

DIGGINGS OF ORYCTOLOGY AND INFIDELITY.

From the Dublin Statesman.

AT the annual meetings of the British Association, we are now treated with tolerable regularity to a text or texts, wherefrom the infidels of this generation are not slow to elaborate *demonstrations* (!) of the infirmity of that divine history of things upon which believers have been accustomed to rely in all points, but which, being now put out of court by the dumb evidence of dead witnesses from the earth beneath, and from the waters under the earth, may speedily and satisfactorily be assumed to be by no means divine and infallible Scriptures of truth at all. It has not, indeed, come to this, that the grave professors, and dignitaries, and clergymen, and philosophers who compose the Association preach the infidel sermons *totidem verbis*, which are elsewhere studiously prepared for the multitude. They only furnish the texts, as we said, but the comment follows like the thunder after the lightning. The devil, who is the author of the one stage of the process, does not leave the other undone. He has the instruments ready for both works. He first has learned the sciologist of the juvenile and superficial science of "*oryctology*," who digs you up a mammoth, or a megatherium, or an ichthyosaurus, or a plesiosaurus, iguanodon, pterodactyle, or some other monstrous beast or lizard, with a monstrously Greek name, from out of an equally learnedly designated mass of rock or mud, and lo! the work is done. This beast or lizard lived and died, saw light, and ate animal food, says the geologist, some hundreds of thousands or millions of years ago,—no matter which,—*ergo*, says the *Sunday Newspaper*, there is no truth in the Mosaic account of creation, or at least there is so little, and that so obscure, that you are better by far without it. Light must have existed millions of years ago for the use of animals with material eyes; and death pervaded creation with suffering long before sin entered into the world! And as for the Sabbath or seventh day of rest being set apart and

sanctified for the reasons stated in the Bible, the less you say about that in the present stage of "*oryctology*," the better for your reputation as a man of sense. A single bone of a single lizard of an extinct species and genus, dug up from a particular class of mud, declares more truth and science to the eyes of a comparative anatomist and oryctologist or geologist, than all the miracles of Scripture wrought to establish the Divine mission of the Lord and Maker of all things, who, nevertheless, appeals to that very Scripture as his own credentials.

We are not about to dig up again, at present, the twenty times buried and exhumed geological questions, nor do we intend to propose any theory as to the reconciliation of Scripture with ascertained facts (if such there be in this department), which really oppose the received and popular Scriptural views. We desire, however, while the subject is again procuring some notice in the publications of the day, owing to the recent assertions in the British Association, to renew our protest against the rashness and presumption, which, in handling this new, and as yet superficial science, had been from the first, and still is, the characteristic of so many of its students. We know, by irrefragable evidence and infallible demonstration, that the Bible is the word of that same true and unchanging God who is the maker of the earth, and the whole material universe. There can, therefore, be no real contradiction between these two pages of Divine work. There may be some misapprehension by the human mind, indeed, of the statements of the Word of God; but to assail the prevailing interpretation as to certain very plain statements, and to make the real meaning of these, seemingly very plain statements, to bend to the recent and still uncertain science of geology, and to be only intelligible to those who have adopted and who understand the teachings of that new science, seems to us to be a process as presumptuous and perilous as the more open infidelity, which coolly dispenses with the task of interpretation by a summary rejection of the whole. For nearly two thousand years the Christian church has sanctified and set apart *one day in seven*, having received that institution from the Jewish church, which, by Divine

command, had similarly acted for a somewhat equal period. Grounds are not wanting for the conclusion, that from the days of Adam to Moses, the institution of the seventh day's rest, by Divine appointment, was observed. The observation of the sanctity of that particular portion of time is expressly declared to be appointed by God, because he ceased from his work of creation after six days. If then, the day of rest be a natural day, and if the other six days be thousands or millions of years, or of ages (as we are told by some of the reconciling philosophers, who desire not to be unbelievers, but Christians and clergymen, perhaps), we are certainly introduced to a confusion of ideas which no simple reader of his Bible can well understand. We prefer to believe that when God says He worked for six successive days, of which "the evening and the morning" marked their boundaries, He did in some clear, plain, and intelligible sense, work as Creator for these six days at that period, and for no more. He sanctified and set apart a determinate portion of time—A DAY—for rest. He declares why He sanctified and set apart that precise portion of time, and wherefore He requires it to be used for rest and worship. We shall require some clearer evidence than dead lizards dug up out of alluvial muds, by men whose minds seem affected by their vocation, to convince us that the seventh, holy, day means several millions of years; or, at least, that as each of the other six days do so, the seventh means nothing at all but fable and farce. The voice of the living God has surely more power than the dumbness of a fossil reptile's bones.

As to the question of death, we do not wish to cogmatize; but we do desire that some of the geological divines would condescend to dig a little into that subject, as well as into less awful strata. If reptiles and beasts died upon earth millions of ages before Adam sinned, and if those reptiles, moreover, had eyes which received and enjoyed light according to the now known laws of optics, as it is stated they did, we seem to require at least a new commentary, if not a new chapter of revelation, in more instances than one. Longinus admired the sublimity of Moses, whom he did not know to be divinely

inspired, in that magnificent sentence, "*God said, Let there be light and there was light.*" Longinus would scarcely have admired the modern light-manufacturing process of these "*oryctologists.*" They dig you up a theory and a style of a very different kind. They seem to have an irresistible antipathy to the ideas and to the language of the Scripture. The Word of God says, "*He spake and it was done, He commanded and it stood fast.*" But this is flat and tame to the man who sees a hundred and thirty thousand years in a bank of mud, and several millions of ages in the eye of a fossil fish or reptile, dug up out of what he pleases to call the "transition series" or the "secondary." We have no desire to interfere with the claims of science legitimately pursued, and we still less desire that the claims of the Bible should be ignorantly advocated by pressing into its service natural phenomena, which, on investigation, do not sustain the argument they are brought to support. The fact of the Mosaic Deluge, for instance, has been made to account for many things for which it does not account, and has been attempted to be supported by arguments drawn from natural appearances which do not support it. But the fact of the Mosaic Deluge, on the other hand, being proved by the evidence which proves the Bible to be the true and inspired Word of God, cannot be disproved or weakened by all the dead reptiles or living philosophers upon or under the earth. The authenticity and divine inspiration and authority of the Holy Scriptures being established, we require something more to discredit them than the recent deductions of a science which has not been fifty years in existence, and whose often-boasted results have been overturned to make way for new theories, in their turn similarly disposed of. And really we do insist that, with the Bible in the world and in their hands, the gentlemen of the British Association have no right to theorize about the creation, like heathen men who have no such guide. What would be thought of a knot of astronomers who would now set to work without recognizing the discoveries of Sir Isaac Newton, or the facts revealed by Lord Rosse's telescope? It is idle to say that because the Bible does not profess to treat of natural science, it is there-

fore to be disregarded in such inquiries. We insist that it demands to be treated with respect, and reverence, and awe; and that if geologists and oryctologists find their theories leading them to conclusions which necessarily assail the Scriptures and the institutions of scriptural religion, they ought to suspect their own wisdom, and to pause before they vent their crude suggestions to a believing community. Professing themselves wise, they become fools when they oppugn inspired truth, as they virtually do, and that upon such insufficient premises. It has been well observed that no geologist has yet penetrated a mile beneath the surface of the earth, of which he knows comparatively nothing, while he vents his theories of millions of ages as if he had been, at the dawn of creation, by the right hand of God. Whether the heart be solid or hollow, with central fire or central deeps of water, he knows not. Whether peopled at its center by moral beings, or dark and void, he knows not. Yet, with scarcely half a century's collection of facts by a few individuals in a few detached portions of the earth's surface to sustain him, he ventures upon assertions which infidels adroitly use to carry on the war against God's revealed truth, and which (though some ingenious men may endeavor to reconcile them with the Word of God) are marvellously hardy.

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