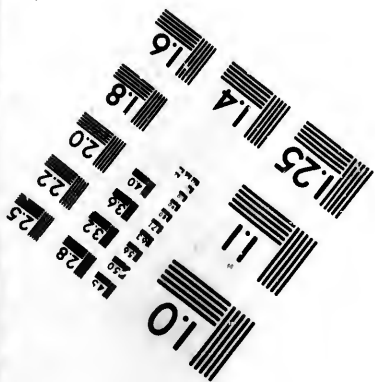
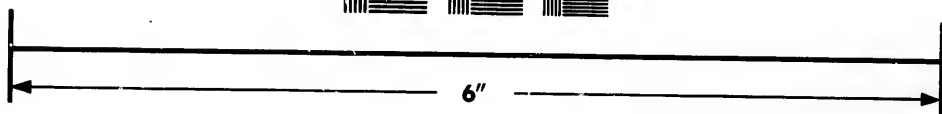
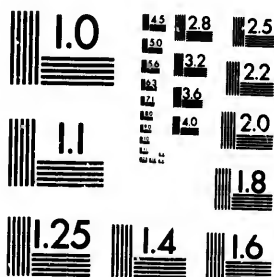


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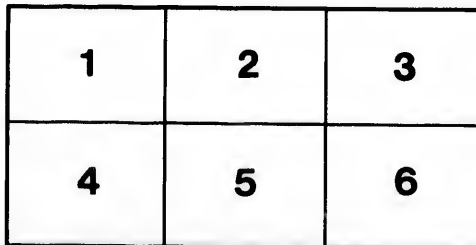
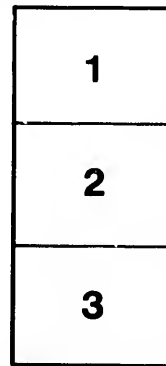
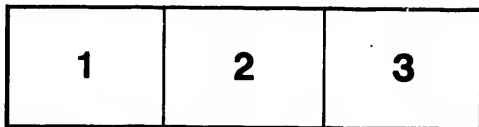
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SCEPTICISM A FOLLY:

FIVE LETTERS,

OCCASIONED BY A

GEOLOGICAL ARTICLE

IN THE

WESTMINSTER REVIEW
FOR JULY, 1857.

“They are vanity and the work of errors; in the
time of their visitation they shall perish.”—

JEREMIAH x 15.

BY ADAM TOWNLEY, D. D.,
INCUMBENT OF PARIS, C. W.

(Originally written for the Toronto Colonist.)

TORONTO:

PUBLISHED BY THOMPSON & CO., 52 KING STREET EAST.

1857.

Price Seven Pence Half-penny.

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THE WESTMINSTER REVIEW.

HUGH MILLER, CHEVALIER BUNSEN, &c.

[LETTER I.]

SIR,—The *Westminster Review* is a periodical which I have much satisfaction in reading. For while it sorely tries my equanimity by its cold-hearted scepticism, its pretentious sneering, and its most deceptive and illogical reasoning, it is, at the same time, exceedingly gratifying to see how entirely baseless are those attacks which the keenest wits amongst the sceptics of Europe are continually making upon the glorious and invulnerable citadel of our Holy Catholic Faith.

I have sometimes begun to read, almost trembling, their vindications of German Rationalism, or their antagonistic Biblical criticisms, or their laboured attempts to invalidate the credibility of Sacred History, or their unhallowed pæans when any apparent Mosaic difficulties are raised by modern Geological discoveries;—but in every case have I been compelled to admit with renewed thankfulness how completely the wisdom of man is foolishness with God, and to understand with increased awe the literal character of the fact, that when men do “not like to retain God in their knowledge” they “become vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts are darkened.”

Of course the *Westminster Review* is a clever publication, but its reasoning is so transparently shallow, and its principles are so glaringly false and self-contradictory, that I can only account for men of learning and talent thus committing themselves, on the supposition that their unhallowed attacks upon revealed truth have subjected them to the curse of judicial blindness. Nor let this idea be scouted as the ravings of mere puritanic

illiberality and superstition. For if you once admit that God *has* given an inspired revelation of His doings and His will, is it not then even reason to suppose,—nay, has He not declared,—that He will “darken the hearts” (minds, intellects,) of those who set themselves in determined opposition to such Revelation? Besides, if intellect *did* share in the ruin of the Fall, then before it can reasonably be expected to comprehend the high things of God, it must again be illuminated by the Spirit of God; but such illumination the self-idolizing sceptic scornfully, and yet idiotically, rejects. Further, if *there be* a mighty fallen intellect, who is the Prince of the Power of the Air, upon whom are his subtle influences likely to be so earnestly and successfully exerted as upon those of the learned, who share in his scorn of heavenly light and purity? Especially, since such men are amongst his ablest auxiliaries in carrying on his malignant warfare against God and man.

It will not do for sceptical *savans* to assume a tone of perfect indifference to the truth or falsehood of Revelation in their professed researches, literary or scientific, after truth. In so doing they beg the very question at issue; since nothing can be more certain than that *if there be* two antagonistic powers of good and evil, seeking to influence every individual of our race, each one of us must have, in a greater or less degree, a distinct tendency to love or hate the revealed things of God.—Indeed, what but the latter feeling could cause the sceptic to endeavor to propagate his doubts, even although himself were *honestly*, if such a thing be possible, their victim? What does scepticism offer us in the place of Christianity, that its votaries should so eagerly endeavor to diffuse their negation of faith? The very sin of Christianity, so to speak, in the eyes of its opponents, is, that it seeks to impart a purity too intense, a love too unselfishly deep, a dignity too divinely awful, and an immortality too lofty in its thrilling enjoyments, for their earth-bound intellects to compass, or their fleshly hearts

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to desire. "Beloved, *now* are we the SONS OF GOD, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear, WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM, for we shall see Him," (that is, and dwell with Him in eternal felicity,) "as He is." Such is the present, such the future of Christianity! Now, what do the *Westminster* and its idol,—a sceptical philosophy, offer us in exchange for dignity so grand, bliss so boundless? What, but a vast waste of agonizing doubt! In robbing us of our divinity, they trample our very manhood in the dust, and leave us to the death of a dog, or at least to the unknown future of an atom too mean to share its Maker's care! In the name, then, of our common humanity we ask, what *are* the motives which induce the issuing of publications like the *Westminster*? Must there not be, in the hearts of their writers, a bitter hatred, though it may be even partially shrouded to themselves, of all that is called holy, before they can thus "cast about fire-brands and death" for the purpose of blasting our only joy in life, our only hope in death? Surely Solomon was wise when he declared such to be the conduct of a "madman."

My thoughts have been more immediately directed into this channel by an article or two in the last (July) number of the *Westminster*. The Reviewer thus speaks of poor Hugh Miller's efforts to reconcile geology with revelation: "Is it not melancholy?—an ingenious and naturally earnest and upright mind thus twisting and twisted! and through such a cause lost to truer and better ends!" Now, although no geologist, I am not satisfied with the method Mr. Miller adopts in reconciling the difficulties he met with. Still, cold must be the heart, aye, degraded the very soul of the man, who could treat with contempt, as the reviewer does all through, Mr. Miller's laborious efforts to save the truth of revelation. He trembled, I can imagine, for the hopes of a world! He feared lest the very science he had idolized should quench the beams of the sun of righteousness! A too absorbing

devotion to science had, perhaps, dimmed his faith, until reason reeled as he looked into the awful gloom of a hopeless eternity. And yet the sceptic sneers at such emotions—the ruin of a world but serves to point a jest with him! Verily, “the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.”

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[LETTER II.]

SIR,—It may at first sight seem somewhat strange that one, who acknowledges himself to be no geologist, should attempt to offer any strictures upon a review of a geological treatise. But concerning the *science* of geology, as I know little, so I have little to say; it is of that *ignorance* of the true facts of nature, which causes presumptuous men to endeavour to make them appear antagonistic to Revelation, that I speak. The very basis of such antagonism is as illogical as it is impious.

It is an acknowledged axiom that it is unnecessary, in order to the establishing of any truth, to be able to meet, or satisfactorily to explain every objection that may be brought against it: *that* is the prerogative of Omniscience alone, until in eternity He shall be pleased to reveal His “secret things” to us also. *At present* it ought to be sufficient for us that the objective arguments and facts in its support are clearly and unanswerably proved; thenceforward no one of rightly constituted mind, or clear intellect, will permit his belief in such truth to be shaken, however plausible the mere objections brought against it may appear. More especially will this be so, where the objections are of such a character, that concerning their force or applicability, as opposed to the truth in question, the opponent himself can only make a plausible guess.

Now, this appears to me to be exactly the state of things with respect to Divine Revelation and the objections brought against its reality on the ground of its ap-

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parent incompatibility with modern geological discoveries. The former has been proved to be genuine, both by facts and reason, with a power of unanswerable demonstration unexampled in the case of any other historical or mental truth connected with man. Evidently, then, the only consistent, or, indeed possible method of shaking the credibility of Revelation is by disproving the facts, and exposing the fallacy of the reasoning upon which our faith therein is grounded. So long as these remain firm and intact, geological discoveries may present difficulties, but, in the nature of things, they can afford no real arguments against the truth of the Bible. Thus, for instance, I may raise a score of apparently unanswerable objections against the possibility of a man of Louis Napoleon's youthful absurdities, rowdyism, and undistinguished early mental character, ever succeeding to the empire, or manifesting any talent for governing, if on its throne; but the fact of his being there and proving himself one of the cleverest men in Europe, will, alas for the credit of my intellectual acumen! scatter all my powerful impossibilities to the winds. Precisely so is it with the geological, and other modern puff-ball artillery, with which the impregnable citadel of Christianity is assailed. So long as the objective demonstrations of its truth are, as they ever must remain, unanswered by its assailants, our hopes continue firm and unshaken as the Eternal Rock upon which they are built.

But my principal object in this letter is to offer a suggestion or two upon the peculiar arrogance, and the shameful want of correct principles of ratiocination, manifested in geological scepticism. Geology is avowedly in its infancy as a science, and indeed, must evidently remain so, until that day when we shall know as we are known. For, in very truth, notwithstanding the rapid progress of our age in the material application of the different sciences, with respect to the secret, almost sacred, principles of them all, we may literally use the words of the Apostle and confess that we "now see

through a glass darkly." And concerning none of the sciences is this more entirely true than of geology. How absurd, then, is it to bring forward our twilight glimmerings concerning a very small portion of its facts, in the expectation that they will extinguish the clear torch-like blaze of Revelation!

It is without doubt our want of geological knowledge, rather than its superabundance, that causes geology to present us with so many difficulties. And these difficulties are, I cannot but think, greatly increased by the efforts of some well-intentioned geologists, who, like the late talented and pious Hugh Miller, endeavor to interpret the Mosaic account of the commencement of the *present order* of creation by the very little which geology has yet revealed, or perhaps ever will reveal, concerning the pre-Adamite history of our globe. It is clearly a trial of our faith, and reasonably so, since we are only required to be content to let "secret things belong unto the Lord;" for, be it remembered, geology brings no *facts* against the facts of the inspired Mosaic account. It is only the *conjectural* reasoning of men upon the facts of geology that makes the difficulty. To me, therefore, it is a matter of great regret that the excellent and gifted Mr. Miller should in his "Testimony of the Rocks," have given a unnatural interpretation to the Mosaic Week in order that, by stretching it over an unlimited series of ages, he might make it take in what *appeared to him* to have been the order of creation. By so doing, I think he has fairly laid himself open to the rejoicing sneer of the infidel-hearted *Westminster Reviewer*, who asks if the Bible is to be subjected, in its plainest statements, to such forced interpretations—"What, in such circumstances, is the use of the book? In its declarations on the most important points it may be meaning something totally different," (to its apparent meaning,) "and of which mankind will get no inkling for thousands of years."

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To this, I confess, I have no answer to give, if such contortions are admissable, as Mr. Miller, and other timid Christian geologists, have used, in order to reconcile their necessarily crude theories with the Bible.

No, Sir—I believe that in every case the *literal* interpretation of the Bible, where, according to the ordinary laws of language, it admits of a literal interpretation, is the right one. Holy Scripture was not written for geologists, or other learned savans, as such; it was written for plain men, in order to aid in making them wise unto salvation. And, for once, I perfectly agree with the *Westminster*, that if the Bible is to be subjected to the non-natural and forced interpretations of any set of men—I care not whether they be geologists, Romanizers, or ultra-Protestants—it becomes, for all practical purposes, useless.

But what, then, are we to do? since we must act, not as mere superstitious votaries, but as those whom God Himself invites to reason upon His doings. The *Westminster Reviewers*, and even many frightened geological Christians, tell us that the facts of geology clearly disprove the Mosaic account of the creation according to its literal interpretation. What, then, I ask again, are we to do? Why, simply deny the fact; refuse to acquiesce in the truth of the assertion! “yea let God be true, and every man a liar;” and certain it is that geology cannot prove one of its anti-Mosaic statements; it can only offer what it conceives to be plausible conjectures in support of its unbelief. Geology, as a science, I fearlessly repeat, is itself walking in profound darkness, and shall it presume to usurp the place of Revelation? Idiotic folly! It is verily the blind seeking to lead the blind; and if men, willfully forsaking the light of Revelation, will be so foolish as to follow such guidance, need we to marvel if both the guide and his followers fall into the pit of perdition?

That geological difficulties (or rather phenomena) exist, which we, on account of our ignorance, can



not explain, is natural; the marvel would be if it were not so. I am told, for instance, that the world must have existed and been inhabited innumerable ages before the creative week, described in the Book of Genesis, commenced. Well, there is nothing there that contradicts this; the earth, doubtless, was created and again destroyed. But light, air, a separation of earth and water were, it is also said, all necessary to animal existence, and Moses tells us that the formation of these things did not take place until the first week of our present creation. Well, what proof have we that all this had not once existed and been destroyed, or thrown into chaos? But light, if indeed it were needed, might have illumined nature without the sun; the earth might roll through space unconnected with the present planetary system; animal life, reptile or marine, might exist under an organization altogether different to the present.

The Reviewer's objection to the above I purpose to notice in my next.

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LETTER III.

SIR,—The theory, and I admit that it is little else, propounded in my last, of a pre-existent state of things which by its entire destruction made way for the present creation, is declared to be untenable because it has been discovered, "That the organic creation recorded by geology was essentially connected, by a series of persistent fossils, with the present order of things".

This is indeed a summary method of cutting the Gordian knot! For, grant that geology has thus proved the connection of the past with the present, what more likely,—what, in fact, could be more completely in accord with what we know by Revelation of the ordinary methods of the Divine procedure—than that, after having brought one phase of creative energy to its own degree of perfection, he should close it up, in order to

make way for what appears, from its connection with the spiritual and eternal, to be His noblest form of material organization ?

In a word, to God all things *are possible*. And what were the peculiarities of that former "possible" state of things, or what is its true history, geology neither has revealed nor ever can reveal.

Geology, as the handmaid of piety, is privileged to unveil new trophies of the Divine power, fresh wonders of God's inexhaustible wisdom ; but as the opponent of Revelation it is the silliest of dwarfs attacking the grandest of giants with a sword of bass wood.

The Noachian Deluge presents difficulties similar to those of geology, especially as respects the capability of the Ark to contain the vast variety of species of beasts and birds, which modern science has shewn to exist. The Reviewer, therefore, would weakly deny the fact of the flood, on the ground of his not understanding the *how*. I say "weakly," for it is the common resort of feebleness of mind to deny, in the face of the clearest evidence, what it cannot understand. But the way in which Hugh Miller gets over the difficulty by supposing, in common with some others, that the deluge was only partial, again lays him open to the sneers of his opponent. Here, again, I must agree with the Reviewer that the language of Scripture, fairly interpreted, allows of no question as to the universality of the Deluge. How then are we to get over the difficulties of the size of the Ark, the distribution of its inmates to their various climates, &c. ? I see no need of getting over them. The fact of the Deluge and its attendant circumstances being proved upon irrefragable evidence, its difficulties belong to Him to Whom "all things are possible." But yet it may admit, I imagine, of a doubt whether it is not quite reasonable to suppose that the variety of species may have greatly increased, from natural causes, since the Flood.

But our sceptical philosophers quite lose sight of one great principle of christian ethics, namely, that miracles,—that is the Divine interference with the usual order of His own works, whenever such interference tends to His own glory or to the benefit of His creatures,—are no breach of the Divine economy, but in exact accordance with its known, because revealed, principles. Miracles form, indeed, a law of the Divine procedure, the fitness of which singularly recommends itself to right reason. It is the knowledge of this *law of miraculous interference*, which greatly aids the consistent believer in trusting the Almighty where He cannot trace His footsteps, or clearly see how to reconcile His word and works.

For men who have the largest amount of faith, (credulity!) upon the smallest degree of evidence, commend me, not to the Romish devotee, but to the sceptical philosopher. Thus, let there be the most shadowy probability of some geological conformation, which apparently tends to throw discredit upon Christianity, and it is immediately pronounced to be *a fact*, in the presence of which Christianity must fall, like Dagon before the Ark! I should, for instance, much like to know from those rationally, because Christianly, learned in Geology, whether the assertion that the Trilobites of the Palæozoic period had eyes suited to the *present* organization of light, be not one of those easy acts of faith or credulity to which I have alluded; being adopted because it appears to militate against the Scriptural account of the origin of light. I have already stated that the existence of light, or even of a sun, previous to the Mosaic creation, would present no difficulty to my reason in its undoubting reception of the Bible as a Divine Revelation; but I ask the question, because it seems to me that the exact nature of the eyes of these trilobites must have been taken marvellously upon trust. Since, though their organic remains may be abundant in a fossil state, I can scarcely think that the delicate coatings of the eye, with

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its still more subtile fluids, have been so wondrously preserved throughout the mighty convulsions of nature for a thousand ages, that in these last days the anatomist and the optician can, at least with due regard to their own professional reputation, decide, with the reckless fearlessness assumed by the Reviewer, upon the exact relation which this most delicate organ bore to light, *or its equivalent*, in the awful past of nature's remotest dynasties. Verily, it appears to me that the good old woman, who declared that she could believe that Jonah swallowed the whale, if the Bible said so, knew nothing of the power of faith, when compared with these learned sceptical geologists!



In the number of the *Westminster Review* (July) now under notice, there is another striking instance of learned fallacious arrogance; and of what appears to be pharisaic, sceptical humility, for the sake of serving a purpose. That arch-enemy of the faith, Chevalier Bunsen, has lately published a work on Egypt, antagonistic to the integrity of Holy Scripture; in which, amongst other speculations, he assumes the probability of our race having been on this earth for *upwards of twenty thousand years*, and then modestly intimates that no one is at liberty to condemn his theories, who has not read his book, and is not, also, deeply learned in Egyptian lore! To this the reviewer meekly assents, and declines, therefore, to criticise the work. But mark the cunning of both the Chevalier and the reviewer. For if the principles they thus lay down, with such apparent innocence, be correct, the evidences of our Christianity and of the truth of its Volume of Inspiration, are so feeble and uncertain, that, unless we have read the work on Egypt, and are, in addition, thoroughly versed in the language and antiquities of that country, we must be completely at sea as to whether Chevalier Bunsen has not succeeded in entirely uprooting their foundations.

Out upon such pretentious insolence, from whomsoever it comes! If our faith were, indeed, thus at the mercy of the brightest intellect that God ever made, it were not worth the preserving!

But the illogical impudence of such men, apart from their wickedness, excites one's deepest scorn. Let them at least shake the walls that surround the revelation of God's eternal truth and mercy, before they so *conceitedly* and *ignorantly* attempt to lay them in the dust with their very small artillery. Let, I say, Chevalier Bunsen, the *Westminster Review*, et *id genus omne*, manfully endeavor to disprove the truth of revelation, and of our faith as founded thereupon, by shaking the *positive* evidences upon which they are based; such as the testimony of profane history, miraculous facts, church institutions, holy traditions, and the mighty spiritual effects produced by Christianity; and when these are undermined, but not till then, we may be prepared to listen to the negative possible objections, by which, through a great stretch of infidel credulity even then, our hopes of salvation may be assailed.

But to conclude this letter with one word.—It does seem to me that so long as I believe in a God I must also believe in Christianity, and in the simple and literal truthfulness of that Revelation on which it is so largely founded; until, at least, scepticism shall offer me a system more worthy of the Divine perfections, and more full of blessedness to man. And this feeling of holy confidence is irrespective of those positive arguments for its truth, which when men or devils shall succeed in shaking, the pillars of Heaven itself may tremble. It is high time that Christian men more thoroughly understood that reason is not elevated, but rather dishonoured, *by doubting*, and that a whole legion of negative difficulties ought to have no power to disturb the faith of one whose religion, if rightly understood, will abundantly enable him to give "a reason of the hope" that is in him. Difficulties are the very

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atmosphere of faith: we must not expect in this life to "know even as also we are known." And I repeat, in conclusion, the assertion, that scepticism NEVER PROVED one fact that was in opposition to the facts stated in the *Book of God*.

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LETTER IV.

SIR,—I must once more trespass on your patience, as I wish to make a few remarks on the difficulties attending Mr. Hugh Miller's attempt to reconcile the Mosaic Creation week with the theories of modern geologists.

Mr. Miller takes the ground that as Revelation was no more intended to teach geology than astronomy, the opponents of his theories are to be placed in the same category with the unwise theological persecutors of Galileo, Columbus, &c. But in this he confounds things which are essentially different. The Bible *does not* undertake to instruct us in the mysteries of the Solar System: it merely speaks of the sun, moon, and stars, as Mr. Miller himself well remarks, just as the almanack does, in that common phraseology which represents their relations to us. But yet I much question, whether the Jewish and Christian world got their former notions of the earth being an extended plain, and so forth, from the Bible; its language by no means necessarily involving such errors; these ideas were rather derived, I imagine, from ancient secular philosophy, to which Biblical phraseology was unwittingly accommodated in the minds of its readers.

We readily grant, therefore, on the same principles, that, as the Sacred Volume is not a geological treatise, the organic history and conformation of our globe is a fair subject of scientific research and theory. But what revelation *professes to state as historic truth, must be understood according to the received language and ideas of the people to whom the revelation was made*, or it would cease to be reliable testimony; and thus becoming a mere vol-

ume of guess work, in respect of its interpretation, it would consequently be valueless as a record of Divine truth and mercy.

Whether the history of Creation as at present organized, was given to Moses in a vision, as Mr. Miller and others suppose, or by direct communication, is of little importance: its *literal* accuracy is the question; but yet from the distinct declaration of Jehovah to Aaron and Miriam concerning the honour He put upon Moses, when He said: "With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently and not in dark speeches," I can come to no other conclusion, notwithstanding the special pleading in "The Testimony of the Rocks," than that the history of Creation was so given to him, immediately by God himself.

Now nothing can be more plain, simple, and didactic than the account given in the book of Genesis of the creation of the heavens, the earth, and its inhabitants, as *they at present exist*. And this account Jehovah solemnly repeated, writing it with his own finger upon the two tables of stone, amidst the awful solemnities of Mount Sinai. And here, let it be remembered, that "words are but signs of our ideas," and that consequently they cease to be true, when they cease correctly to represent those ideas. Now, what would the people of Israel understand; what, in fact, have all men understood, till warped by a floundering philosophy, from this week of six days, and its seventh of holy rest—but the universal week of Judaism, and of Christianity? Hence as Jehovah—the God of Truth—could not use language designing it to convey a deceptive sense to His hearers, I cannot avoid the conclusion that the Mosaic week of the Creation was a natural week.

Miller and his friends, suggest, however, that Moses spoke after the manner of the later prophets, who generally use natural periods to indicate long prophetic dates. But they ignore this all important difference, that the prophets were not writing history; and the people

whom they addressed doubtless understood that the days and weeks mentioned were prophetic and not natural periods; and again a certain degree of obscurity was absolutely requisite in their case, as otherwise the prophecies might have been said to procure their own fulfilment; and thus one of their great objects—the proof of the Divine prescience—have been defeated. Evidently then, their position and that of Moses in his account of Creation, were not at all parallel. His theme was *history*, his object to impress the Jews, and thence mankind at large, with a deep sense of the Divine Majesty, power and goodness, and the high original motive for the institution of the Sabbath; here there was no call for obscurity; on the contrary, the plainer the details the more likely was the object aimed at to be gained; and hence, as we see, the language could not be simpler; nor could there be a more complete absence of anything to intimate that the terms day and week were not used in their natural sense.

And further, notwithstanding all the efforts used to reconcile the employment of an indefinite geological period in the present organization of things with the motive assigned by the Most High for setting apart the seventh day and making it a day of holy rest, I must think them a signal failure. To my moral perceptions there is something very painfully repugnant, in supposing, that the Eternal, after being an incalculable number of ages in bringing creation to perfection, should then, in the *first pause* of His operations, represent to us that He had been only thus engaged six natural days, and make that the ground of demanding that the seventh day should be set apart as a day of holy rest, so long as time should last, in commemoration of that *supposed* six days of creative energy. There is, however, no such objection to the idea that our globe itself, and, if you will, the countless systems by which it is surrounded, had been in existence innumerable ages, and that after returning, perhaps repeatedly, to chaos, whatever that may be, they were once more called into joyous existence during the



six days by recreative Divine power, as narrated in the Book of Genesis. Nay, if one scientifically ignorant of Geology might pretend to offer a geological suggestion, it would be that the foregoing supposition is the only one consistent with the recent discoveries in the science itself; since between the various geological eras the connection appears so slight, as to indicate that *each one of them was a recreation*; the Mosaic account being simply the history of the last and most perfect, to which indeed all the rest tended.

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Not without reason, also, does the *Westminster Reviewer* sneer at the spasmodic efforts made by Hugh Miller, and those who think with him, to reconcile their theory of a *partial* Noachian Flood with the plain and strong language of Scripture, and the almost certain previous universal diffusion of the human family. The Reviewer of course, rejoices in the theory of a partial Deluge, because, if true, it gives, in despite of all that Mr. Miller can say to the contrary, awful force to his sceptical attacks upon the credibility of Revelation. With respect to the Flood, as it, like the story of Creation was a matter of history, so Moses concerning it also professes to give a plain detail of the facts of the case; and here there can be none of the mistakes of eye witnesses, since he wrote under Divine direction; for not even Noah could have been bold enough to use the unequivocally universal language, concerning the Flood, which is used by Moses, as personally he could only have witnessed a very small portion of its effects. And then the strong expression of St. Peter surely sets the teaching of Scripture on the matter at rest, when, after speaking of the earth at large, as part of it being in the water and part out of the water, when in its natural state, he adds, "Whereby *the world that then was, being overflowed* with water, perished;" and he proceeds to compare the flood with that universal destruction by fire of the heavens and the earth, which is hereafter

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to take place. To such plain declarations as the above, it is surely superfluous to add, in proof of the universality of the flood, the fact of the large, and therefore necessarily diffusive population of the world; calculated by some, as being, from the great age to which men lived, six times as numerous as at present. Mr. Miller finds it difficult to meet this, but suggests that men were so wicked that they had nearly depopulated the world by their wars and crimes! But even if so, the greater reason is there to suppose that the remnants would not be all found near the same spot; and if some were scattered in Asia, some in Europe and Africa, or even in America, the Deluge must still have been universal in order to reach them all.

Again, the natural cause which Mr. Miller assigns for even his supposed partial Flood is diametrically opposed to the Scriptural one. He attributes it to the *sinking* of the earth; the Scriptures, on the contrary, most emphatically to "the fountains of the great deep being broken up, and the windows of heaven being opened," and pouring forth their torrents of rain; until, not as Miller conjectures, the earth sank, but, as Moses repeats at least three times, "the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth;" or as St. Peter, so many ages after, declares, "they overflowed the earth that then was."

It will perhaps be said, that I have not met the difficulties that oppose themselves to the idea of a universal Noachian Deluge. That was not my object; those difficulties I do not fear, they doubtless arise from our own want of knowledge. But I solemnly protest against any believer in Revelation attempting to undermine its truth, by such lawless interpretations, as those upon which poor Hugh Miller, and men of his Geological school, have so recklessly ventured. Either their warping and twisting of Revelation is most thoroughly unwarrantable, or the foundations of our faith are gone. No portion of Holy Writ is safe, if such principles of interpretation are once admitted,—the story of Redeeming love may be

resolved into an allegory, and the Blessed Spirit, our only hope of sanctification, declared to be a myth.

In fine, however, I may just observe, that to me it seems that most of the difficulties which appear to surround the question of the Deluge arise from the want of a *reasonable* faith. For instance, why may we not suppose that the different species of the same animals have, from a variety of causes, greatly multiplied since the deluge? Do the different species of the bull, the lion, the sheep, &c., vary more the one from the other than the Caucasian from the Hottentot? And yet Christian geologists find little difficulty in supposing that these last are descended from one common parentage. And if the number of the species can be thus reduced, the objections as respects both their having to travel far to assemble at the ark, as in such case the original species might be found near it, and their accommodations in it, are met. Then as to the difficulties attending their dispersion to their natural localities, I can see none but what equally apply to the fact of their being so dispersed, even if there had been no flood; for still the question returns, How did they get to their present localities?

Indeed one or two facts by which Geology corroborates Revelation, should teach *reasonable* men faith as regards the rest. I refer to the truth to which Mr. Miller beautifully alludes, as being proved by geology,—that *all things had a beginning*. And to the yet more striking fact, that up to the Mosaic period of the Creation, *no records of man are found; his footsteps are as yet unseen!*

I thankfully repeat then, with renewed confidence, "Let God be true, though every man a liar."

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## THE SIX DAYS OF CREATION.

## LETTER V.

SIR,—I only last evening saw your “daily,” containing the letter of my friendly opponent J. C. D.; whom I thank for his very kindly personal appreciation.

But as you wish to eschew controversy on the subject to which his letter refers, I will only trouble you with a brief reply.

I have carefully examined Hugh Miller’s “Testimony of the Rocks,” and while I quite appreciate the earnestness of his spirit, the beauty of his diction, and the ability displayed in his investigations, I deeply regret, both for the sake of *his own peace of mind*, and the good of others, what I must consider his unwarrantable wresting of God’s Holy Word: Had he been trained with feelings of more reverent respect for the authoritative interpretations of the Church as the “witness and keeper of Holy Writ,” I cannot but think that it would have been happier both for himself and his readers.

With respect to the “expressions found in God’s Word:—

“The Day of God,

“The Day of the Lord,

“A thousand two hundred and three score days,

“Seventy weeks,” &c., &c.,

Quoted by your correspondent, and with which Mr. Miller seeks to confound the “week” of creation, the answer is simple. And though I have already attempted to give it in my fourth letter, I will, at the hazard of a little repetition, make one or two further observations, in the hope of strengthening my position.

The above expressions were so evidently used in a metaphorical or typical sense, and in such entire accordance with the symbolic teaching common to the periods in which they were written, that it is probable they were never misunderstood by competent persons.

With the "six days" of the Book of Genesis it is, however, altogether different. Moses was professedly giving a plain historical account of Creation as at present existing in its relations to man; and, as though anticipating the glosses of these last times, he marks the days of creation, beyond the possibility of *unprejudiced* questioning, as *common days*, by mentioning their successive "mornings" and "evenings;" and then, by Divine command, draws from the cessation of work at the end of these six ordinary days, the obligation of observing every ordinary seventh day, as one of rest and of holiness to the Lord. The Israelites, therefore, could not, any more than common-sense men amongst ourselves, have understood the days of creation as other than natural days. And indeed, if they were not so, what was Moses but a deceiver alike to them and us?

But, if contrary to all the laws of language, we are to understand the week of creation as being composed of days of almost unlimited duration, then we must of necessity apply the same rule to the Fourth Commandment, since it is entirely based upon the Mosaic account of creation. Hence its six days of labor become six vast epochs of time, each comprising many ages, during which the successive generations of men are to work without any special periods being appointed for rest or worship, until, at the end of these six epochs, a seventh period—an eternity perhaps—is to be ushered in, and devoted to enjoyment and to the service of Almighty God!

Will J. C. D. accept this as a true interpretation of the Fourth Commandment and its Seventh Holy day?

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And yet it appears to me to be the only one consistent with the modern geologico-religious theory.

If the Sacred Scriptures are thus to be tortured by private interpretations, contrary to all the teaching of Christ's Holy Catholic Church in its purest, and perhaps most inspired ages, what is to prevent the dogmas of transubstantiation, purgatory, the papacy, &c., becoming fearfully prevalent amongst those who are seeking unity upon almost any terms? Or, on the other hand, what is to be our protection against the insidious attacks of our sceptical and rationalistic foes upon the Divinity of our Blessed Lord, the existence of the Holy Ghost, the eternity of rewards and punishment, the validity of the Holy Sacraments, &c., &c.? Since only once admit the lax principles of interpretation sanctioned by the unfortunate Miller and his well-meaning compeers, and the Bible will cease to be a "stumbling-stone" to the Romanist, or a "rock of offence" to the rationalist and the infidel.

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LETTER VI.

SIR,—Since writing the foregoing letters, I received the September number of *Blackwood's Magazine*, and regret to see that in an article entitled "The Book and the Rocks," it cordially endorses Mr. Miller's theory that each of the Mosaic six days of creation embraces an incalculable number of ages. It does not, however, advance much that is new in argument, being little more than an echo of "The Testimony of the Rocks." Still, with your permission, I will briefly notice some of its statements.

I quite agree with the writer, and Mr. Miller, that the supposition of Dr. Pye Smith that the Mosaic account of creation is concerned with only a small portion of the earth's surface,—is quite untenable, opposed alike to Revelation and science.

But I also think that the admissions of both Mr. Miller and *Blackwood* themselves, as well as the arguments of their opponents, prove that their assertion that the "geologic periods agree with the Mosaic days in order and number," is based on exceedingly fanciful grounds, and strained contrary to the facts of the case, in order to support a favorite theory. In proof of this, let your readers carefully note the admissions of these writers, and then read the article in the *Westminster Review* which first occasioned these letters. But if I am correct in this idea, then the whole of Mr. Miller's theory falls to the ground as "the baseless fabric of a vision."

The saying of St. Peter that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day," is quoted in support of Hugh Miller, by his admirer in *Blackwood*. But the quotation is beside the mark; the argument of the Apostle simply being that God can accomplish His moral designs in the world without reference to time. While our controversy is concerning the right of geologists to give a non-natural import to the language which Jehovah has addressed to men, in cases where He Himself has not given the slightest intimation that He was using common language in other than in its ordinary meaning.

The principal argument adduced in "The Book and the Rocks" which I have not already noticed in my previous letters, is a very singular one, namely,—that "if the day of the Creator's rest be a long period of time," (as the writer supposes is the case,) "so must also be the six days of His work!" Upon this fancied *sequitur* he lays a very triumphant stress, saying, "The retort is complete and unanswerable." Whereas to me it appears positively puerile. Surely the writer does not suppose that the term "rest" is applicable to the Creator in the same sense that it would be to a man who had been engaged in arduous labour? In fact, for ought that we know, works of creation may be going on

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continually in other spheres; and indeed the recent discoveries in astronomy seem to render this very probable. The meaning, therefore, is evidently this,—that God having *ceased* from those great works in which for the last six days He had been engaged on our behalf man was required in token of his gratitude to God and for his own comfort, (how wondrously Divine benevolence ever combines the two!) to keep the Seventh Day holy. My argument in my last letter, with regard to the Fourth Commandment, consequently remains untouched.

Something, I can scarcely understand what, in favour of the writer's views is attempted to be based upon the fact that the Seventh Day is not defined by its "evening and morning," as are the rest. To me, the omission seems to strengthen the argument in favor of the literary character of the other six days; since they, being the days of creation, are thus carefully marked as natural days, in order to prevent their after perversion, as, for instance, is now done by our geologists, to a non-natural sense; while the Seventh Day being one of rest was not equally liable to misinterpretation. And besides, this last day of the primeval week might be left thus partially undefined as a beautiful symbol of that eternal rest which awaits the faithful. For there is a wondrous depth of loving kindness,—*though not of deception!*—in any of these typical allusions.

Blackwood is equally as pertinacious as Hugh Miller in attributing the distinct language of Moses concerning the six days, to his writing from the appearances of "a vision;" or even from a "succession of hieroglyphs, descending perhaps from high antiquity"!! rather than in positive revelation. Now all this is exceedingly un-*profitable*; first, because there is not the most remote hint of any such "vision," which there distinctly is in the *epistle* of St. John, whom the writer cites as an example; and less than is there any hint respecting "hieroglyphs;" while, on the other hand, there is more than an intimation, as I have stated before, that God spoke in

all His revelations to Moses, face to face, as a man with his friend. But this trifling with Holy Writ is further distressing, because we must after all return to the fact that the Divine Intelligence is responsible for the truthful accuracy of the narrative according to the common method of interpreting human language, whatever might be methods by which it was imparted to Moses, or,—the Book of Genesis is a fable!

Thus, let any unprejudiced person say, after reading the account of the fourth day's creation of the sun moon and stars, whether human language can convey any facts in clearer or plainer terms? Yet of this statement of the Book of Genesis, the article in question says: "This is optical not astronomical truth"! I fancy I can see the quiet sneer of the *Westminster* on reading such a defence of the holy literal truth of that volume. on the fact of whose unassailable truth all our dearest hopes depend. And this cavilling is certainly most uncalled for, as the account of the heavenly bodies is literally and "astronomically" correct, *Blackwood* to the contrary notwithstanding, when considered in their relations and influences upon our earth;—and this it was, of course, the legitimate object of the sacred historian to state.

But what, indeed, is there to prevent our supposing, if geology seems to demand it, that a planetary system or systems, had existed, and been destroyed, before the creation of the present solar system, described by Moses as taking place on the fourth day? or, might it not possibly be their re-organization from a state of chaos? These suppositions are surely more reverential, than to imagine that when God says He "*made two great lights,*" He only means that He *cleared away the mists and fogs* which hid them from sight! And yet this is what Mr. Miller and *Blackwood* would have us to believe.

The whole of these efforts to bend the Mosaic account to the *supposed* discoveries of geological science

give painful evidence of a want of *reasonable faith*.— Good men have unwittingly permitted their love of science to over-ride their love of faith; for though all, as respects *the when and how* of geology, is guess work, yet in order to make the word of God succumb to its rude uncertainties, His Truth has been tortured into something so like “a lie” that religion veils her face in shame.

It is pleasant, however, where one finds so much to deplore, to be able to speak in terms of high gratification of the able manner in which both Mr. Miller and the writer of “the Book and the Rocks” place in bold relief the complete refutation which the recent discoveries in the science of geology have given to the sceptical conceits of the *eternity of the world, the infinite succession of the human race, &c.* In earnest and glowing language they rejoicingly show how entirely in harmony are geology and Holy writ on these important points. And this they do *without any unholy straining of the divine veracity*: What a pity it is that they could not also have *trusted* Eternal Truth where geology does not speak, but only as yet *utters most uncertain sounds*.

The necessary brevity of these letters compels me to conclude, content with rather suggesting reflection than elaborating argument. I finish, therefore, with one hint,—that the present infancy of the science of geology should cause its christian votaries, while they steadily pursue their researches, and fearlessly proclaim their discovered facts,—for the Infinite stands in no need of the adroit fencing of poor human wit to defend either His natural or revealed truth,—at the same time to let their faith “stand still,” assured that in this thing also, they shall one day “see the salvation of God;” and doubtless they will then greatly marvel that they should ever have trembled lest God should not be able to “vindicate his ways to man.”

