

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
FIRST GENERAL PRESBYTERIAN COUNCIL

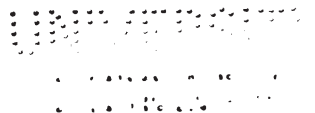
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WITH RELATIVE DOCUMENTS

BEARING ON THE AFFAIRS OF THE COUNCIL, AND THE STATE OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

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testant, or the Christian, interpretation of the Scriptures, which justifies the introduction of these remarks in a paper on unbelief.

2. There is another thing to be done by those who would defend the truth against an insidious unbelief. For that an insidious Socinianism is in the Protestant Churches, and is seeking to undermine the faith of God's people, particularly in the atonement of Christ, there can be no doubt. The inspiration of the Scriptures, the doctrine of the atonement, the doctrine of future retribution—these are the doctrines which are giving orthodox people most trouble, and these are the doctrines which are most open to the attacks of false teachers. It is important that men should know the sources of doctrinal aberration. False assumptions, one-sided views of truth, and the tendency of thought to logical consistency—these are some of the causes which explain the progress of heterodox belief. The last is the only one I can notice. The question was discussed in our papers on the other side of the Atlantic whether there had not been a mutual approach on the part of Unitarians and some of the orthodox Churches. It was argued that the charge that this approach had taken place was untrue, since in the latter Churches the divinity of Christ was still preached. But what is the fact? The fact is that a thoroughly Socinian view of the atonement is creeping into the Churches. Now a Socinian doctrine of the atonement has no need of a Divine Christ as its doctrinal correlative. And the doctrine of a Divine Christ will not live in a creed very long after it ceases to be needed.

3. A revival of the study of dogmatic theology and of doctrinal preaching is needed. I do not speak of dogmatic theology as distinguished from exegesis. For dogmatic conclusions must rest on exegetical premises. But we must study the Scriptures not in the way of reading isolated proof-texts, or even of reading books of the Bible after the commentary style. We must carry on an inductive study of the Scripture in order that we may ascertain what is the mind of the Spirit in the points of inquiry. Dogmatic theology is an inductive science, but like other inductive sciences it is deductive too. And if the people are to be strong in the faith, they must not only see individual truths supported by appropriate proof-texts, but they must see those truths in their relations and correlations, supporting one another. When a man sees that the doctrine of the atonement takes hold of other doctrines, he will be careful how he gives up the orthodox doctrine of the atonement, because he will see that if he gives it up, the contiguous doctrines will go too. It is perhaps a misfortune that the prejudice against dogma has been fostered until the people get less

of it than they need. In this connection, and before I close, let me advert to the common mistake of supposing that to deal in system and deductively is to deal speculatively with truth, and in a way which disparages God's Word. To arrange the truths which God has given in the works of nature and the Bible under their proper categories is not only a proper thing, but a thing of the highest importance. If we were looking for a new argument in support of the doctrines of our system, it would be hard to find a better one than the logical concatenation of truth in a system would furnish. Herbert Spencer's philosophy has been attractive to men, not because of the great dialectical power it displayed, but because he brought a constructive mind to the systematising of the facts of experience. His work is a failure, as any work must be which does not take cognisance of all the facts, and in taking cognisance of them does not give the right place to the personality of God, and does not read human history as the incarnation of divine ideas. But who shall say that the time will not come when some one with God's two books before him—the book of nature and the Bible—shall co-ordinate facts of both in a system which will show that God executes his providence in the sphere of material order on the one hand, and in the sphere of moral order on the other? Who shall say that a new argument for the Christian shall not be presented when some architect shall take the materials which are furnished by specialists in the various fields of inquiry, and build them into a cathedral the majesty and symmetry of which shall be its best vindication?

The following Paper was read by the Rev. JAMES M'COSE, LL.D., on the view which religious men should take of

DISCOVERIES IN SCIENCE AND SPECULATIONS IN PHILOSOPHY.

I. How are we to look on discoveries in physical science? We should realise and acknowledge that science has its method, and when this is followed the result is certain. This method was first clearly expounded by Bacon, and has since been improved by practising it, and by carefully noticing the way in which discoveries have been made. No wise man will set himself against a law established by induction. I believe that the Word of God has ample evidence on its behalf. But I also believe that such laws as gravitation, and chemical affinity, and the conservation of energy, are supported by proof which no sane man will dispute. Religious men have often injured their cause by denying truths of science which have been established by com-

petent evidence. But the question arises, What is a religious man to do when an alleged discovery is made which seems inconsistent with the Word of God?

First, he should inquire whether the law has been established by the sure method of the induction of facts. He may not be fit to undertake the work himself, but he will find competent men doing it for him. There are abundance of scientific men both willing and able to test every supposed discovery in science. Thus Dr. Bastian maintains that he is able to show cases of spontaneous generation. But on the other hand Professor Huxley and Professor Tyndall resolutely affirm that the evidence which he offers is defective. Religious men may leave scientific men to settle the question. It seems to me to be a question in which Christians, as Christians, have no interest. Believers in the Bible may, without being liable to be charged with inconsistency, assert, as Augustine did, that there is generation, not without a cause, but without an organised cause. But they may safely say in the meantime that the doctrine of spontaneous generation is not established according to the the canons of induction, and that the old doctrine *omne vivum ab ovo* has not been overthrown. When the doctrine has been proven, it will be time enough to inquire into its religious signification. There may be as much religion or irreligion, according as men use it, in the doctrine of spontaneous generation as in Huxley's doctrine of an ocean of protoplasm from which all living things proceed. Religious men will insist that the cause of life, be it organised or unorganised, is the operation of God.

Secondly, suppose the law to be established according to the canons of induction, what are religious men to do? I hold that it will be madness in them to resist it. He who believes in God is sure that truth must always be consistent, and he who has an enlightened faith in Scripture is certain that no truth of science can contradict it. He will therefore inquire into the religious signification of this new discovery.

Very likely he will soon find that it is not opposed to any genuine truth or to any statement of the Word of God, but merely to some popular or traditional belief which it is desirable to have rectified. Pious men were staggered when Copernicus and Galileo affirmed that the earth moved round the sun, whereas the Scriptures spoke so distinctly of the sun rising and setting, as I may remark, even astronomers are still obliged to do. There were Christians pained when Newton demonstrated that the movements of the planets were regulated by a law of arithmetic, forgetting that the Scriptures had spoken of God "hanging the earth on nothing," and that the power of God

might be as clearly seen in a system governed by law as in operations proceeding lawlessly. In the beginning of this century there were religious people who set themselves against geology as inconsistent with Genesis. It is now shown that the account given by Moses three thousand years ago is in wonderful consonance with palæontology as to the successive days or epochs of the world's formation. Within our day the doctrine anticipated, as can be shown, by Leibnitz, has been established by Mayer, Dulong, Joule, and others, that the amount of energy in the universe is always one and the same; and some are wondering whether this does not place God outside of his own world, forgetting that this energy is the very power of God, acting in the way and measure which he has prescribed. The same impression may be deepened when it is proven, as scientific men seem to be on the point of doing, that gravitation is a modification (not a very strong one) of the one great power of God, acting according to law, for his own glory and our good.

In our day the keenest discussion rages round the question of development, where scientists are going beyond inanimate, and penetrating into the mysteries of animate nature, and showing that law reigns in the one as well as the other, the law being now one of succession. *Hypotheses non fingo*, Newton used to say. But in these days the boast of many is *hypotheses fingo*. I believe that the devising of hypotheses is an essential step in making discoveries. We may allowably suppose that the law is so-and-so, and then proceed to verify it. Gravitation itself was at first an hypothesis in the mind of Newton, abandoned for a time when reported measurements did not seem to sustain it, but resumed when better ascertained facts confirmed it. But then an hypothesis is to be regarded as a mere supposition till it is established by a wide and careful induction of facts. An hypothesis, it may be admitted, is at times of use, before it is positively proven, as combining and expressing a body of facts. It is thus we have had such hypotheses as "polar forces," "polarisation of light," and "a universal ether," provisionally serving a purpose, but some of them, I rather think, now waxing old and ready to vanish away. These suppositions do not, I believe, express the exact truth, and if rigidly carried out might land us in very serious error. In fact, the best scientific hypotheses require to be modified and adjusted over and over again before they exactly fit into the facts. Thus, scientific men holding the vibration theory of light had to make the vibrations transverse and not forward before they could explain the phenomena.

Now this is the view I take of the development hypothesis. All our younger men of science are

sure that it contains important truth ; and religious men are only injuring their cause when they deny this. Those of us who have to deal with educated young men know that were we to assert that there is no such thing as development, we should be laughed at by them, and lose all our influence over them. Scripture is full of development. The Jewish dispensation came out of the patriarchal and the Christian out of the Jewish, and I believe the millennium will grow out of the present missionary economy. But development, while it explains much, cannot explain everything. It implies something original, out of which the thing developed issues. Actual evolution, with its order and its purpose, its formal and final cause, has evidently a governing power to direct it. There are many important phenomena which cannot be derived from body, that is, from material or mechanical agency. No man has been able to show how life can come out of the lifeless, how sensation, pain, and pleasure, can be produced on the insensate, how knowledge can become an endowment of atoms, or consciousness, which is the knowledge of self, a property of an object which has no self, or how molecules by combination or collision, can be made to think, to discern, to reason, or rise to the ideas of moral good and evil, of holiness, of perfection, of infinity.

Here we have an effect for which we must look for an adequate cause ; and we cannot find this in body or material force. These facts, by an incontrovertible logic, require us to call in mind and will and God. The grand work of the science of the time now present, is to determine rigidly what development can do, and what it cannot do. Religious men may let the investigation and discussion go on, and feel confident all the while that when they have given to the hypothesis all it can claim, with any show of reason, there will be left an infinitely wide region as the possession of religion, not unknown as Herbert Spencer maintains, but known as clearly as the land on which the sun is shining ; and where we may see, if we do not shut our eyes, design and a moral government, and a God who is in all and above all.

Physical science, in its most advanced forms in the present day, seems to be more in accordance with Scripture than it was last century or the beginning of this. Lagrange and Laplace were then demonstrating that nature, if not interfered with, would go on for ever, and in this city Playfair was expounding the doctrine of the continuity of nature through all past and in all coming ages. No one, not even Paley or Chalmers, discovered any proof of evil in nature, of any disorder or disorganisation. When natural philo-

sophy—and natural theology, it may be added—looked at the heavens, it was only to discover a universal and eternal harmony and stability. Plants and animals were examined only to find out the adaptation of every organ to every other, and to the whole. But all this has changed within the last few years. The heavens used to be regarded as embodying and symbolising eternal stability ; it is now declared that they have come out of star dust. The intellectual man who sits in the chair of Playfair tells us that “all portions of our science, and especially that beautiful one, the Dissipation of Energy, point unanimously to a beginning to a state of things incapable of being derived by present laws—of tangible matter and its energy—from any conceivable previous arrangement.” Sir William Thomson and Herbert Spencer concur in assuring us that our present state of things must come to an end ; that our world is to be burned up with fire—a truth which a Galilean fisherman somehow or other knew eighteen hundred years ago. Naturalists have been obliged to look at the defects as well as the beauties and conveniences of the animal frame. The statement of the great physical philosopher Helmholtz is often quoted, that if a workman were to bring to an oculist of the present day as defective an instrument as the eye, he would return it to him. I have seen models of one hundred diseased eyes, and there are said to be twice as many maladies to which the eye is liable. There are physiologists who dwell with fondness, as if they delighted in it, on the ravages, accompanied with exquisitely excruciating pain, wrought on the bodies of the higher animals and of man, by parasite insects feeding on them. We have all felt that there are pain and misery in our present world ; but geologists inform us that there has been a struggle for existence for millions of years in which races of animals have died of hunger or been extinguished by changes of temperature or other catastrophes.

Scientific men, who used to dwell so fondly on the order and benignity of the world, and of the power of the study of nature to assure and tranquillise the mind, are now complaining bitterly of its restlessness and its aimlessness. It is of some moment in this scientific age to have it acknowledged by our *savans* that there is evil in our world. It is the fact on which Revelation proceeds when it goes on to show a remedy in the *Logos* becoming flesh. Our *savans* have reached the same conclusion as the Preacher (Eccles. i. 8, 9), “All things are full of labour ; man cannot utter it : the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be ; and that which is done, is

that which shall be done : and there is no new thing under the sun." We all know and feel how that earnest man spake truly when he said, "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Rom. viii. 22). Our advanced scientists are now joining in this groaning. The throes of nature, in the forms of storms, tempests, earthquakes, volcanoes, in the demon shapes of disappointments, disease, and death, are now answered by groans from the deepest hearts of our savans. The two Mills, father and son, had no profound sense of the perfection of the world, and were much impressed with its evils ; neither of them regarded it as worthy of God. Comte used to fix attention on members of the body, such as the eye and the liver, so liable to become deranged, and which he affirmed could easily have substituted for them organs not liable to disease. Helmholtz dwells remorselessly on the imperfections in the structure of the eye. Herbert Spencer is obliged by his logic to admit that there is a reality beyond the appearances ; but then we can know the appearances only. Professor Tyndall, in his "Hours of Exercise on the High Alps," says that there is something chilling in the contemplation of those terrible forces whose integration throughout the ages speaks of the saddening effect produced by the aspect of the mountain from its higher crags, "hacked and hurt by time." "Hitherto the impression that it made was that of savage strength, but here we have inexorable decay." Mr. Fiske, the expounder of Herbert Spencer in America, follows on the same strain : "There is little that is even intellectually satisfying in the awful picture which science shows us of giant worlds concentrating out of nebulous matter, developing with prodigious waste of energy into theatres of all that is grand and sacred in spiritual endeavour, clashing and exploding again into dead vapour balls only to renew the same wilful process without end ; and a senseless bubble play of Titan forces without life, love, and aspiration, brought forth only to be extinguished." None of our narrow and exclusive divines who used to depreciate nature that they might exalt Revelation, ever denounced nature so sternly as do some of our savans, who see the evil, but, as not believing in Revelation, do not see the remedy, and do not believe that "the creature shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. viii. 21).

II. How are Christians, I mean educated Christians, to view speculative Philosophy ? Are they to welcome and receive it ? Or are they to frown upon it and spurn it away ? Our answer to this question will require to be carefully guarded.

First, The Christian religion professes to be suited to our nature and fitted to meet its wants ; and great good may arise from expounding those ideas and sentiments of the human mind to which it is adapted. It is thus that in ancient times, and as a contribution of heathen thinking to our faith, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, thus that in modern times, proceeding on the way of natural reason, Descartes, Locke, Leibnitz, Reid, and Kant, have unfolded those principles on which theism is founded, and to which the Word of God appeals, as for instance the existence of God, and the essential distinction between good and evil. It is thus that Butler and Chalmers have stood up for the existence of conscience, and that John Müller has maintained the reality of sin,—for which the religion of Christ provides an atonement. All such inquiries into our deeper nature, and careful expositions of our loftier ideas and aspirations, such as the higher German philosophers and Coleridge have furnished, are to be weighed by thinking Christians, and welcomed if they can stand a sifting logical or inductive investigation.

Secondly, We must keep all such philosophic investigations distinguished and distinguishable from the simple declarations of the Bible. So far as Scripture is concerned, let us take it as it stands, inquiring what it says, looking only to the words, and giving an exegesis of them guided only by good sense and a common logic which even the peasant knows. Over-against this let us place the truths revealed in the mind or external nature after having carefully inducted and collated them. We may then compare them and discover that the two, each standing on its own foundation, support and strengthen each other. But let us never so mix them that we cannot discover which is religion and which philosophy. There is a risk on the one hand that Scripture misunderstood and misinterpreted be turned to an illegitimate use in hindering scientific and philosophic investigation, as when divines so understood Genesis as to resist the evidence furnished by astronomy and geology. There is a risk on the other hand that a pretentious speculation may swallow up and absorb religion. This was done by Origen, who interpreted the simple narrative of Scripture so as to turn it into an incongruous mixture of Eastern Theosophy and Platonic Philosophy. It may be admitted that Augustine, who had a philosophic talent not unworthy of being compared with that of Plato and Aristotle, did at times introduce a doubtful metaphysics into his theology. Some think that even Calvin, who was a great exegete, and did draw his divinity from Scripture, did sometimes, being a jurist of the highest order, put the truth in too rigidly logical and juridical

forms. Our great American thinker, Jonathan Edwards, took no pains to separate his metaphysics from his theology in treating of such subjects as original sin and the freedom of the will. Everybody sees that Hegel, and Schelling, and Schleiermacher subjected religion to their philosophic theories, making the doctrine of the Trinity a philosophic thought, and the humanity of Christ merely a manifestation of a universal incarnation. All such identifications of philosophy and religion have on the one hand interfered with the freedom of intellectual investigation, and on the other hand corrupted the simplicity of the faith by foreign intermixtures. By all means let the two be friends and seek pleasant and useful intercourse, but they may profitably attend to the canny Scotch proverb that "freens 'gree best separate," and let them have distinct domiciles, from which they may visit each other only to return to their own independent homes. It is thus, by philosophy building on its own foundation and keeping its own position, that it can best lend an aid to religion.

The transcendental or *a priori* philosophy of Germany has run its course and finished it. The men who were so idolised an age ago, such as Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, and Herbert, have now no calculable influence over the thought of Germany or any other country, though they are still read by those who wish to make themselves acquainted with the history of philosophic opinions. Those British and American youths, who a quarter of a century ago so laboriously dug into the deep mines of the philosophy of Hegel, are not very willing to acknowledge that they have not got so much gold as they expected from their El Dorado. Even the Germans, serious people though they be, are apt to receive with a knowing shrug of the shoulder and a wink of the eye the American youth who posts from the Mississippi as fast as rail and ship can carry him to Berlin, demanding to be instructed in the philosophy of Hegel. The fact is, the philosophy of Hegel is dead, though not just buried. You could now count the Hegelians of Germany on your ten fingers, and the Hegelians of other countries on your ten toes. The general judgment now is that Hegel spent his life in an intellectual gymnastic, in which he denied what he should have assumed, and assumed what he should have denied; and constructed a palace of ice beginning with floating matter formed into a shining fabric, and dissolving into its original vapour. The grand speculative philosophy which began with Leibnitz and his optimism, or best possible world, allowing evil only as a sad necessity which God could not prevent, has ended in Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann, and an

elaborated system of pessimism, in which all the evils of the world, moral and physical, are brought forth to the view in terrible colours, and shown to be in the very constitution and nature of things, always so far as nature has a will and intention. There are youths in various countries gazing at this *monstrum horrendum* with gaping eyes and open mouth, and wondering after it, not sure whether it is a spectre or a reality. It has to be allowed, and should be acknowledged frankly and gratefully, that thought generally, and our theology particularly, has been immeasurably enriched by the spoils captured in the great fight; in the lofty ideas of the good and infinite brought out to view to counteract the sensationalism which has come from Condillac in France, from David Hume in Scotland, and the materialistic school of England.

In the "thinking shop of Europe," the highest minds are now devoting themselves to the history of philosophy; of philosophy generally, ancient or modern, or of particular schools such as Plato, or Aristotle, or Descartes, or Kant. These historical and critical disquisitions have so far a good influence as keeping before the youthful mind the great truths imbedded in the mind which was formed in the image of God, though they often tempt our young men from the study of the mind itself, and may leave the impression that truth is not to be found among these wranglings and shiftings of opinion. It is interesting to notice that Kant is as much appreciated and studied as he ever was, and his influence is now upon the whole for good, inasmuch as he defends fundamental truth in the mind, and especially as he gives a high place to the Practical Reason and the Categorical Imperative, guaranteeing an eternal and immutable mortality, the existence of God, and the immortality of the soul. Kant was stoical rather than evangelical in his ethics, and took little or no notice of sin. Schleiermacher delighted to dwell on the more ethical features of Christ's character rather than on redemption from evil. But Müller called attention to that sin which made it necessary that Christ must needs suffer and die. And now in the philosophy of of such men as Ulrichi, and the theology of such men as Tholuck and Dorner, we have high philosophic truth brought to support religion and redemption, taking its place as the keystone of Christianity.

But meanwhile there is a lower current moving on with vastly greater power in a German form of Darwinism. In the pages of Haeckel it has become gross materialism and atheism. In the systems of others it has sought to raise itself to a higher place by connecting itself with the ideal

philosophy ; and has taken advantage of the subjective forms of Kant, and is employing a pantheistic phraseology which it has no right to use. It sets aside final cause, design, and intelligence, as separate from, and above the world, and leaves only physical development.

It may be laid down as a fact that the only philosophy of the present day which has life, activity, and zeal, is that which is founded on the investigation of the brain and nerves, and is called mental physiology, physiological psychology, or by other names more or less correct and expressive. Physiology has now advanced so far that it can take notice of the working of the cerebro-spinal mass, and has made a number of not very important discoveries of fact, and gathered around them a huge body of speculation. Lotze and Wandt in Germany, and Carpenter and Ferrier in Great Britain, have been diving deep into this mine, hitherto with only moderate success. They have found enough of metal to encourage them to think that they have struck a true vein, and there is a great rush towards the supposed mine of gold, and eager speculative youths, believing that the old stratum has run out, are turning to this new bed with eager expectations. Meanwhile, some of them are mingling the wildest speculations with the few facts they have discovered about the brain, and are rearing a pyramid on a point connecting their physiological discoveries with the theory of natural selection, indeed with the whole theory of Darwinism and development. They are trying hard to show how nervous action may produce consciousness, and intellect, and emotion, and will, and even generate our ideas of the true, the good, the infinite,—all this with no success. But a number of intellectually ambitious men are labouring each in his own sphere to accomplish this end, and a very powerful speculative thinker, Herbert Spenser, is seeking to combine the whole in a great system developing both mind and matter out of a grand unknown.

This is the philosophy, the only philosophy, which has influence in London and throughout England. I am not aware that it has travelled into Ireland, which has many other evils, but is not troubled with scepticism. But it has seats of strength in Scotland. It has been vigorously opposed by the older naturalist of France, but is defended there by M. Ribot and the *Revue Philosophique*. It has a place in our schools of science in America, but is opposed in nearly all our 300 or 400 colleges, male and female.

How is this powerful current to be met ? So far as it discovers and establishes facts in physiology bearing on mental operations, it is to be encouraged. I have no doubt that, as the result

of these investigations, we shall have some light thrown on the rise of some of our mental states. But it must be resolutely maintained that there is an essential distinction between mind and body. We know them by different organs ; the one by the senses, the other by self-consciousness. We know them as possessed of different properties ; the one endowed with extension in space and resistance of one body to another. No one has been able to say how bodily properties, such as attraction or chemical affinity, can produce sensation or consciousness or reason or purpose or determination or freedom of will. We here come to a wall of adamant which will throw back or knock down those who seek to break through it. We must hold resolutely and to the death that mind is not so associated with matter that the soul cannot exist without the body ; and we cannot allow ourselves to be bereft of the arguments for immortality and the hope of life eternal.

The Scottish philosophy, with its ramifications in the Irish province of Ulster and in America, is especially the Presbyterian philosophy. All its great masters, such as Carmichael, Hutcheson, Reid, Gerard, Beattie, Campbell, Stewart, Ballantyne, Abercrombie, and Hamilton, belonged to that Church. Their aim was to construct a philosophy of consciousness, that is, to observe mental phenomena by the internal sense, and co-ordinate them in the method of induction. They carefully abstained from fashioning *à priori* theories of the universe ; they did not pretend to be able to solve all the mysteries about God, the soul, and the world to come. They contented themselves with carefully noting and cautiously generalising the operations of the mind. The consequence is that they have never injured religion. Some of the moderate ministers in last century and beginning of this did preach academic ethics instead of the Gospel ; but they did so in opposition to the advice of Hutcheson, the founder of the school, who recommended preachers not to introduce abstract philosophy into the pulpit. They defended the fundamental principles of religion, such as the existence of God and the spirituality of the soul, and they opposed the materialism of Priestley and the older Darwin. They inquired carefully into the nature of conscience, and established deep ethical principles, which Chalmers employed to show the need of an atonement for transgression. This philosophy had considerable influence in France in the early part of this century, and helped to train Cousin, Jouffroy, and the reaction against sensualism, and is seen and felt in the present day in the philosophy of Saïsset, Janet, Jules Simon, and others. It has had and still has influence for good in Ulster.

Led by Wotherspoon, it migrated, like the Covenanting cause, into America. In the present day a philosophy, if not Scotch, yet conceived in the spirit of the Scotch, is taught in three hundred colleges of the United States and of Canada, some of which colleges are now worthy of being placed alongside of the great European colleges, and by far the greater number of which are spreading around them a wholesome moral and religious influence.

It must be acknowledged that in the land of its birth the Scottish philosophy has not the power it once had. Those who pursue philosophy in the country in which we have met are dividing themselves into two streams, one giving mere histories of philosophy, after the manner of the Germans, and the other making mind and matter substantially one. It has to be added that we have still representatives of the Scottish philosophy in Scotland, unfolding the operations of the human mind,—one of these a member of this Alliance.

What should Christian philosophy now do? It ought to hold resolutely that the investigation of the mind is the principal work of philosophy, and that it is to be investigated mainly by consciousness, which looks not to the brain and nerves, but to mental actions proper. But on the other hand, if it is to have any power in the coming generation, it must make itself thoroughly acquainted with physiology, and be prepared to adopt, nay, to advance, its discoveries.

Meanwhile there are certain principles which the Christian philosopher must uphold, and to which our thinking youths should be lashed as to a mast, that they may not be washed over in the storm :—

1. It must be maintained that truth can be discovered by man. For things have come to this pass that there are eminent men arguing that truth of any kind cannot be reached by the human intellect. "We know in part." Yes, only "in part;" but we do know so much of things; of mind and matter, of things and not mere phenomena in the sense of appearances, not of things "in themselves," which is a meaningless phrase, but of the *very things*, of things as they present themselves to our cognitive powers. On such a basis we can build other truths higher and higher. We must oppose the doctrine of Nescience, as it used to be called by German philosophers, or Agnosticism, as it is now called. Unguarded language used by Hamilton and Mansel has been turned by Spencer to ends from which these illustrious men would have shrunk. It creeps into philosophy in the form of the fundamentally wrong principle of the Relativity of

Knowledge,—that we do not know things, but simply the relations of things, themselves unknown. The error is to be met by showing that by the powers given us by God we so far know the very things around and within us.

2. It must be resolutely maintained that God is so far known. Hamilton used to refer to the altar to the unknown God seen by Paul in Athens; but he forgot to tell us that the apostle, referring to this altar, said to the men of Athens, "Whom ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you." The Word of God clearly declares that God can be known by his works. "For the invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." This should be shown to be the clear doctrine of reason. In revelation the God thus made known is represented as speaking unto us.

3. Vigorous opposition must be offered to the prevailing materialism of the day, with its debasing tendencies. This not the less because its advocates maintain that they are not materialists, which means, when sifted, that, like Hume, they believe in neither mind nor matter as substances, but simply as appearances,—they meanwhile explaining all things by material law, and falling back on a physical basis of all mental action, and thus giving, in fact, a thoroughly materialistic tendency to their philosophy in the common apprehension. There may be allowable room left for a difference of opinion as to what the relation between mind and body is, and religious men should never oppose inductive inquiries into cerebral and nervous action. But meanwhile they must hold determinedly that matter cannot explain the action of mind. Philosophy is competent to aid them here, and to show how wide the difference between electric and nervous action on the one hand, and ideas such as those of truth and infinity, moral good and God on the other.

4. It must be maintained that there is an essential distinction between good and evil. This distinction is removed, on the one hand, by pantheism, which makes all acts, even deceit, cruelty, and adultery, acts of God; and on the other hand, by materialism, which denies free-will, and makes every deed a physical necessity. There may be allowable disputes as to the essence of virtue and the psychological nature of the conscience; but it must be held that holiness, love, and mercy are good in themselves, and that lying, perjury, injustice, murder, are evil in themselves, and deserving of punishment.

5. It should be unflinchingly affirmed that there is such a thing as sin, which is not, as some argue, a mere negation, but a positive quality. Ingratitude is quite as much a reality as love,

cheating as much so as truthfulness, and murder as pity and almsgiving. It is this unfathomable depth in our nature which leads us, as we feel it, to look around for something to fill it.

These are the foundation-stones of the temple of truth. Christians should see that these truths are taught in our colleges. Whenever they are denied in our educational institutions or by the public press, the Church should take steps to counteract the influence. For this purpose it should train a body of men, corresponding to the apologists of the early ages, and the Sabbath-afternoon lecturers of the Puritan period in England. I do not believe, indeed, that all private Christians, or even that all ministers of the gospel, are bound to do battle with the infidel. I have felt that some of those who have gone forth as soldiers to fight might have been better employed as labourers in tilling the ground, say in preaching the gospel or teaching a Sabbath school. But the Church of God, which is the ground and pillar of the truth, is required to have everywhere a body of men acting as defenders of the faith at all the points at which it is liable to be assailed, whether from the side of physical science, philosophy, or literary criticism.

DR. ROBERT WATTS, Belfast, read the following Paper on—

THE PERSONALITY OF THE SUPREME BEING.

“THE questioning impulse” is one of the most fertile of all the springs of human activity. Its universality proves it to be innate and original, and not the outcome of any process of development. It is, in fact, itself an indispensable condition of the development of man's intellectual and moral nature. Under the operation of this impelling force, the mind is urged backwards along the chain of being, and finding no resting-place in the seen, is forced to look within the veil and explore the *arcana* of the vast invisible.

Nor is this native element of our constitution a blind impulse. It is of a superior order, and depends upon intelligence for its rise in consciousness. Like the principle of causality, of which it is but the expression, it asserts its authority on the discovery of phenomena, and reveals its character and power by demanding an adequate cause. It will ask respecting the construction of a crystal all the questions it raises respecting the building of the pyramids; nor will it tarry in the domain of second causes, but finding among phenomena evidence of kinship, it will search for a cause of the relationship, and this search it

will prosecute until it rests in one ultimate, supreme cause, possessing attributes sufficient to account for the origin and continued existence of the entire universe. Here then we are brought face to face with our theme—the character or attributes of that one supreme entity, which will be recognised by the human mind, under the force of this “questioning impulse,” as adequate to produce and sustain the mighty fabric of this wondrous *Kosmos*.

The question, it will be observed, is not whether there is, or is not, one ultimate cause, for on this point all who put forth any recognisable claims to a philosophical standing are agreed. The point to be settled is, whether this one ultimate cause is a person, or a thing; for I do not know of any one, save Mr. Matthew Arnold, who hesitates to place it in one or other of these two categories. Of his reasons for this hesitation, notice will be taken hereafter. In the discussion of this question, of course, it is necessary that we have a correct apprehension of what is embraced in the idea of Personality. When we say that God is a person, we mean that he is a self-conscious, self-determining, intelligent power, as distinguished from an unconscious tendency in the nature of things, or from a blind force which acts without intelligence or volition; and we hold, that without doing violence to our own mental and moral constitution, we cannot regard the latter as the ultimate cause of the universe, or refuse to ascribe it to the former. The arguments in support of this position I shall merely state, as the chief object of the present paper is to deal with the leading objections to their validity which have obtained currency through the medium of certain classes of German and British literature.

Stated formally, the cosmological argument is: That which exists and has not the cause of its existence in itself, must have a cause outside itself. The existing *Kosmos*, with all that it contains, has not the cause of its existence in itself, and therefore must have proceeded from a cause *ab extra*. To this argument Strauss replies that it does not carry us beyond the *Kosmos* itself. “If everything in the universe has been caused by something else, and so on *ad infinitum*, what we finally reach is not the conception of a Cause of which the *Kosmos* is the effect, but of a substance of which individual cosmical phenomena are but the accidents. We reach,” he says, “not a deity, but a self-centred *Kosmos*, unchangeable amid the eternal change of things.” (*The Old Faith and the New*, p. 132).

This is not a fair statement of the argument. The argument is not that “everything in the universe has been caused by something else, and