

fall, and no amount of histrionic sensuous ceremonial will prevent her ruin. Like Ephesus which left her first love, like Thyatira which suffered Jezebel to teach, like Laodicea which became lukewarm, her candlestick will be taken away. The glory will depart from her. The pillar of cloud and fire will be removed. The best and most loyal of her children will forsake her in disgust, and, like an army whose soldiers have gone away, leaving nothing behind but officers and band, the Church will perish, miserably and unpitied but deservedly, for want of Churchmen.

J. C. LIVERPOOL.



ART. II.—THE STUDY OF CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE WITH
A VIEW TO MEET POPULAR OBJECTIONS.

1. *Principles of Mental Physiology.* By WILLIAM B. CARPENTER, M.D., LL.D. King. 1874.
2. *A Candid Examination of Theism.* By PHYSICUS. Trübner. 1878.
3. *Easy Lessons on Christian Evidence.* By Archbishop WHATELY. C.K.S.
4. *Word, Work and Will.* By the Archbishop of YORK. Murray. 1880.
5. *Lectures and Essays.* By the late W. K. CLIFFORD. Macmillan. 1879.

HITHERTO the study of evidence has not been made sufficiently popular. It is not easy to make it popular. The subject is abstruse, extending over a wide range, and tasking in no ordinary degree the attention and memory of the student. With the single exception of Archbishop Whately's "Easy Lessons on Christian Evidence," it is hard to find any treatise on evidence which is at once interesting in itself and within the comprehension of those persons by whom this instruction is the most needed. And it is well known that this little tract cost the illustrious author more labour, and was more carefully and more frequently revised, than any other of his numerous works—while, on the other hand, the greatest of all books on evidence, which is also, perhaps, the noblest example of accurate reasoning and judicial impartiality to be found in the whole range of English literature, Butler's "Analogy," is, at the same time, one of the most difficult and least attractive of all books to the non-professional student. Although the range of

physical science has been extended almost indefinitely since Butler's time, so that it would appear that the contest is henceforth to be waged on a different field and for other interests, there is really (with the single exception of the one chapter on the future life) scarcely a sentence in the whole book which is not as useful as ever to the student of evidence, and we see in almost every page, not less in his wonderful caution in never pushing an argument beyond its strictly logical application than in the fair statement of objections that Butler had foreseen and provided against difficulties which, in his day, were only coming into prominence, but in our time have excited an absorbing interest. The pure gold is there. It only needs to be re-minted, and issued in smaller coins, to meet the every-day wants of our modern readers, who have no taste for such books, and by whom such arguments would scarcely be understood.

The teacher of Christian evidence, with a view to the needs of the present time, will have to cultivate the art of exposing popular fallacies and bringing arguments which have been addressed to the student of divinity down to the level of the men who have had none of these advantages, and who have neither capacity nor inclination to weigh arguments which suppose some knowledge of the subject and which demand long and sustained habits of disciplined attention. He must not be afraid of science, nor unwilling to employ the accepted terms of science in defence of religion.

The struggle is no longer for a division of the territory of human thought between two jealous rivals, nor even of a compromise, but of an absolute, unconditional, and dishonourable surrender. If there be no personal God, no intelligent Creator, and no moral Governor of the world, religion is impossible, and in "matter" must reside the promise and potency of all external things, as well as all the thoughts and associations and works of the greatest as well as the meanest of men. In the presence of such a controversy as this all other questions are comparatively insignificant. Not only the questions which divide Churches from each other, but even essential verities of the Christian faith, and other departments of evidence such as miracles and prophecy, are small in comparison. It is useless to examine the claims of miracle and prophecy, so long as some men believe that there is no God who can act and who has spoken to mankind. The discussion may be painful, difficult, complicated, but it is inevitable. All other questions must wait until this has been considered. It is well to know, at least, what issues are at stake and on what field and with what weapons this decisive battle of all the ages is to be fought.

I shall give my readers certain cautions as to the salient points of this controversy.

It is necessary at the outset to understand the attitude of science towards religion. This meets us at the threshold of our subject and must be taken into account. It is important to show that the foundations of religion have not been weakened by the progress of modern science. We must notice the direction of modern scientific inquiry, especially those discoveries of very recent date which are supposed to have endangered the proof of an intelligent Creator and moral Governor of the world, so that our friends may understand exactly the present position of this controversy.

It is difficult to discuss these questions in popular language. And yet the attempt must be made. We must refrain from harsh words, and, however keenly we feel the immeasurable importance of the issues at stake, we must render impartial justice to the arguments of our opponents, and try to show that we can understand, and have weighed candidly and fairly, the difficulties of their position as well as the difficulties of our own, and that we give them credit for motives as honourable as those which influence ourselves.

We may even go farther than this and admit the intense earnestness which has marked the struggle between darkness and light in the souls of many who seem to have made shipwreck of their faith, and we may pray that through God's great mercy they may yet be led to retrace their steps, and may find that joy and peace in religion, the want of which has been to them the eclipse of the sun at noon-day. Few sadder words have ever been written than those in which the anonymous author of "A Candid Examination of Theism" concludes the treatise in which he has tried to controvert the well-known arguments for Theism:—

Forasmuch as I am far from being able to agree with those who affirm that the twilight doctrine of the "new faith" is a desirable substitute for the waning splendour "of the old," I am not ashamed to confess that, with this virtual negation of God, the Universe to me has lost its soul of loveliness, and although from henceforth the precept "to work while it is day," will doubtless but gain an intensified force from the terribly intensified meaning of the words that "the night cometh, when no man can work," yet, when at times I think, as think at times I must, of the appalling contrast between the hallowed glory of that creed which once was mine and the lonely mystery of existence as now I find it—at such times I shall ever feel it impossible to avoid the sharpest pang of which my nature is susceptible.

One cannot but sympathize most deeply with the writer of this passage. Nor is he alone. Similar words are found in other writings of men who might be called the *Apostles of despair*.

On those who undertake to meet them on their own ground

there lies a heavy weight of responsibility that no words be spoken in bitterness, but rather in the hope that we may lead them to retrace their steps. Surely such men will be the first to acknowledge that they have spoken bitter things against themselves, and that the premises on which they have relied will not justify the inference that God has left Himself without a witness in the world around us, as well as in the mind and conscience and heart of man. This is not only right in itself and the only way by which we can hope to gain a hearing or to make any impression on the minds which we desire to convince, but it will be found to be the most effective of all arguments, for in many cases we shall see that, even granting the objection, it does not overthrow the truth against which it was directed. In other cases it will be found that men have taken up as a part of the Christian revelation, some theory of man's devising for which it is not responsible, or perhaps an injudicious advocate has employed an unsound argument, which, being refuted, is not allowed to drop out of the controversy altogether and count for nothing (as it ought to do), but is then paraded as a positive objection to the truth, so that it can easily be shown that even by its own admission, or rather on the admission of its most anti-Christian exponents, science has really proved nothing which the most devout Christian ought to be unwilling or afraid to accept.

We must distinguish between the unproved unverified hypotheses of science, the conjectures unsupported by a single fact, and the principles which are universally admitted. The former are not science but conjecture. The latter are not inconsistent with revelation.

What is the last utterance of science on this question of questions? Some men of science have assured us that, since the establishment of the scientific doctrine of the correlation of physical forces, and the publication of a famous treatise on the "Mechanical Equivalent of Heat," the belief in an intelligent author of the world is, perhaps, no longer scientifically indispensable.

Modern science has discovered that all the physico-chemical forces, through which the various changes in the world of matter have been produced, such as gravitation, motion, heat, electricity, and chemical affinity, are interchangeable, or convertible one into the other, that retarded motion turns to heat—that each force generates another equal force so much, and no more—that no force is lost, though a force may pass from an active to a potential state, that the force expended by the drops of water which turn the wheels of a corn mill is no more than the paying back a portion of the force which (perhaps ages before) was spent by the sun's heat which raised it by evaporation, drop by drop,

from the surface of the sea. This process of compensation is so perfect, that, before the water comes down again into the sea, it will have spent, through friction on the river-bed and tasks imposed on it by the ingenuity of man, exactly so much force as it originally cost the sun, perhaps centuries before, to raise it from the ocean-bed to that place in the overhanging sky, from which it was precipitated in fertilizing showers on the thirsty earth. We may therefore accept these two propositions, as demonstrated scientific truths, that the forces of physical nature are convertible, and that no force is ever lost. It is also an accepted truth that vital force, the force which is expended in the several operations of our bodies, the force by which we move our arms and by which every part of this our animal mechanism is kept going, has the same relation to the various forms of physical force which they have to each other.

The absorbing interest and grandeur and beauty of these discoveries no words can adequately describe. But it cannot be seriously maintained that they go so far as to disprove the existence of God. In fact there are certain words in the Psalms with which we are familiar which describe the unity of the works of God by language which would need very little change to make it an accurate scientific description of this newest and greatest discovery of modern scientific research. All men of science would admit, whether Theists or Atheists, that the history of the material universe could not be other than it is. The belief in special unconnected acts of creation is no part of the Christian faith. We all admit that God acts by general laws, that the sphere of the action of these laws is wider than we had anticipated, and goes farther back, even so far as to the period when this world, now so full of beauty and harmony and power and happiness and life, may have been only a rotating mass of heated vapour. But this is perfectly consistent with our belief in the Creator working by these laws. In the book called "A Candid Examination of Theism," by Physicus, which is the latest and the ablest exposition of the principles of materialism, the conclusion is given in these words:—"Result of the exposition—suspended judgment, the only logical attitude of mind with regard to the question of Theism." "*Suspended judgment*,"—*i.e.*, it is said to be no longer impossible to construct a theory of the universe without what has been called the *hypothesis of God*. This is the utmost point to which the most advanced thinkers of this school have been able to go. Let us examine it for a moment.

The treatise called "A Candid Examination of Theism," by Physicus, has been adopted by many anti-Christian writers as the latest and most accurate defence of their position. He examines the truth of Christianity from the side of science, and

absolutely declines to apply to the investigation any other than scientific tests. His words are:—

If there is a God, it is certain that reason is the faculty by which he has enabled man to discover truth, and it is no less certain that the scientific methods have proved themselves by far the most trustworthy for reason to adopt. To my mind, therefore, it is impossible to resist the conclusion that, looking to this undoubted pre-eminence of the scientific methods as ways to truth, whether or not there is a God, the question as to his existence is both morally and more reverently contemplated if we regard it purely as a problem for methodical analysis to solve, than if we regard it in any other light. Or, stating the case in other words, I believe that in whatever degree we intentionally abstain from using in this case what we *know* to be the most trustworthy methods of inquiry in other cases, in that degree are we either unworthily closing our eyes to a dreaded truth, or we are guilty of the worst among human sins. "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." If it is said that, supposing man to be in a state of probation, faith and not reason must be the instrument of his trial, I am ready to admit the validity of the remark; but I must also ask it to be remembered, that unless faith has some basis of reason whereon to rest, it differs in nothing from superstition, and hence that it is still our duty to investigate the *rational* standing of the question before us by the scientific methods alone.

These words, which are found in the preface to the book and may therefore be regarded as describing the writer's object and method, show very clearly the fallacy which underlies his whole argument. No Christian would assert that Christian faith is based on mere authority without any basis of reason. Christ Himself and his apostles appealed to evidence of various kinds. Had there been no such proofs those who rejected Him would not have had sin. Every one of the writers of the New Testament speaks of proofs from miracle and prophecy. One of them warns his readers that they must be able to give a reason for the hope that is in them, and contrasts the facts of which he himself and the other apostles had been eye-witnesses with the cunningly devised fables of superstition (*σεσοφισμένοις μύθοις*) of Pagan mythology. It is unnecessary, therefore, to warn us that our faith must have *some* basis of reason. But it is a very different matter to assume that all questions involved in the Christian religion are to be determined by *scientific methods alone*. In the page next to that from which I have already quoted, the failure of the scientific method alone is admitted:—

If it is retorted that the question to be dealt with is of so ultimate a character that even the scientific methods are here untrustworthy. I reply that they are nevertheless the best methods available, and hence that the retort is without pertinence; the question is still to be

regarded as a scientific one, although we may perceive that neither an affirmative nor a negative answer can be given to it with any approach to a full demonstration.

But this amounts to a complete surrender of the claim previously made for the scientific method *alone*. If the case against the truth of the Christian revelation amounted to demonstration we might say "the case is finished—science has spoken her last word." But when, on the other hand, we are told by the most accomplished scientific men that their answers are so vague and come so far short of full demonstration, we reply that they cannot reasonably decline to examine such other proofs as may be within their reach, and may help them to form a right conclusion on the most important of all questions which can engage the thoughts of mankind. We never asserted that science could demonstrate the truth of religion. Nor can she demonstrate its falsehood. But physical science is not the only field of investigation, nor physical methods the only methods within our reach, nor physical tests the only tests of truth. The whole field of moral questions cannot be excluded from this discussion, nor the absorbing and manifold interests which make up the practical life of men, including the great problems involved in the words "sin and sorrow."

No single department of human thought can claim the monopoly of evidence in deciding the question which, more than any other, concerns the happiness and the virtue of mankind.

The admission that physical methods have failed shows that the dogmatism of infidelity cannot be defended. It leaves the question of Theism an open question, to be determined by such evidence as may be within our reach, and with which we must be satisfied on all moral and practical and historical questions. Probability is the only kind of evidence of which such questions are capable. Christianity is a religion of facts, of the evidence for which men conversant with mathematical are less competent judges than lawyers, or historians, or men who have been engaged in the business of active life. In a letter to a friend Archbishop Whately said:—

Though one might naturally expect that the fault of mere mathematicians would be an over-rigid demand for demonstration in all subjects, I have found the fact to be the reverse. They generally, when they come to any other subject, throw off all regard to order and accuracy, like the feasting of the Roman Catholics before and after Lent. With them mathematics is "attention" and everything else "stand at ease." The defect of mathematics as an exclusive or too predominant study is that it has no connection with human affairs, and affords no exercise of judgment, having no degrees of probability.

That mind is imperfectly and disproportionately trained which measures all kinds of evidence by the same standard, and which

in matters of religion, refuses to accept the only kind of evidence which can ever be produced in such cases, and with which in all other similar cases it is satisfied. This is, in truth, under the appearance of objecting to Christianity to find fault with the human faculties themselves, and to resign ourselves to universal scepticism in all the concerns of our daily life as well as in all that we can know of the history of the past.

But in reply to this whole argument, the desolating sweep of which has been described by the author himself in words of such terrible significance, we must observe that, even if we accept it, it has not loosened nor disturbed a single stone from the foundation of our faith. The existence of God is not merely nor mainly a question of science. No doubt, some scientific men, as well as some who are not men of science, are very impatient of the introduction of religious questions into the domain of science. Science herself remembers the day when theology compelled her to labour in chains; though she has long since outgrown her fetters and forged out of them hammers for the destruction of her prison doors, she often points to the scars of the prison-house and the instruments of torture. The memory of former suffering often perverts her judgment and warps her vision. She fancies that the presence of God and the thought of religion will only complicate what is simple, introduce controversies foreign to science, restrain the process of reasoning by fear of consequences, and trouble the calm atmosphere of abstract thought by the frivolous disputes and passionate hatreds of theology.

This is a very real sentiment, and has inspired many of the foremost writers of the day. In Professor Tyndall's famous Belfast address it held a prominent place, and it has been stated more explicitly by the late W. K. Clifford.

In the second volume of Clifford's "Essays," p. 233, he writes thus:—

We are not much accustomed to be afraid, and we never know when we are beaten. But those who are nearer to the danger feel a very real and, it seems to me, well-grounded fear. The whole structure of modern society, the fruit of long and painful efforts, the hopes of future improvement, the triumphs of justice, of freedom, and of light, the bonds of patriotism which make each nation one, the bonds of humanity which bring different nations together—all these they see to be menaced with a great and real and even pressing danger. For myself I cannot help feeling as they feel. It seems to me quite possible that the moral and intellectual culture of Europe, the light and the right, what makes life worth having and men worthy to have it, may be clean swept away by a revival of superstition. We are perhaps ourselves not free from such a domestic danger; but no one can doubt that the danger would speedily arise if all Europe at our

side should become again barbaric, not with the weakness and docility of a barbarism which has never known better, but with the strength of a past civilization perverted to the service of evil.

I do not assert that these fears are absolutely groundless. For instance, if the daydream of some enthusiastic "Catholics"—a reunited Christendom—were to be effected, the Inquisition and the index of prohibited books would not lag far behind. But the danger in England at the present day comes from the opposite quarter. Let the men of science remember that prejudice of every kind is equally fatal to the investigation of truth, that there may be an anti-theological, as well as a theological bias. Let not the man who has been bitten by a serpent be afraid of a rope. Indeed, there could not be clearer proof of the strength of this anti-theological bias than the contrast between the moderate words in which Physicus states his conclusion and the language in which we are elsewhere told that the defence of Christianity is hopeless. *Suspended judgment* is the watchword. Scientific research is trying to account for everything without God.

If there were no other field of human knowledge except science; if science herself could give a perfectly complete and satisfactory account of all the phenomena of this world from the beginning till the present hour, if the belief in God were no more than one of those speculative questions, such as the theory of development, on which one might hold the judgment in suspense as long as he pleased, because it does not affect the practical business of life, every one who did not take a personal interest in such questions might leave the battle to be fought out between the philosophers and the theologians. This is the course which is often pressed on us under the name of *Agnosticism*—which means simply *ignorance*, and expresses that temper of indifference to theological questions, which implies that religion is a speculative theory which may or may not be true, but with which men of science, as such, have no concern. If God were nothing but an hypothesis to account for the world, this would no doubt be true. But nothing could be more contrary to the whole meaning and purpose of the Christian religion. In the case of religion *Agnosticism* is impossible, because religion is practical. Here then are only two possible alternatives, belief and disbelief. The life of the man who says, "I don't know whether there is a God or no," and of the man who says "I don't believe that there is a God," will, as a rule, virtually be the same, and will differ entirely from the life of him who believes in, and who directs his life by, that predominant and overmastering belief. In this case, a man's words are nothing, because his life decides for him, and the decision of the *Agnostic* and the *Atheist* are identical. They

both say in their heart, There is no God. But the premises of the scientist will not warrant the logical much less the moral conclusion of Agnosticism nor of Atheism.

They argue from tendencies, not from facts. They point to the triumphs already accomplished by science, and they ask us to believe that the method which has accomplished so much already will in due time accomplish all.

Here we pause and cry *Halt!* Our scientific friends are going too fast.

None of the triumphs of science gives us the slightest hope that she will ever come nearer than she is now to the last great secret of all. Phenomena due to physical forces may be analyzed. These are the proper subjects of physical science. But phenomena due to a Creator cannot be seen and classified, for they depend on laws of which we know nothing. We must distinguish between what are called the *mechanical* conditions of phenomena and the *dynamical* conditions. This is no unreal distinction drawn in the interest of religion, but it is insisted on by the greatest physical philosophers of the day, Mr. Mill, Professor Bain, and Dr. Carpenter. Mr. Mill teaches it in these words:—"The chief practical conclusion drawn by Professor Bain bearing on causation is that we must distinguish in the assemblage of conditions which constitute the cause of a phenomenon two elements, one the presence of a force, the other the location or position of objects which is required in order that the force may undergo the peculiar transformation which constitutes the phenomenon." It is evident that no amount of knowledge of the conditions under which the force is manifested will bring us any nearer to the knowledge of the force which impels them. If science had come to the very end of the phenomena of the universe, had analyzed and classified every phenomenon, and had written down the several conditions under which every possible change took place, she would find herself as far as ever from understanding the nature of the force by which all these things are moved. All former discoveries would not help her to say whether the force by which all things are moved is intelligent or not. For this reason we are sure that no discoveries of science will ever destroy religion, for they lie on totally different planes. The word *cause*, in the language of science, means one thing—the succession of external phenomena considered as signs; in the language of religion a totally different thing—the cause of force itself. The physicist investigates the external sign, the theologian the internal force. There is no ladder by which we can ascend from the lower of these stories to the higher. The most accomplished anatomist, looking at the cells of the human brain, knows as little of the power of thought as the infant in his mother's arms. This he never will know, for thought

and life fly before the surgeon's scalpel and defy his subtlest powers of microscopic observation. This is well illustrated by Dr. Carpenter in *The Modern Review* for January last. The worker in a cotton mill, the power of which is conveyed by a shaft from the outside, cannot know, without going outside, what is the nature of the power that sets so many parts agoing, whether it be water, or steam, or electricity, or horses. No investigation of cranks and wheels will give the slightest clue to the origin of the the force itself. These are the mechanical conditions—the force itself is absolutely and totally distinct. All that he knows is that it is directed by some power for the purpose of effecting those changes which the owner of the mill has designed. The inmate of the mill would never suppose that the force, whatever it might be, was not intended to work the mill, that the architect was wanting in intelligence, or did not intend that the force should be employed for the purpose for which the mill had been erected. If any one object to this inference he is bound to show why the form of argument which is valid in every case in which it can be applied within our reach should suddenly deceive when applied on the largest scale, and to prove that the force by which the whole world is moved proceeds from a Being of intelligence and volition. Moreover, this inference is not only legitimate but it has been actually formed by the vast majority of the human race from the earliest times, not only by the common people, but by the great thinkers of every age and country. This is the force of the argument from general consent, which is not in the sentiment of awe towards the Great Unknown, but is the inference which the mind of man, looking at the external world, has almost invariably drawn from the marks of design which everywhere meet his eyes.

It is wise, then, to show that we are not afraid of the progress of science, that, in reference to the fundamental question of the being of God, religion and science move in different orbits, and that, although the shadow of science may seem for a moment to intercept the light which the sun of God's revelation has thrown on our earth, we are quite certain that as she moves onward in her appointed course round the central Sun this present shadow will pass away, as other shadows have passed away, and leave to the inhabitants of our planet the light and heat and life from Him who is the Sun of Righteousness and the light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

But while we concede so much to science, we are bound on the other hand to protest against unscientific science and unphilosophical philosophy. Great as are the claims of science on the gratitude of mankind, physical science is not the only department of knowledge accessible to mankind. To confine the

Christian advocate to scientific methods, and scientific facts, and scientific proofs, is to invite us to surrender our strongest position, to descend into the plain with our hands tied behind our backs, and to submit the decision of a question which is eminently and distinctively moral and historical to a tribunal which peremptorily refuses to accept any testimony higher than the testimony of dead matter and the brute creation.

You ask us to distrust the evidence of our own consciousness, which tells us, in the only instance in which we are brought into direct contact with the origin of force, that it is connected (obscurely, perhaps, and with many intervening links, but still indissolubly and invariably, connected) with volition and intelligence, and so with motive, and reason, and all the other attributes of mind in which our own personality consists. You ask us to distrust the evidence of our moral sense which tells us, and has told all the generations of men, including the *Æschyluses* and *Sophocles*, the *Platos*, and *Aristotles* of ancient times no less than all Christian dramatists and moralists, that guilt is a real sentiment and remorse a real suffering—you ask us to renounce the appeal to the common reason of mankind, which has decided with such wonderful unanimity in our favour—you ask us to silence the convictions of the hearts of millions who have found in these truths the only availing solace in the darkest passages of life and the only availing protection against the assaults of evil which seemed to them worse than death, and, what seems the most unreasonable of all your demands, you insist that the decision should be given either without consulting a page of the history of the human race, or else that we must produce, for the facts on which Christianity is based, proofs of such a kind as the very nature of the case absolutely precludes, which, moreover, never have been and never could be produced in proof of any fact or any series of facts which have ever taken place in the history of the world. "The Bible is the history of the world, as God's world," as Butler says. Christianity is based on a series of facts, the history of the effects of which we trace in the Christian Church up to the present day, so that we have a right to ask that its truth be decided, not absolutely as a question of the science which deals with dead matter and the development of the animal creation but as a question of the history of mankind.

There is, says the French philosopher *M. de Quatrefages*, the whole thickness of history between the brutes and mankind, and to determine an historical question without the aid of history is eminently unjust and illogical. Such a decision could only be justified if Atheism were capable of demonstration. This no man who knows anything of the subject would undertake to assert. As for us, we may without any hesitation refuse to

surrender the dearest hopes of humanity to an appeal to that evidence only which can be gathered from the study of inanimate matter and the dumb animals. Between us and them there is the whole thickness of history, and that is a wide enough interval to show how partial and one-sided, therefore how far short of demonstration, that science must be which does not take it into account.

That I am not exaggerating the systematic and sometimes ostentatious neglect of history which pervades many of the treatises which have been written against religion in the name of science, will be admitted by every one who is familiar with this department of literature.

But even where the principle is not avowed it is universally acted on by the deniers of revealed religion, when they come to speak of those parts of the Bible which contain prophecies or miracles, which are essential parts of its history. They come to the Bible with the foregone conclusion that all such passages are false. They stretch a perverted ingenuity to the utmost length of extravagance, they tax the credulity of scepticism to an extent which no religious enthusiast would dare to emulate, in order to get rid of the supernatural elements from the Bible, especially from the Gospels. They apply to them a method of mythical interpretation which Mr. Grote exposed and exploded from the legends of Grecian history thirty years ago. They would never venture to apply such a method to the interpretation of any other books than the Gospels. Why do they apply it to them? Simply because they have approached this subject with the preconceived theory either that there is no God, or that He has never interfered in the affairs of men. It has been already shown that the discoveries of science do not justify any such conclusion.

All that the least friendly witness can say is that perhaps God is not scientifically indispensable.

But we would remind our friends with all deference that our conception of God is very much truer and very much nobler than theirs, or than that which they erroneously attribute to us. We do not believe in a God who is restrained by his own laws, and who values the uniformity of the laws of inanimate nature more than the happiness and virtue of mankind. The moral and religious aspect of the miracles of the Gospels is always the most prominent feature of our history. To suppose that miracles are either interferences with God's original design, and so confessions of imperfection (as has been alleged by some), or that they are to be separated altogether from the purpose for which they are said to have been performed (as others say), is equally unfair. In fact, the authority of the Gospels never would have been questioned if they had not contained a record of miracles, and the

miracles would not have been questioned if men had not brought with them the conviction that miracles are impossible, and, therefore, that the evidence in favour of them does not deserve to be impartially examined. This nothing less than a demonstration of Atheism would justify, and this has never been attempted.

No doubt the stories of counterfeit miracles will justify you in testing all alleged miracles most rigorously.

The Christian advocate has nothing to fear from the most careful examination of the miracles of the New Testament. His chief difficulty is that men will not examine them at all, and that they are confounded with the counterfeit miracles of mediæval times. This is only to be met by insisting on the *uniqueness* of the Christian miracles. He must show that the so-called ecclesiastical miracles differ in almost every essential feature, prophetic, historical, doctrinal, and moral, as well as physical, from the miracles of which the apostles and their contemporaries were eye-witnesses. He must show that the reality of these miracles is the only adequate, the only assignable cause for the success of Christianity at the first, as well as for the continued transmission of the Sacraments of the Christian Church to our own day.

I conclude this Paper with a few practical suggestions:—

1. We must take care to show that Christianity is altogether independent of all scientific hypotheses, and to not assume that every new theory will necessarily be hostile to revelation.

2. We must refuse to look on the great fundamental questions of religion as questions to be decided by one kind of evidence only, and that the kind which is farthest apart from the moral purposes of religion and from the history of mankind, of which the history of our religion forms so large a part.

3. We must point out that religion, as a matter of practice, of morality, and involving the happiness of mankind, is not capable of scientific demonstration, but must rest on probable evidence which admits of degrees, and to all, even the strongest of which, some objections may be made.

4. We must remember that neutrality is in this matter impossible. When men of science ask us to be satisfied with a middle position between Theism and Atheism, which is called Agnosticism, they ask that with which it is impossible either for us or for themselves to concede. We cannot concede it, because in every hour of our lives, and in every sentiment of our hearts, and in all our prospects for the future, we must either acknowledge or deny God. If the question were not so momentous and so urgent we might delay coming to a decision, but our lives will answer for us, and we cannot accept an indefinite delay. Nay, more, it is evident that Agnosticism is no less difficult for

the scientist than for the humblest believer in Christ. Agnosticism assumes a position of impartiality between Theism and Atheism which it is as impossible to maintain as a philosophical speculation as in the business of life. A consistent Agnostic will approach the question of miracles without prejudice either for or against their truth. If there be a God who may interfere for the highest purposes in the affairs of men (and on this point the Agnostic will say that he has formed no opinion whatever) miracles are not impossible, nor the account of them incredible. But the leaders of Agnosticism are the first to forget these admissions when they speak of miracles. By taking for granted that they cannot be true they show that, in speculation as well as in the affairs of life, Agnosticism and Atheism are practically one and the same.

WILLIAM ANDERSON.

ART. III.—BRITISH BURMA.

Personal Recollections of British Burma, and its Church Mission Work in 1878-79. By the Right Rev. J. H. TITCOMB, D.D., First Bishop of Rangoon. Pp. 183. Wells Gardner, Darton and Co. 1880.

THE See of Rangoon, taken out of that of Calcutta, was founded in the year 1877. Churchmen in the diocese of Winchester raised £10,000, and to this noble contribution another £10,000 was added as a benefaction from the Societies for "Promoting Christian Knowledge," and for the "Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts," and from the "Colonial Bishops' Fund." To these sources of endowment the Indian Government also consented to add the pay of a Senior Chaplaincy. The area of the diocese, coterminous with that of British Burma, including also the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, is about 100,000 square miles, and the population amounts to more than 3,000,000 souls. The great delta of the river Irrawaddy, which covers an area of about 11,000 square miles, is intersected by an immense network of tidal creeks with paddy-fields yielding rich harvests of rice. The richness of the soil may be imagined from the information that beneath these rice crops alluvial mould can often be pierced to the depth of twelve feet. In Tennasserim, one of the three divisions of British Burma—Arakan and Pegu being the other two—excellent tin is found; ores of manganese and iron are abundant, and coal has been discovered, although from the expense of removing it the seams are not worked. The tracts of uncultivated land in British Burma are enormous; but the percentage of increase on lands under cultivation is rising steadily.