; and I think we shall not err in saying, that the majority of enquirers into the nature of the Material Universe were also professed believers in the Authority of the Scriptures.

The upheaval of Europe at the end of last century, and the enormous additions made to the domain of human knowledge during the last sixty years have changed all this. Literature and Philosophy, at any rate as represented by their highest names, are for the most part friendly to the Christian Revelation: Physical Science is for the most part (we know there are some memorable exceptions) either hostile or coldly neutral. Yet, let me not state this antagonism more strongly than it actually

exists. In England, at any rate, it very seldom assumes the form of deliberate rejection of Christ, or denial of the assertion that he is the heaven-sent Saviour of Mankind : rather is it an entire negation of the claim of the Bible to be in any sense "the word" or message "of God," and a scarce concealed pleasure in proving its statements one after another to be scientifically inaccurate, yet withal a conviction that somehow or other the essentials of Christianity will remain after the Divine Authority of the Bible is overthrown. But I think it is hardly too much to say, that in the present temper of men's minds, the fact of a particular theory squaring with the testimony of Scripture on the point in question, would actually militate *against* its reception by the greater part of the Scientific world.

In short, in the first period Science was supposed to be the sworn vassal of Revelation, in the second, she was her friendly Ally, in the third, she is (too often) her bitter antagonist.

I have spoken—it is difficult in these matters to avoid speaking—of Science and Revelation, as if they were two complete and independent Personalities, and as if it were possible that there could be hostility or antagonism between them. Yet, whenever this idea is present to the mind, we are really thinking not of Science but of some of the Scientific men of one particular generation, not of

Revelation, but of some of the Advocates of Revelation at one especial time. These may be advancing claims which their brief never warranted ; those may be smarting under the pain of long oppression, dazed with the light of some new truth just won, or mistaking the dim outlines of some truth, as yet but half risen above the horizon. To say that I believe that Science and Revelation essentially and *per se* can never be at variance, is but to say, that "I believe in one God, Maker of Heaven and Earth," who has revealed himself to mankind ; for successful Science is but the observation of the working of his hands, and true Revelation but the echo of his voice.

Without doubt Scientific Men, in their earnest and simple search after Truth, have oftentimes suffered great injustice at the hands of Theologians. A sad instance of the arrogance of well-meaning ignorance is afforded by no less illustrious a name than Luther's. "Mention was made in his presence of a new Astronomer (Copernicus), who sought to prove that it was the Earth which turned round, and not the Firmament, the Sun, and the Moon ; and who said that the inhabitants of the world generally, were in the same position with the person who, being in a chariot, or in a ship, imagines he sees the coast or the trees of the roadside flying away behind him. 'Ah!' observed Luther, 'this is quite the way of the world now-a-days. . . .

This silly fellow, for instance, wants to upset the old established Astronomy ; but, according to the Scripture, Joshua commanded the *Sun* to stand still, and not the earth.' ”—(*Michelet's Life of Luther, Ed. Bohn, p. 289*). This surely ought to be a lasting caution to us against arguing in scientific discussions, “The Bible says so and so, therefore, this asserted discovery of Science must be wrong”—against following the example of that most unwise, though, no doubt, excellently intentioned disputant, who at a meeting of the British Association, triumphantly held up his Bible as the only but conclusive answer to a purely scientific statement, made by one of the members.

Let us, therefore, entirely dismissing from our minds the old scholastic claim, unwarranted by Scripture, unwarranted by Reason, to find in Scripture a Cyclopædia of all Sciences, Human and Divine, let us inquire, what are in fact the points of variance, real or supposed, between the Bible and Modern Science. I believe I shall not err in asserting, that they may all be reduced to three (though I fully admit that for some purposes three might be as effective as three hundred).

1. ASTRONOMICAL.—It is evident enough that none of the writers of Scripture had any idea of the truth of the Copernican theory. The Earth was to them, probably, a flat disc, bordered by the Ocean, the Sun and Moon and Heavenly Bodies all revolving

around it. Whereas we know that God has made the Earth a sphere revolving on its own axis, and also round its far-off solar centre, and that again, possibly, round some immeasurably distant point in the universe.

2. GEOLOGICAL.—The First Chapter of Genesis appears, on first reading, to assert that the Earth and Heaven were all made in ~~seven~~ *six* periods of 24 hours each, at a time which, as subsequent Chapters inform us, was only separated from the present day by about 6,000 years. More attentive study shows us that this is not really stated so sharply and definitely as we had at first supposed; yet the general impression remains of a recent origin, at least, of organic life. Geology seems to have proved, as far as any fact in physical science can be considered proved, that ages of incalculable vastness must have passed before the Earth alone (to say nothing of the other heavenly bodies) was prepared for the abode of its present inhabitants; and that, through many of these ages, the land and the waters teemed with animal and vegetable existences. The account given in Genesis of the Deluge also, appears at first sight to suggest an universal deluge over the whole surface of our planet, which Science refuses to acquiesce in, though willing to accept, all that the narrative, with its strong Oriental forms of speech, is probably intended to convey—a *local* inundation sufficient to destroy the whole of the

then existing family of man, and the creatures dependent on him.

3. * ETHNOLOGICAL OR ANTHROPOLOGICAL. The Bible seems to assert the derivation of all mankind

* I do not wish to enter here into any *detailed* examination of any of these points of variance; but as *this* question is still *sub judice*, I may be permitted to notice one or two considerations which, to a non-scientific mind, seem to throw some doubt and obscurity over the conclusion to which Science appears likely to commit herself. If the human race have really lasted even 100,000 years, it seems strange that its *conscious* history should reach back so little way, strange that in the annals of the most ancient nations with which we are acquainted, Egypt, Babylon, China, we should find no firm footing further back than, at earliest, B.C. 5,000, strange that we should have no Time-defying structures like the Egyptian Pyramids, or the Roman Aqueducts, of a vastly greater antiquity than any of these; stranger still (if we are told that during those preceding 95,000 years the Human Race was slowly raising itself into civilization) that we so very rarely see this process repeated by any tribe of savages now *without assistance from some more highly civilized race outside of them*, though we do see abundant traces of the contrary process, Civilization sinking down into Barbarism.

As for the argument derived from the present variety of national types, I venture to suggest, with much diffidence, whether those who accept in any sense the doctrine of the *Creation* as distinct from the *development* of Man, may not also acquiesce in the possibility that by a fresh act of the Creative Will, differences of type may have been at some distant period impressed upon particular individuals, the chosen progenitors of the varying races of mankind. A new force, "an attraction of repulsion," so to speak, would thus have been imported into the Dynamics of Humanity, the object being to counterwork that too

from a single pair of ancestors, that pair having been created not more than 4,000 or 5,000 years before the Christian era. Scientific men, while pretty evenly divided on the question of the unity of

strong tendency of the atoms to gravitate into one mass which had hitherto prevented the "replenishing of the Earth" from going on with sufficient rapidity and extensiveness.

And upon the whole matter, looking to the singularly close accordance which exists between that part of the Scripture history which we can compare with human annals, and these annals themselves—an accordance which the investigations of the last twenty years has strengthened rather than weakened—my inclination is to believe, putting the question of their Divine authority aside for the time, that they will also be found a safe guide to follow in the dimmer twilight, where we are unable to apply any such test to prove their veracity. Yet I am withal desirous to bear well in mind, that many sincere believers in the truth of Scripture, hold and have long held the idea that the early chapters of Genesis have an allegorical character which is not shared by the later chapters of the same book and the other books of the Pentateuch; and that the same canons of interpretation are not to be applied to all alike. That this notion, be it true or false, is no mere device for evading a present difficulty, but springs from a consideration of the text of Scripture itself, take Sir T. Browne's *Religio Medici* (page 82), published in 1642, as proof:—

"And truly for the first chapters of Genesis, I must confess a great deal of obscurity; though Divines have to the power of humane reason endeavoured to make all go in a literal meaning, yet those allegorical interpretations are also probable, and perhaps the mystical method of Moses bred up in the Hieroglyphical Schools of the Egyptians."

origin of the human race, seem, on the whole, disposed to agree in claiming for it a much greater antiquity—say hundreds of thousands of years instead of thousands. Some of the strongest advocates for Unity of Origin (who are willing so far to agree with Scripture), appear to consider themselves bound to claim the most enormously extended period of duration, in order to allow room for the gradual introduction of the now existing varieties of type. Upon the whole question Science cannot be said to have yet delivered her verdict; but it is not difficult to see in which direction the minds of the Jury lean. And, if it be finally given in that direction and maintained by irrefragable argument, we must, of course, accept it, as we have already accepted the utterances of Astronomy and Geology, and readjust our previous opinions in accordance therewith.

1. Now, with reference to all these divergencies, I have to remark at the outset, that the bitterest opponent of Scripture would not class them with the ludicrous errors of those cosmogonies which form the bases of so many other religions.

We have here no such stories as that Indian one, of the world being supported by a gigantic elephant, who stands on a still more gigantic tortoise: we have no laying of world-eggs, or manufacture of mountain ridges out of giants' bones as in Greek mythology. We may say, in fact, that everything

here described really *is* or *has been*, but that it is described from Man's point of view, and, possibly, with an imperfect reproduction of the aerial perspective of the picture. If we accept Hugh Miller's suggestion that the history of the Creation was conveyed to the inspired narrator in a series of visions, somewhat like those which were at a later period vouchsafed to the Prophets, then our very experience of these Prophetic writings themselves will lead us to look for these characteristics in the description—faithfulness as to the *general outline of the objects revealed*, vagueness and perhaps no little ignorance as to the *intervals of time by which those objects were separated one from another*. I can well believe that Moses, with reference to Time Past, even as the Prophets and Apostles with reference to Time Future, was not permitted "to know the times and the seasons" in which the Father worked out his own far-reaching counsels: and this limitation of the knowledge of the scribe I can at once and without difficulty refer to the human element with which the Divine Message has garmented itself. Limitation of knowledge, be it observed, not unfaithfulness in its utterance. An Artist, let us say, sits down to sketch a wide expanse of sea, with distant headlands far away in the horizon; he knows that those three minute specks of black on the left of his picture are rocks; but he is very likely ignorant that each one is a *group* of rocks, thickly

encrusted with organic life, a little World of interest and delight to the scientific explorer, and that the sea, upon whose bosom they seem so calmly resting, is at this very moment swirling in impetuous eddies through their hundred channels, and by its heavings up and down forbidding any boat to lie there in safety ; he knows not that the thin scarcely discernible line in the cliff to the right of these, stands for a chasm in the rocks more than seventy yards wide, and though he sees and strives to reproduce in his picture some marked difference of shade, and, consequently, of nearness in the two succeeding headlands, he knows not nor would ever have conjectured that the bay thus guarded, narrows into a gulf, and the gulf widens out again into a lake, which runs up for miles inland, and well nigh insulates him, the artist, from the coast which he has been depicting. Still, he has honestly and successfully laboured to reproduce that which the sense of sight did reveal to him, though his picture, could it be cross-examined like a witness in a Court of Justice, would very likely betray his ignorance on some of these points as to which he remained in darkness.

Even so, as it seems to me, would Moses probably describe what was revealed to him in vision of the far distant Past, or Isaiah, of the fore-shadowed Future, faithfully describing events, but often ignorant by what intervals these events were

separated one from another. Furthermore, could we imagine a blind man setting himself to study the Natural History and configuration of that very Coast line, he would probably in the course of time make out for himself all these facts of which the Artist was ignorant: yet surely more of the real glory of God's handiwork in the scene is revealed to the Painter in one flash of sight, than years of patient labour can unfold to the blind Student. Something like this is perhaps the relation borne by such Vision of the Creation as may have been vouchsafed to Moses, to such knowledge of it as the Geologist conquers for himself.

2. Still there is no doubt that the non-scientific character of these descriptions is a stone of stumbling to many of the present generation. Miracles they do not desire, indeed, many of them say that the existence of alleged miracles is a positive hindrance to their belief in a Revelation; but the presence in the Scriptures of any discovery of modern Science, the enunciation, for instance, of Kepler's Laws, or Dalton's Theory, or some hint of the marvels of Spectral Analysis would have greatly gratified that craving after "a sign," which our age also feels, though it loves not to avow it.

Yet, on reflection, we must see that such thoughts, while reviving the old and exploded fallacy of the schoolmen, do also claim of the Most High that which, without "respect of persons,"

could not have been granted to this generation. How infinitely small a proportion in space and time do the scientific investigators of our day bear to the millions in past centuries or still living in humble homes, for whom as much as for these Christ died, to whom as much as to these God meant the knowledge of his will to come. To all these millions the presence in the Scriptures of the sublime paradoxes of Science would have constituted a positive barrier against their acceptance of the Truth. It is not too much to say, that one good clear statement by Moses, of the Copernican Theory alone, would have made the path of the Hebrew incalculably more difficult to tread, would probably have seemed to thousands a sufficient reason for adopting the always alluring worship of Baal or Astarte, and renouncing the hard covenant with Jehovah, who, it would be said, "not only requires of his worshippers this severe and almost unattainable austerity of morals, but bids us believe, in plain contradiction to all the evidence of our senses, and all the wisdom of the learned, that this flat earth fixed immovably beneath us, is a round ball, rolling with the rapidity of a whirlwind through the heavens."

3. And who can tell, even now, that a full and complete revelation of the nature of the Physical Universe, interwoven with the Scriptures, would not, even to the men of this generation, prove

hindering rather than helpful. The foremost men in the ranks of Science, those who have done the most themselves to add to her domains, are they who realise the most vividly how much yet remains to be done, how far we still are from penetrating into the mysteries of Life and Being. And if we could imagine a Prophet now commissioned to come forth and declare these to us, and at the same time to inform us what it was the will of God that we should do, how much was comprehended in our duty towards him and towards our fellow-men, it is likely that the practical part of his message would suffer from its union with the theoretic, that the Scientific Truths which the men of Science are not yet prepared to assimilate, would prove a positive hindrance to their being nourished by the Spiritual Verities which accompanied them.*

* It is possible even that some of the Propositions which Science has already established, would not a little bewilder many of her disciples, if stripped of the technical language in which they are usually clothed. It must be confessed that Physical Science is apt to talk a strange artificial dialect, curiously compounded of derivatives from the Greek, (which would move one of the old Hellenes to most sincere astonishment, if he were told that they belonged to his language,) and barbarous surnames of modern discoverers fitted with a classical ending. Yet these very names, once mastered by the memory, are the catchwords, so to speak, by which many of the rank and file of Science apprehend and retain Scientific Truth; and were this enunciated simply, and in language fitting more closely to the

4. But the best summing up of the whole question is contained in the now trite maxim, "*The Bible was not meant to teach us Science.*" Whatever the reason may be, whether any of those here hinted at, or that other more commonly put forward,—that God would not enervate man's intellectual faculties by giving him that truth ready to his hand which he had provided him with the means of thinking out for himself—here is the fact, and Theologians and Men of Science, as they have really agreed in accepting this conclusion, should consider what practical consequences flow from it to each of them.

My belief is, that the Bible is—to state the matter as simply as possible—*God's Message to Man*. These two beings, God and Man, are the two all-important terms of every proposition with which it has to deal. Thus in those early chapters of Genesis, where there appears to be the nearest approach to Scientific teaching, the true Predicate of the main proposition is not Scientific but Religious, and the Science is introduced as part of the definition of the Subject. The object of these chapters is, not to teach us with scientific accuracy one particular cosmogony, but to say—

God—who made the Heavens, and the Earth, and the Sea, and all that is therein,

Nature of Things, it would be perhaps only the minds of the real Discoverers that would be able to follow it step by step, and recognize its identity with that which they at present hold.

Made Man also ;

Made him sinless, but free to choose between good and evil ;

Saw his fall with sorrow, and

Pledged himself to provide a means of redemption.

Now the question is, considering all the countless attestations to the truth of the Bible-message,—attestations which we cannot here even hint at, except collectively—Miracles, Prophecy, the very existence of the Jewish Nation and the Christian Church, the character of Christ, the adaptation of his Gospel to the Individual Man and to the Human Race, the testimony of the Martyrs, the lives of Christians, and still more their deaths, the answer which Scripture gives to the deepest yearnings of the Soul of Man, the harmony which it brings back into that otherwise wild and bitter discord which we call Human Life, considering all these things, will you reject the message, and say that it comes not from God, because the message-bearers were men ignorant of modern Science ? I hardly know how to convey my sense of the disproportion between the negative and the positive quantities in this case, between the objection taken and the evidences ignored. Yet, if we could imagine an officer in the thickest of the fight on the day of Waterloo, refusing to advance his troops to cover an important movement on his flank, and thereby imperilling the whole fortune of the day, simply because the aide-

de-camp, who brought the message, in some way mispronounced one of the words in it, "You sound the ou in Hougoumont as if it was û. I am sure that His Grace is too good a French scholar to have made such a mistake, and I shall not obey an order which for this reason cannot come from him"—that would in some measure express our notion of the absurdity of disbelief on such grounds as these with which we are now concerned. Or again, in a case of shipwreck which actually occurred a few months ago in the North of England, the lives of half the passengers and crew were lost, owing to a mistake in fixing the rocket apparatus too low down on the mast of the ship, which caused the tackle to "foul." Imagine that before this was done, one of the landsmen standing by had swum out at the peril of his life to bring the captain word from the sailors on shore, how the apparatus should be placed, but in doing so, had failed to pronounce in true sailor fashion the name of the fore-top-gallant yards to which it ought to be affixed; that the captain for this reason refused to believe that his message came from sailors, and that all those lives were lost in consequence. This, also, would seem to me a not more insane procedure than the rejection of Scripture, because the revelations made to Moses anticipated not the discoveries of Copernicus or of Lyell.*

* See Note in page 43.

VIII. For this is after all the main question for each man to answer for himself. Practical
Conclu-
sions.
 "If it be reasonably probable that this book is a message to Man from his Creator, what must I do to share the deliverance and to escape the dangers of which it speaks?"

The first question for us is the moral and practical one. The speculative and theoretical one—as to the nature and extent of Inspiration, comes far later in the true order of enquiry: and no honest hearted seeker after truth should reverse this order. Many, of course, there are in our day, whose objections to the Christian Revelation are not free from the taint of self-interest, who are at heart anxious that it should be proved untrue, who weary of its high and holy teaching and would fain ostracise the Lawgiver, whom, with an unanimity which begins to be tedious to them, eighteen centuries have agreed in recognising as emphatically The Just One. It is not to these men, who for the sake of obtaining a wilder license are saying, "Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us;" that I address myself. To them, one seems to hear the Lord saying, "If any man hear my words and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." But there are men,

and to them I speak, who long to believe, if they could, firmly and heartily, that God has revealed himself to Man by Jesus Christ, and who would, if they could accept the Christian Scriptures as the written record of his will : but the voices of doubt which are in the air trouble them, the apparent opposition of Science fills them with dismay, and they are like the ranks of an army just beginning to waver in its position when whispers, "The day is lost" begin to pass from one to another, and even the brave man looking on the face of his fellow sees his own unuttered fear written there. To such men I would say : You stake your faith on far too narrow an issue. The point towards which you are looking—and whose danger I believe you exaggerate—is not, is far indeed from being, "the key of the position." I desire not to under-estimate the importance to the Believer, of a right faith in the Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, but I hold that faith in certain great facts therein recorded comes far before it in the history of the human soul. I utterly dissent from and renounce the doctrine insinuated in the cry, "Christianity without Judaism;" yet I am fully persuaded that to us, not Jewish born, but "sinners of the Gentiles," the New Testament, last of the two volumes in the order of composition, is first in the order of belief. Could the Apostle Paul revisit the earth to prove the descendants of his Gentile converts as to the faith that

was in them, I am sure that his first question would not be, "Dost thou accept the theory of literal Inspiration?" or, "In what sense dost thou interpret the Mosaic record of Creation?" but rather, "Dost thou believe in Jesus and the Resurrection?" and then, "Hast thou received the Holy Ghost?" Thus, it is with events which happened in the full blaze of historic light, the Life, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ that we are primarily concerned, and no amount of groping enquiry into "the origins of Earth and Man" can really unsettle these. It is true that later on, and after we have accepted him as our Saviour, the question, "In what relation did this Saviour stand to the Old Covenant?" will probably force itself upon our attention. We find his coming in the flesh continually spoken of both by himself and his Apostles as the fulfilment of that Covenant: he answers the Tempter by three quotations from Deuteronomy, and the Sadducees by a verse from Exodus: he commands or accepts* the examination of "the Scriptures," as bearing witness to himself; his chosen Evangelists everywhere quote the Old Testament prophecies as divinely-inspired predictions of him; he says that "the Scripture cannot be broken," and that "not one jot or one tittle of the Law shall pass till all be fulfilled," and the Apostle of the Gentiles says, "Well spoke the Holy Spirit

* ἐπεινῶτε Imperative or Indicative.

by Isaiah, the Prophet." My own feeling is, that all this could not have been unless the Old Testament had been substantially, what it professed to be, the Divinely-inspired record of God's covenant with his people. Without being thereby bound to accept all the minutiae of the Masoretic annotators, I feel that the attestation of him who was himself The Truth, *is* hereby given to the broad outline of the message of that Covenant. And even in giving this attestation, he and his Apostles have given us a key to unlock its really hardest passages—those of moral and spiritual difficulty—by such expressions as these, "Moses, *because of the hardness of your hearts* suffered you to put away your wives." "The Law was added because of transgressions." "The Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ," all of which entitle us to speak of the Old Dispensation as but an imperfect reflection of the attributes of our Heavenly Father—a compromise, may we venture to say, between his Light and the thick Darkness which was covering the Nations.

I must repeat it once more, at the risk of iteration even to weariness; the true question involved is not a theoretical, but a practical one. This man, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, "declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead," is set forth as our present Saviour, as our future Judge. Shall we accept and confess him now, that he may confess us then, and place

us at his right hand ; or shall we on some slight pretence evade confession of him now, to hear from his reluctant lips, in that day, the word "Depart." There is no middle course possible. We must accept him or reject him : " he that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." Even silence may be hostile, and much more may the slightly veiled sarcasm, the shrug of the shoulders, the sneering innuendo, " Nous avons changé tout cela"—do the work of the enemy. Yes, of the common enemy ; it is not " Divines" or "Theologians" alone, whose position Infidelity endangers ; thy hopes and mine are equally at stake in the question, " Has God spoken to us by Jesus Christ?" and, reverently let me say it, neither thy life nor mine would be worth living if he had not. But to as many as do receive this Saviour, he gives power to become the sons of God, and is willing to give a share of that Holy Spirit which, though not revealing to them new truths as to the mysteries of redemption, brings the old ones with a new force home to their hearts, while adding no chapters to the books containing the message, does help them to understand under what inspiration they were first composed.

For every one of these Sons of God, not for one caste or order or sect alone, there is a work to do, and in doing it, the spiritual muscles grow firm and the spiritual eye grows bright and clear. The diffi-

culties which, to the mere Student seem infinite, the soldier of Christ feels to be infinitesimal. In actual conflict with Sin and Sorrow, he perceives how helpless he would be without God's message in his hand, as well as God's grace in his heart; and without rigorously defining the exact measure in which the Holy Spirit has co-operated in every word, we believe he will generally accept the old-fashioned doctrine that the Bible is God's Book, as expressing with the instinctive truthfulness of popular conviction, and more nearly than any mere speculative refinement, the truth as to the weapons of his warfare. And if sometimes, when he is out of sight and hearing of the great tide of Human Life, in the solitude of his study, the intellectual and especially the scientific Difficulty comes back to him in exaggerated proportions, he will do wisely to accept the advice of a modern poet—

“Wait, nor against the half-learned lesson fret;
Nor chide at old belief as if it erred,
Because thou canst not reconcile as yet
The Worker and his Word.”

He who thus patiently, yet not idly, waits, shall have, I doubt not, one day, his part in the promise of Christ, “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth.”

NOTE (TO P. 36.)—The Author does not mean to imply, by the comparisons here made, that the Scientific difficulties to be met with in the Bible are of no more importance than the trifling inaccuracies there imagined. The point upon which he wishes to insist is this: a man may be a good and trusty messenger, and may faithfully convey the whole message entrusted to him, yet if cross-questioned he may display even gross ignorance upon points as to which his principal *must* have been well-informed. Therefore the fact that the writers of the Old and New Testaments were imperfectly acquainted with matters of Science does not prove that we do wrong in listening to them on Religious subjects as the spokesmen of the Omniscient One.

The Author admits that it is to some extent a question of degree: but, while utterly unable to prove, he can easily believe, that when viewed in the light of Eternity, the Scientific difficulties in question will be found to bear no larger proportion to the truths revealed than the mispronunciations he has imagined, to the orders conveyed.

Notes (to p. 28).—The Author does not mean to apply, by
the comparison, I to make, that the words difficulties to be
used with in the Bible are of no more importance than the trifling
inconveniences there imagined. The point upon which he wishes to
insist is this: a man may be a good and truly religious man, &
may faithfully convey the whole message entrusted to him, yet if
any question be raised, he may display even gross ignorance upon points
as to which the principal and have been well-instructed. There-
fore the fact that the errors of the Old and New Testaments
were imperfectly acquainted with matters of doctrine does not
prove that we do wrong in listening to them on religious
subjects as the supporters of the Christian Religion.

The Author admits that it is to some extent a question of
fact, but which admits to be proved by an equal degree of
fact when viewed in the light of History, the scientific dis-
cussion in question will be found to bear no better proportion to
the matter itself than the imagination he has imagined,
to the main context.