

doctrine of inspiration better established, and more unquestioned, than the contemporaneous history of any nation on the earth. I was greatly struck the other day with Mr. Porter's volume on the "Cities of Bashan." It is within your reach, and I recommend it to your perusal. I recollect hearing a discussion between two Oriental travellers on the subject of Palestine. They both agreed that the country never could have been peopled as it is represented in the Bible; and, in particular, that the idea of sixty fortified cities in the little country of Bashan was a manifest figure of speech. Well, Mr Porter went to Bashan, a district somewhat out of the route of ordinary travellers, and in a narrow gorge of hills, terminating with Mount Hermon, he saw with his own eyes the sixty cities. There they are—cities built of granite, stone doors, turning on stone hinges, stone shutters on the windows, stone slates on the roofs. They are entirely untenanted, save by the jackals, and seem to have remained just as they were in the days of Og, King of Bashan—(Applause)—a strange, mysterious, but speaking fulfilment of prophecy; but, what is more important to my present theme, an enduring rebuke of the levity and carelessness of some modern Biblical critics. (Applause.) There are two reasons which should restrain men of science strictly within their proper province. The first is the continual change of opinion, the second is the existing difference of opinion. The first of these reasons is peculiarly applicable to the arguments so confidently derived from geology as to the antiquity of man. Now, geology in itself has no relation whatever to the antiquity of man. No doubt in the course of the science facts may be elicited which, when thoroughly ascertained and well weighed, may come to have a bearing on that subject. But no man can pretend that any of the facts hitherto disclosed can form safe data for any such assumptions. The geological landscape shifts from day to day and from year to year. The axioms of last year are the fallacies of this, and may again be the axioms of the next. No branch of knowledge has altered so much and so rapidly as geology. Sir Charles Lyell himself—deservedly at the head of the school—has in the course of very few years altered his opinion on some of the most important results of the science. It is quite certain that on the subject of the antiquity of man, Cuvier, and Buckland, and Agassiz, the great names of thirty years ago, held opinions entirely different from those now maintained by Lyell, or Huxley, or Page, or Geikie. "Truth at any price" is the modern battle cry; as if truth had sent the worthy philosopher what we call in our profession a special retainer. It is vain for us mildly to suggest that we have no controversy with truth at all, but that we doubt whether the philosopher is quite as much in her confidence as his vanity assumes, and we are confirmed in our misgivings when we find that only a year or two ago truth wore a different dress, spoke a different language, and taught an entirely different lesson. Let me take an example. Professor Huxley—a name celebrated enough, and a man strong enough to afford to stand criticism—in a lecture lately delivered before a clerical audience indulged in many

somewhat dogmatic prelections as to the age of the pyramids and the mud-banks of the Nile. There may have been much force in the remarks, but he must have known that there is no more noted battlefield than the age of the pyramids and the mud-banks of the Nile. No longer time ago than 1864, Sir Charles Lyell, in the first edition of his work on the antiquity of man, said that eminent Egyptologists thought the mud-banks of the Nile furnished no safe data for any conclusions whatever in regard to the antiquity of man. He alters the phrase to some eminent Egyptologists in the third edition, but there the controversy remains. So that truth at any price in 1864 was a very different person than the clamorous client of our friend the philosopher in 1868. (Applause.) Mr Moncreiff proceeded to give the impressions which he had derived from attending the meetings of the British Association in Dundee in the autumn of last year, remarking that these meetings had quite convinced him that religion had nothing to fear from science, and that in the meantime science, had better not intrude upon religion. He criticised Professor Tyndal's observation that we could not tell who made the universe, because we did not know, for "the real mystery of the universe remains unsolved;" remarking that the learned Professor was really no authority beyond his own province. After a few words on Mr Geikie's address, whose conclusions he challenged, Mr Moncreiff adverted to the ethnological discussions at the association, remarking that neither of the contending parties could be strictly denominated orthodox, but he thought they were entirely successful in destroying each other. (Laughter.) They were divided into Darwinians and Crawfordians—into those who maintained that men sprang from monkeys, and those who maintained that they cannot have all descended even from Adam. Amid these two loud and jubilant camps hardly a word was said for the account given by Moses, which, notwithstanding, had by much the best of the argument. Mr Moncreiff also disputed the theory of human progression maintained by Sir John Lubbock. Progress, he said, has certainly been made, but it is not intellectual nor physical progress. We are neither intellectually nor physically greater than the philosophers of Greece and Rome, I doubt if Greece was greater than Egypt, and Rome certainly was not greater than Greece. It is moral advance only that has been made, and that only where Christianity has prevailed—(Applause)—though in the whole of that discussion I did not hear that idea once suggested. Christianity has introduced a milder and more beneficent code of laws, a more merciful practice in war, more leisure for the arts of peace. Christian nations are no longer, as Pagan nations always were, in a chronic state of war. With war came insecurity, and with insecurity, indifference to the arts of life. If the matter were traced to its origin our real superiority would be found to consist entirely in the shadow of Christian precept under which we live. On the motion of Dr Winchester, a cordial vote of thanks was given to Mr Moncreiff for his lecture, and thanks were also voted to Sheriff Cleghorn for presiding.